

Cultures of cosmopolitanism

*Bronislaw Szerszynski and John Urry*¹

Abstract

This paper is concerned with whether a ‘culture of cosmopolitanism’ is currently emerging out of massively wide-ranging ‘global’ processes. The authors develop certain theoretical components of such a culture, they consider ongoing research concerned with belongingness to different geographical entities including the ‘world as a whole’, and they present their own empirical research findings. From their media research they show that there is something that could be called a ‘banal globalism’, from focus group research they show that there is a wide awareness of the ‘global’ but that this is combined in complex ways with notions of the local and grounded, and from media interviews they demonstrate that there is a reflexive awareness of a culture of the cosmopolitan. On the basis of their data from the UK, they conclude that a ‘publicly screened’ cosmopolitan culture is emergent and likely to orchestrate much of social and political life in future decades.

The need for a constantly changing market chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must settle everywhere, establish connexions everywhere . . . the bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world market give a *cosmopolitan* character to production and consumption in every country . . . The individual creations of individual nations become *common* property. National one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible (Marx and Engels, [1848] 1952: 46–7; emphasis added)

Introduction

Where the world consisted of antagonistic nation-states, the ‘other’ was often seen as something to fear, to attack, to colonise, to dominate or to keep at bay. The other was dangerous, especially those others who were on the move, such as armies, migrants, traders, vagrants, travellers who might travel into and stay within one’s country. Citizenship came to consist of rights attributable to tightly specified categories of those who were unambiguously within the ‘nation’. If for reasons of birth or blood or residence people were not citizens of that nation, any such outsiders were sometimes vulnerable to harsh and punitive sanctions. This system of nation-states and national

identities involved antagonism towards the 'stranger', especially those strangers deemed to have a different colour, creed or culture. Orientations to the other, and especially to the mobile other, were generally 'nasty, brutish and short'.

But not all of recent human history has consisted of quite such hostility against the 'other'; here and there what we might call a more cosmopolitan attitude did prevail. In this paper we interrogate such a notion of cosmopolitanism and, with a primary focus on the United Kingdom, ask a simple empirical question: with the development of global processes so brilliantly outlined by Marx and Engels in 1848 is cosmopolitanism becoming more widespread, and, if so, of what does it consist? In particular we consider the 'global other' and ask whether, and to what degree, what lies 'beyond one's society' is becoming differently valorised, in a post-national, cosmopolitan manner, as no longer quite such an intensely opposed 'other' (see Beck, 2000, on the cosmopolitan perspective more generally). Will 'national one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness' become a thing of the past, as predicted a century-and-a-half ago in the *Communist Manifesto*?²

Some immediate evidence is to be found in *The Soul of Britain*, a survey conducted in the UK in 2000. Respondents were provided with a list of geographical entities, ranging in size from their neighbourhood or community up to 'the world as a whole', and asked to say which of them they belonged to 'first of all'.³ 33% of the respondents chose England, Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland as their primary source of belonging, 20% the locality or town where they lived, 13% their 'neighbourhood or community', 9% Great Britain and 9% the UK. But significantly 11% chose 'the world as a whole' (ORB, 2000).

What might this 11% have *meant* by saying that they felt that they belonged to 'the world as a whole', given that in giving this identification there is no obvious 'other' to which they are saying they do *not* belong? Is such global belonging felt in terms of formal rights and obligations familiar from ideas of national citizenship, or in the more affective terms characteristic of other kinds of belonging – a kind of 'global effervescence'? Even for those whose primary identification is with locality or nation, how might a wider awareness of the world be altering the nature and character of such local belongings? Furthermore, what is the role of the media in the production and maintenance of cosmopolitan attitudes to the wider world?

These issues were amongst those explored in a research project on the connections between the environment and global citizenship (see Szerszynski, Urry and Myers, 2000, for a summary).⁴ 'Cosmopolitanism' occupied a complex place in our analysis of global citizenship. Many claims concerned with in some sense 'saving the environment' appear to depend upon a notion of the cosmopolitan. We found ourselves deploying the notion of a culture of cosmopolitanism, citing *inter alia* Kant, analyses of cosmopolitan democracy (such as Held, 1995; Beck, 2000) and theories of global scapes, consumption and travel (Hannerz, 1990, 1996; Urry, 2000).

Three significant thinkers also contributed to our thinking through the concept of the cosmopolitan. First, Henry Thoreau in his evocative return to 'nature' on the banks of Walden Pond in the mid-nineteenth century did not complain about the sound of the railway. He considered that he was 'refreshed and expanded when the freight train rattles past me, and I smell the stores which go dispensing their odours all the way from Long Wharf to Lake Champlain, reminding me of foreign parts . . . and the extent of the globe. I feel more like a citizen of the world' (1927: 103). This emphasises that new socio-technical relations can positively transform connections between places. The railway made Thoreau feel a citizen of the world, a cosmopolitan, connected and not insular. In the contemporary re-imagining of the global other a similar role may be played by air and space travel (Cosgrove, 1994).

Heidegger in similar vein commented about another new technology, the radio in 1919. He said: 'I live in a dull, drab colliery village . . . a bus ride from third rate entertainments and a considerable journey from any educational, musical or social advantages of a first class sort. In such an atmosphere life becomes rusty and apathetic. Into this monotony comes a good radio set and my little world is transformed', made we might say cosmopolitan (quoted Scannell, 1996: 161). We will consider how the TV also de-severed the local, national and global worlds. It has transformed all our 'little worlds' without the need to move corporeally outside one's home (Szerszynski and Toogood, 2000; Urry, 2000: chapter 3).

Third, E.M. Forster noted that certain kinds of place have are nomadic or cosmopolitan in character. He argued that 'London was a foretaste of this nomadic civilization which is altering human nature so profoundly . . . Under cosmopolitanism . . . we shall receive no help from the earth. Trees and meadows and mountains will only be a spectacle . . .' (1931: 243). Certain local places seem quintessentially cosmopolitan; other places are not. And certain sorts of places come to be detached from nature and the physical environment. Nature itself gets transformed into a cosmopolitan *spectacle* comprised of images of trees and meadows and mountains to be known about, compared, evaluated, possessed, but not according to Forster or Heidegger places 'dwelt within' (Szerszynski and Urry, 2001).

In the next section we elaborate some more precise research questions drawn out of these notions – those of connections, de-severance and spectacle – in order to explore the culture of the 'cosmopolitan'.

Research questions

Our starting point consists of the writings about globalisation that have grown exponentially since around 1989.⁵ Certain points from this emerging 'globalisation-paradigm' we take for granted here: that the media (and other) industries increasingly involve globally interlocking patterns of ownership and control, that there are multiple new forms of 'global governance', that there

is the proliferation of 'global' images and brands circulating across much of the world (from Coca-Cola to Greenpeace) and that the global level is partially self-organising (see Urry, 2000). While there is no global society, powerful, interconnecting global hybrids, especially capitalist corporations, are transforming social life across exceptional scales of time-space (Harvey, 2000). With regard to the media, McLuhan presciently wrote over thirty years ago: 'Electric circuitry has overthrown the regime of 'time' and 'space' and pours us instantly and continuously the concerns of all other men [sic]' (McLuhan and Fiore, 1967: 16).

Moreover, these processes are also transforming contemporary citizenship. 1989 was also when the Berlin Wall came down (the twentieth century version of 'Chinese walls'), symbolising the emergence (or re-emergence) of various ethnic and national identities and new states that have had massive consequences across much of especially former Central and Eastern Europe. But also in the 1990s there has also been the development of various strands of 'post-national' or 'nomadic' citizenship resulting from the increasingly global flows of migrants, refugees, asylum-seekers, tourists, environmental risks, information and images (Soysal, 1994; Yuval-Davis, 1997; Joseph, 1999). This globalisation has generated a return to issues of universal rights and the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights from 1948 (see Harvey, 2000).⁶

We are concerned here with whether, and to what degree, such global processes are directly transforming the cultural conditions of people's lives, in Manchester or Manchu, Blackpool or Baghdad, Preston or Pretoria. Is 'globalisation' producing 'cosmopolitanisation' – a globalisation 'in the head' (Robertson, 1992) whereby people conceive of the world as a whole, and of distant places as essentially reachable (Spybey, 1996)? At present the empirical analysis of the 'global' as 'culture' remains largely at the level of institutional structures, even though the idea of global culture was given serious attention at least a decade ago (see the 1990 *Theory, Culture and Society* special issue on 'Global Cultures').

Analysis and data have mainly developed of *ownership* (who owns which media/leisure/fast food etc companies), *consumption* (in 2000, for example, TV ownership ranged from fewer than 20 TVs per 1000 people in Afghanistan to over 800 per 1000 in the US) and *programming* (range and scale of global TV programming; numbers of new internet sites, etc). But there has been very little examination of the *consequences* of such putative global cultures for everyday life and for how these cultures may be transforming the very ways that people conceive of their relationships to a variety of 'others' across the globe and where representations of those lives are widely available on film, TV, the internet and so on. It is how these mediations of 'other' peoples, places and environments are folded into our daily lives that is addressed below, and especially how such others become objects of identification, pity or compassion (see Boltanski, 1999).

We are thus concerned with the 'thicker', more cultural conditions for a post-national citizenship. Printed books and newspapers, radio and public

service television helped to form the imagined 'community in anonymity' of nations and national citizenship (Anderson, 1989). The formation of anything like global citizenship in the twenty-first century will arguably require massive cultural work to generate a far more extensive community in anonymity (Hall, 1992; Perry, 1998), with media likely to play a key role in such work. Thus, although television may be implicated in the erosion of *local* belonging and involvement (Putnam, 2000), it may be beneficial for *global* belonging and involvement. Television is not important here simply for its cognitive effects or indeed its ideological bias, but also in terms of its circulation of symbolic resources, and its flow-like form as a medium. It circulates images and narratives – images of places, brands, peoples and the globe itself, and narratives of various figures, heroes and organisations (see Alexander and Jacobs, 1998, by contrast, on the narrative structure of national civil society). Above such content, television also has certain formal, collage-like characteristics that might have the effect of displacing unreflective identification with local and national cultures and placing them within a far wider context so as to facilitate cultural, emotional and moral encounters with various global 'others'. This 'televisual flow' has become part of the everyday mode of dwelling for much of the world's population (Williams, 1974; Allan, 1997; Scannell, 1996). We thus question Bauman's argument that the 'telicity' necessarily generates moral distancing (1993: 178; Robbins, 1999).

These issues are important because global processes transform the very nature of the public life (Sheller and Urry, 2000). In Habermas' conception of the 'public sphere' in the late eighteenth century, the salon, coffee house and the periodical press provided a sphere where private individuals could debate and resolve political issues (1989). Central to this notion (criticised for its gender-bias) is that of co-presence and dialogue between people face-to-face. But the 'mediated' character of contemporary social life transforms such a sphere. Thompson hypothesises that 'deliberative democracy' might develop through the media conceived hermeneutically rather than cognitively (1995; Cohen, 1996). People can develop forms of quasi-interaction through the media, a kind of 'enforced proximity'. Indeed there is an increasingly visual and narrative 'staging' of the public sphere, as it is transformed into a 'public stage' or even a 'public screen' (Szerszynski and Toogood, 2000; Meyrowitz, 1985; Sheller and Urry, 2002). This has led Ignatieff to suggest that future conflicts such as that in Kosovo can be viewed as 'virtual wars' which appears 'to take place on a screen . . . War affords the pleasures of a spectacle . . . When war becomes a spectator sport, the media becomes the decisive theatre of operations' (2000: 191).

First, we consider whether media images and narratives have developed a global equivalent to what Billig terms 'banal nationalism' (1995), a 'banal globalism' present within various broadcast genres, including advertisements. Interestingly, some writers suggest an increasing overlap between consumerist images in advertising and citizenship rights and responsibilities (Meijer, 1998). Second, we consider an issue raised by The Commission on Global Gover-

nance, set up to report on the first 50 years of the UN. It talks of 'Our Global Neighbourhood' [sic] where a mediated, enforced proximity may be generating a new cosmopolitan ethics involving many individuals and social groups (1995; Bauman, 1993; Tomlinson, 1999: chapter 6; Beck, 2000). Has there been any change in the level, impact or nature of cosmopolitanism? How possible is it to be cosmopolitan while still being an unambiguous member of a locality or a nationality? To what degree is widespread travel important in the very development of cosmopolitan culture?

In various lengthy focus group discussions conducted in the north west of England, with other colleagues, we began to address these issues, in particular, the notion of 'banal globalism' and the contemporary nature of 'cosmopolitanism'. We deal mainly with the latter but in the next section we briefly consider the former that is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for the latter.

Banal globalism

Billig describes vernacular or banal nationalism, the many features that serve to articulate the identity of societies through their mundane differences from each other (1995). These include the waving of celebratory flags, singing national anthems, flying flags on public buildings, identifying with one's own sports-heroes, being addressed in the media as a member of a given society, celebrating independence day and so on (Billig, 1995). Such banal nationalism is inscribed within language, so that when ex-President Clinton points to 'this, the greatest country in human history', the 'this' evokes a national place of belonging, an habitual nation which will implicitly understand that the 'this' refers to the US (Billig, 1995: 107). All Americans will understand that the US is 'the greatest country in human history'.

However, this deictic pointing can occur to wider imagined communities stretching way beyond a nation's borders. Billig himself cites Mandela who refers to 'the people of South Africa and the world who are watching' (1995: 107). The 'we' in Mandela's speeches almost always evokes those people beyond South Africa watching South Africa upon the global media and have collectively participated in the country's rebirth. When Mandela states that 'we are one people' he is pointing both to South Africa and to the rest of the world. Likewise much of the pointing from the television commentators to the collective 'we' at Princess Diana's funeral, was to the estimated 2.5 billion people watching, as a post-modern saint, a 'global healer', was sanctified in the face of the whole world (see Richards, Wilson and Woodhead, 1999: 3).

We undertook a 24-hour survey of all the visual images available on a variety of TV channels within Britain (see Toogood, 1998; Szerszynski and Toogood, 2000). We found numerous examples of the following 'global' images over this brief period: images of the earth, including the mimetic blue earth; long, often aerial images of generic 'global' environments; images of

wildlife that index the overall state of the environment; images of the family of man sharing a global product; images of relatively exotic places that suggests the endless possibilities of global mobility; images of global players famous in and through the world's media; images of iconic exemplars who demonstrate global responsibility; images of those engaging in actions ultimately on behalf of the global community; images of corporate actions; and images of global reportage shown to be present, live and staffed by iconic figures able to speak, comment and interpret the globe (see Richards, Wilson and Woodhead, 1999, on Diana as the global clothes-horse/global healer).

Central to banal globalism are representations of the earth or globe that might be seen as paralleling 'national' flags (see Ingold, 1993; Cosgrove, 1994; Franklin, Lury and Stacey, 2000). A common version is the 'Blue Globe': the Earth seen in dark space, as a whole defined against threatening emptiness, with no lines or political colouring, freezing a moment in time. But the globe appears in many other forms. It can function as a symbol of authority, organisation, and coverage of global information, particularly in news programmes – the graphic news globe, for instance, shown at the beginning of the BBC's or CNN's regular news broadcasts. These representations draw on the image of the Earth seen from space, but altered to incorporate other conventions: the land may be yellow and sea green; or the globe might be translucent, and weather formations absent.

This sort of globe suggests a universal perspective, what Franklin, Lury, Stacey term a 'second nature', in which physical and geographical boundaries processes do not obscure the outline of the continents – everything can be seen but a distance. The Blue Globe is associated with a perspective from outside the Earth, from the point of view of an astronaut or satellite. And any vast panorama, especially seen from above, and especially with a curved horizon, seems to suggest that it is the Earth itself that we are looking at, not the particular local place and people. Space is often used to connote the endless possibilities of cosmopolitan travel and the potential consumption of many other places and cultures from across the globe (see Toogood and Myers, 1999; Urry, 2000: chapter 7).

Thus there is much global imagery on contemporary TV, both directly of the globe and indirectly through images of exemplary 'global' individuals and peoples and through various iconic places, peoples and animals. The media frequently uses techniques by which different places and people are framed as representing, or speaking on behalf of, the one earth. And we explored the production, circulation and reception of 'banal globalism' beyond the televisual genres usually regarded as of 'civic' significance, including advertisements, logos, music video, and soap operas (Szerszynski and Toogood, 2000; Meijer, 1998). The global is thus 'ready-to-hand', a backcloth to a world of exceptional co-presence. As well as the ubiquitous TV (1 billion world-wide), PCs, planes, mobiles and modems enable people to straddle that globe, circling it with bodies, messages, bits of information and images that pass over and beyond horizons (see Franklin, Lury and Stacey, 2000).

This array of global images is very familiar to viewers who were well able to discuss its main features and characteristics. Indeed when respondents were asked to consider such global imagery analytically, they demonstrated high levels of 'visual literacy' (Szerszynski and Urry, 2001). They showed familiarity with images used to connote the global, some knowledge as to how these images had been produced and were likely to be used, a capacity to compare and contrast different visual regimes of signification, and the capacity not just to grasp intended meanings, but to reflect upon the multiple intentions of those producing the images, often offering competing interpretations of imagery. For example, respondents particularly disliked the use of the blue globe in an advertisement for insurance services. In the small business persons focus group:

- Male 3: This advert, I've seen that one before, I find that type of advert quite cynical
- Moderator: Mmmm
- Male 3: Well they are trying to sell you insurance, aren't they? And they are talking about something which, they are bringing in images which are totally false

While in the corporate professionals group:

- Female 3: . . . it frustrated me actually, it's very kind of God like, it's like saying we're everywhere
- Female 2: [laughs] Big brother

The use of children standing for the globe in charitable appeals was also regarded on occasions as manipulative, while a retired man stated 'It's all staged', in the creative professionals group:

- Moderator: What do you think lies behind the use of children as an image? You know, what do they signify?
- Male 4: To noble people, you know [laughs]

Cosmopolitanism

We turn now to the culture of cosmopolitanism. We take this to be a cultural disposition involving an intellectual and aesthetic stance of 'openness' towards peoples, places and experiences from different cultures, especially those from different 'nations' (see Tomlinson, 1999: chapter 6). Cosmopolitanism involves the search for, and delight in, the contrasts between societies rather than a longing for superiority or for uniformity. Hannerz especially emphasises the importance of 'openness' and of the way that cosmopolitanism may generate new forms of critical knowledge (1996: 103–9). The cosmopolitan, he says, needs to be in 'a state of readiness, a personal ability to make one's way into

other cultures, through listening, looking, intuiting and reflecting' (1990: 239). This parallels Heidegger's description of how the radio 'has so expanded its everyday environment that it has accomplished a de-severance of the "world"' (quoted Scannell, 1996: 167). By this he means bringing close, within range, abolishing distance or farness with events and especially people. 'Heidegger interprets the possibility of radio . . . as making the . . . the great world beyond my reach . . . as accessible and available for me or anyone' (Scannell, 1996: 167). However, communications through the radio, nor other forms of communication or travel, do not necessarily produce cosmopolitanism – most argue that the latter entails a particular set of cultural predisposition and practices.

There are however various problems in suggesting that the cosmopolitan is a specific cultural type clearly distinguishable from locals, tourists, visitors, migrants, refugees and so on. First, supposedly cosmopolitan openness mainly refers to masculinist opportunities and dispositions always to remain 'on the move' (Jokinen and Veijola, 1997). Second, such a stance of openness is predominantly the preserve of affluent travellers of the 'north' rather than poorer migrants of the 'south' or even of rich (Japanese) tourists from elsewhere. There is a danger that a distinction of social taste is being implemented through deploying the concept of the cosmopolitan (Massey, 1994; and see Buzard, 1993, on the traveller-tourist cultural binary). Third, so-called cosmopolitans may seek to escape from contributing to national or local states and to move within self-enclosed cosmopolitan enclaves or bubbles (Lasch, 1995: 47). Fourth, thus cosmopolitanism is often constructed at the expense of the local and local peoples who are presumed to be narrow, insular and parochial in their patterns of mobility and in their ethics.⁷ Fifth, as we argue in the next section, there is no one form of cosmopolitanism; it rather functions as an 'empty signifier' (Laclau, 1998), having to be filled with specific, and often rather different content, in different situated cultural worlds.

Clearly different societies have initiated different modes of cosmopolitanism, including what we might call Heidegger's 'aural cosmopolitanism'. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries an aesthetic cosmopolitanism developed amongst the British upper class that expanded its repertoire of landscapes for visual consumption. Barrell summarises the importance of how their mobility throughout Europe provided the cultural capital for developing such a cosmopolitanism: 'the aristocracy and gentry . . . had experience of more landscapes than one, in more geographical regions than one; and even if they did not travel much they were accustomed, by their culture, to the *notion* of mobility, and could easily imagine other landscapes' (1972: 63). Appadurai makes a similar argument about contemporary migration, arguing that people's capacity 'to imagine routinely the possibility that they or their children will live and work in places other than where they were born' is enabled by a 'mass-mediated imaginary that . . . transcends national space' (1996: 6).

The following sets out a more general model of cosmopolitanism that seeks to avoid the dangers mentioned above (see Urry, 1995: 167; Tomlinson, 1999: 200–2; Beck, 2000). Cosmopolitan predispositions and practices involve some or all of:

- extensive *mobility* in which people have the right to ‘travel’ corporeally, imaginatively and virtually and for significant numbers they also have the means to so travel
- the capacity to *consume* many places and environments en route
- a *curiosity* about many places, peoples and cultures and at least a rudimentary ability to locate such places and cultures historically, geographically and anthropologically
- a willingness to take *risks* by virtue of encountering the ‘other’
- an ability to ‘*map*’ one’s own society and its culture in terms of a historical and geographical knowledge, to have some ability to reflect upon and judge aesthetically between different natures, places and societies
- *semiotic* skill to be able to interpret images of various others, to see what they are meant to represent, and to know when they are ironic
- an *openness* to other peoples and cultures and a willingness/ability to appreciate some elements of the language/culture of the ‘other’

Contemporary cosmopolitanism has developed in and through imaginative travel through the TV (Urry, 2000: chapter 3). Hebdige argues that a ‘mundane cosmopolitanism’ is part of many people’s everyday experience, as they are world travellers, either corporeally or via the TV in their living room: ‘It is part of being “taken for a ride” in and through late-twentieth century consumer culture. In the 1990s everybody [at least in the ‘west’] is more or less cosmopolitan’ (1990: 20). This is not so much the consequence of individual programmes but of ‘televisual flow’ itself (Williams, 1974; Allan, 1997). Viewers are thrown into the extraordinary, flowing visual world that lies beyond the domestic regime, an instantaneous mirror reflecting much of the rest of the world that is then mirrored into people’s homes. In an Indian context, Arundhati Roy evocatively writes of an elderly woman whose life is transformed by the instantaneous and often ‘live’ visual perception of the multiple ‘global others’:

She presided over the World in her drawing room on satellite TV . . . It happened overnight. Blondes, wars, famines, football, sex, music, coups d’état – they all arrived on the same train. They unpacked together. They stayed at the same hotel. And in Ayemenem, where once the loudest sound had been a musical bus horn, now whole wars, famines, picturesque massacres and Bill Clinton could be summoned up like servants (1997: 27).

Sensations of other places, especially facilitated through channel-hopping, and programmes that simulate channel-hopping, may create an awareness of

cosmopolitan interdependence. Featherstone summarises this argument: 'the flows of information, knowledge, money, commodities, people and images have intensified to the extent that the sense of spatial distance which separated and insulated people from the need to take into account all the other people which make up what has become known as humanity has become eroded' (1993: 169). By participating in the practice of consuming in and through the media people can experience themselves as part of a dispersed, global civiness, united by simultaneously watching with millions of dispersed others (Anderson, 1989; Dayan and Katz, 1992).

However, Tomlinson reworks the notion of the cosmopolitan in terms of transformed relations *between* the global and the local (1999: 194–207). He argues that we should not counterpose the local and the cosmopolitan, maintaining that forceful moralities in the contemporary world will not be *either* localist and proximate *or* cosmopolitan and global. Rather Tomlinson advocates a contemporary cosmopolitanism that involves the capacity to live ethically in *both* the global and local, in the proximate and the distant simultaneously. Such a cosmopolitanism involves comprehending the specificity of one's local context, to connect to other locally specific contexts and to be open to a globalising world. He thus develops a kind of 'glocalised cosmopolitanism' or an 'ethical globalism' in which 'in the everyday lifestyle choices they make, cosmopolitans need routinely to experience the wider world as touching their local lifeworld, and vice versa' (Tomlinson, 1999: 198).

Tomlinson suggests that the transformation of many 'localities' into 'glocalities' provides some of the preconditions for developing such a cosmopolitanism:

changes in our actual physical environments, the routine factoring in of distant political-economic processes into life-plans, the penetration of our homes new media and communications technology, multiculturalism as increasingly the norm, increased mobility and foreign travel, even the effects of 'cosmopolitanizing' of food culture (1999: 199–200; and see Rotblat, 1997; and Beck, 2000, for further processes involved in 'cosmopolitanisation').

Also deepening and developing a cosmopolitan stance is the vast amount of localised moral commitment and practice undertaken by people. Berking notes that 45% of US citizens dedicate over 5 hours a week to voluntary activities beyond the individual and family (1996: 192–3). Such mutualities involve potential forms of 'extended solidarities that are no longer restricted to my own community of shared values' (Berking, 1996: 201; Tomlinson, 1999: 207; see Keck and Sikkink, 1998, on 'activists beyond borders').

In the next section we report upon our focus group research to see if these claims about contemporary cosmopolitanism are empirically significant at least in one part of the UK.⁸

Researching cosmopolitanism

We conducted nine focus groups, each meeting twice for two-hour sessions. They were recruited to provide a wide distribution of occupational group, age and gender, as well as of different kinds of local-cosmopolitan lives (see Myers, Szerszynski and Urry, 1999, for a lengthy summary). Three groups from Blackpool were chosen to explore different kinds of activity that people pursue in their *leisure* time (local citizenship; consuming the globe through travel; consuming the globe through the media). Three groups were convened in Manchester to explore comparable set of options in different *professional*, working domains (caring for local places and people; producing the global mediascape; travelling the global corporate world). And three Preston groups were chosen to explore how notions of citizenship might play out within recognisable, existing *subcultures* (local business-people; 'Old Labour' internationalism; global flows of labour).

Our first finding was that few participants claimed an identity as a 'citizen of the world' or to challenge existing conceptions of national identity (for much more detail on the following, see Myers, Szerszynski and Urry, 1999). In that sense we found few 'global citizens'. When notions of abstract or formal rights or responsibilities were introduced, the discussion developed along national lines, with people exploring what their particular *nation* can and cannot demand of its citizens – and what non-citizens can and should demand of it. We found little evidence of what we had systematically hypothesised as the thesis of 'global citizenship' (see Urry, 2000: chapter 7). However, simultaneously it was clear that nation-states and national peoples were deemed to have a wide variety of obligations beyond that of narrow self-interest, including some obligations of a post-national character.

Indeed we found a widespread if rather general cosmopolitanism. People had a strong awareness of the global flows of money, commodities and pollution; of extended relations connecting them to other peoples, places and environments; of the blurring boundaries of nation, culture and religion; and of a diverse range of possible local, national and global experiences. As a creative professional expressed it: 'globalisation has become more of a possibility and a reality' (Male 4). Such a cosmopolitanism was found within all the focus groups, and most interestingly not just amongst those who travelled a great deal or had international links as part of their work. Most groups demonstrated a mundane 'cosmopolitanism' within their daily lives, *even* where their lives were currently based within geographically proximate communities (it should be noted that most groups had shown a history of considerable geographical mobility). Thus a member of the small business persons group happily talked of the idea of a 'shrinking world' (Male 2). Another member of the group (Male 5) said of the mobile phone: 'Years ago it didn't happen, you'd link up here, link up here. And it took 10 minutes to get through. The whole world's shrunk'. A retired man (Male 2) said: 'I think we

are living in a shrinking world now aren't we, I think you can't do anything without having a you know an environmental effect on everybody else.'

A member of the women involvers group commented:

Female 7: The media bring it all . . . they bring it right into your living room

Female 4: Mmm

Female 7: Immediately it happens, it's there . . .

Female 4: Mmm

Female 7: . . . on the television, very graphically sometimes

Similarly one of the creative professionals group (Female 3) argued that: 'I am a global citizen because I am aware of people, I'm aware of cultures, I'm aware of other countries and to a certain extent the impact that I have on it as well'. On another occasion in the same group:

Moderator: I mean, should everybody everywhere be entitled to travel?

Female 3: Without a doubt

Moderator: To buy foreign food?

Male 3: Without a doubt if you've got any sort of belief in a free world and a free, you know, sure . . .

One of the young European students (Female 1) argued: 'We could say that maybe there are different cultures and different people but there's only one planet, that we're all in it, we're all involved into this planet'.

For European students cosmopolitanism involved less commitment to specifically local forms of life and embraced a culturally more mobile sense of identity between 'national cultures'. An Italian student (Male 6) said that:

I've got my family, my brothers, my parents and nobody is pulling me away from Italy, at the moment nobody's pushing me away from England so I feel quite comfortable in both places even if they are quite different.

Another student contrasted the situation with former East Germany (Male 1) bringing out the importance of consumption processes to cosmopolitanism:

I mean they didn't have the right to travel, they didn't have the right to try any European or Western country food or clothes or cars or anything. And just, I think it's horrible. You should have the right, at least the right to enjoy or to try it.

At the same time as this people's political formulations involved an embedded vocabulary of feeling, emotion and localised care. And across different social groups there were strong expressions of particularistic care, specifically to various kinds of compassionate and charitable 'local social action'. Without

prompting, participants consistently used the word 'care' for what could be legitimately asked of them to do. Care is concrete, physical and grounded (Gilligan, 1982; Lash, 1999). The concepts of *global* connectedness and responsibility that people deployed seemed to be very firmly grounded in *proximate* citizenship and belongingness (see Berking, 1996: 192–4, on the huge scale of local gift giving).

Moreover, in the *Soul of Britain* survey referred to earlier, voluntary activity seemed to be if anything *negatively* correlated with global belonging. For example, only 9% of those who work in some capacity for a voluntary organisation claimed 'global belonging', compared with 12% of those not working for such organisations. On the other hand, 'local belonging' identification with neighbourhood or community does seem to be correlated with voluntary activity. For example, 17% of those working for voluntary organisations chose the local community as their primary source of belonging (ORB, 2000).

However, one should not counterpose the local and the global too starkly. As Doreen Massey argues, 'each place is the focus of a distinct *mixture* of wider and more local social relations' (1994: 156). Our qualitative research enables further light to be shed on how this mixture shapes the relationships between local loyalty, global openness and moral connectedness. Most, if not all, of the respondents had some kind of active and compassionate commitment to an immediate community, as an actually existing way of life, as a lost world of the past, or as an ideal for the future. However, this community was not always based upon a geographical territory. People also conceived of wider, dispersed communities based not on geography but on shared interests or 'affect', organised around practices and issues such as football, collecting for a hospice, scouting, work, the environment, student unions, caravanning, car racing, short wave radio, or even tortoise protection (Hebdidge, 1990; Szerszynski, 1997, 1998). Just as respondents were well aware of global culture so they also articulated Lash's second grounded modernity of 'haptic space, as the tactile community, as community, as memory' (1999: 14).

Respondents also found it difficult to extend the taken-for-granted sense of moral connectedness in their more grounded communities to the larger and more abstract global community, since the latter seemed to lack the immediacy and groundedness ascribable to the former (see Bauman, 1993, on ethics at a distance). As a result respondents described their ethics in terms of either specific iconic figures (Mandela, Diana, the Pope, Mother Theresa, Bob Geldof), special kinds of figures (especially children who are often deemed to have global concerns), special kinds of organisations (Red Cross) or special kinds of event (Band Aid), rather than in terms of more abstract concepts of duty and belonging. A member of the creative professionals group (Female 2) maintained: '... Band Aid, look at that. That was amazing, that was huge. I mean, that highlighted charities, most people wouldn't even bother thinking about stuff like that or even care what's going on across the world'.

In questions of moral consideration, at times compassion seemed (as might have been predicted) to decrease with distance – as one of the women

involvers ironically expressed it: 'oh it's another famine advert' (Female 4). Compassion seemed to be directed first at family and friends, then at one's particular 'community', and only then extended further afield. But at other times respondents placed the emphasis not so much on the near but on the *particular*, the problem being abstraction not distance (Bauman, 1993; Ginzburg, 1994). People were numbed by having to choose between the huge range of moral demands that the globalising world now confronts them with, whether these are proximate or distant. They also felt numbed by the very abstractness of many moral demands, often preferring to fill a shoebox with gifts to send a particular child who may not be at all proximate, rather than donating money to a charitable cause where there is an anonymous, generalised beneficiary (see Boltanski, 1999: 18).

This particularisation also manifested strongly in the respondents' talk about moral *agents*. Participants clearly had different interpretations of what 'citizen' might mean in relation to the local, national and the global. As we noted above they found talking about citizenship as an abstract concept difficult and unnatural, preferring to talk about specific figures, types of figures or organisations who might serve as *exemplars*. These focus groups were held in late 1997, and the discussion often turned to Princess Diana. She was used to show the extension of the local sense of personal responsibility and immediate face-to-face contact. For many participants, she could stand for the personal and affective relations needed for global community, and she could be contrasted to politicians, with their programmes and apparent self-interest. The simplicity and directness of her concern, as well as her apparent cosmopolitanism, were taken as evidence of its sincere authenticity (Richards, Wilson and Woodhead, 1999). A corporate professional (Male 5) argued that:

She helped by her personality to bring it a lot more to the public attention. Again landmines is only one issue, she did the same with something like AIDS, it was an interest and a caring nature to do what she could from her abilities, to influence world opinion.

The overall choice of people chosen to stand as exemplars of the cosmopolitan showed that respondents conceived their wider moral obligations more in the affective terms of care and compassion than those of abstract duty (Gilligan, 1982). However, the global exemplars were not regarded as examples that people simply ought to copy. The respondents operated with an implicit division of moral labour between the extraordinary morality exhibited in many highly mediated global lives, and the ordinary morality of their everyday, private lives. The global exemplars were overwhelmingly seen as what Blum calls 'idealists' – people who appear to have a mission in life, who consciously choose and affirm their ideals and look for ways to implement them in their own life and the wider world. However, within their *own* lives, the participants felt that it was enough for them to be what Lawrence Blum

calls 'responders'; people who, although they have no clearly articulated moral vision, nevertheless try to respond in morally appropriate ways to situations that confront them (Blum, 1988: 208–9). People rarely talked of actions by governments but many groups mentioned the importance of ethical consumption and consumer boycotts – showing the greater importance of grounded daily and proximate concerns and practices.

The focus group discussions revealed orientations that were 'global' in the sense of involving moral and cultural openness to diverse other peoples, environments and cultures. But these orientations are *not* global in the sense of being universally shared and consistent (see Therborn, 2000, on this distinction). The *Soul of Britain* survey found that age, religious belonging and voting intentions were amongst the most significant factors that seemed to shape the distribution of a sense of global belonging. For example, whereas 19% of 18–24 year olds chose 'the world' as their primary locus of belonging, this figure dropped to 11% of 25–34 year olds, and dropped further to 9% amongst those over 65. In terms of religion, 14% of Roman Catholics and 'other' religionists and 13% of those with 'no religion' chose 'the world', compared with 9% of 'convinced atheists' and only 6% of Protestants. Similarly, 12% of Labour voters identified with 'the world', compared with 6% of Conservative voters (ORB, 2000).

But as well as the global having a different *salience* for different social groups, our research indicates that it is also given particular *meanings* within specific cultural worlds. Ideas of global connectedness, belonging and responsibility are as ubiquitous, 'banal' and taken for granted amongst the public as they are in the media, but they are interpreted in different ways. Amongst younger and more mobile groups, it appears as a cosmopolitan openness to the new and the culturally different (although this too has its limits). For older groups, ideas of responsibility and intervention beyond national boundaries were sometimes interpreted in relation to received notions of British character and the fulfilment of duty, familiar from the days of Empire and the World Wars (see Szerszynski, Urry and Myers, 2000). Also, although we never raised issues of immigration, some groups, who otherwise engaged in much localised care, expressed considerable *cultural* hostility to various categories of immigrant.⁹ As a corporate professional said: 'they don't have the right to come here and insist that they can do whatever they like'.

Cosmopolitan identities and practices were differently articulated at different stages in the lifecycle. Young people talked about travelling and working around the world, but, possibly reflecting the strong regional identity of the north west of England, still expected to return to the locality of their origins to settle down. Adult responsibilities brought a greater salience of ideas of duty, responsibility and care, ideas that are then extended to other places and peoples. Retirement brought a re-opening to a sense of wider connectedness. But these life phases also bring their own situated justifications for *not* being 'good' global citizens. The young people frequently said that it is not their job to care or to be responsible, but to enjoy them-

selves while they could. The parents and workers explained how wider experiences and loyalties took second place, while the retired said that it is time to think of themselves for a change.

Finally, another part of the research showed that media professionals are reflexively aware of this cosmopolitanism and seek ways of extending it, through brands, icons and narratives, often in ways that enhance global 'connectedness' (see Szerszynski, Urry and Myers, 2000). Two comments from media professionals are interesting here. First, the Director of One World Broadcasting noted a growth of cosmopolitan sentiment and commented on its causes: '... I wonder whether things like tourism aren't a bigger factor, the international markets for music or whatever. The sort of anti-Japanese feeling that I grew up with completely changed because of really the consumption relationship we now have with Japan' (2.12.98). So rather like Marx and Engels he argued that consumer interconnectedness might in fact *lessen* nationalist hostility.¹⁰

Second, the Head of Media Affairs, International Committee of the Red Cross, Geneva (14.12.98) argued:

That figureheads are able to convey to an audience is a certain moral authority, a certain message which institutions made of brick and stone, apart from people in them, can't really do. And in a world where you have moving images, a photo of a still red cross probably doesn't have that kind of authority, whereas somebody speaking on television and moving around a landmine field does have significance.

And this authority appears to derive from the fact that iconic figures are also known for moving around countless other places – it gives them added authority if it is known that they have been and seen many other global sites (as of course with Princess Diana as a cosmopolitan 'media saint'; see Richards, Wilson and Woodhead, 1999).

Conclusions

This research was designed to be exploratory rather than definitive; nevertheless, three broad conclusions can be drawn from the empirical findings in north west England. First, a banal globalism is ready-to-hand and increasingly acts as a backcloth for an enormous amount of media output. With the emerging convergence of media, from televisions to computers to phones, this global vernacular will be increasingly folded into an wide array of other practices – such as advertising, sport, education, arts, travel and so on – that are saturated with media images and information, with a banal globalism that is both outside and in a way within each of us.

Second, there is some evidence of a 'cosmopolitan civil society'. There is an awareness of a 'shrinking world' of global transportation and communica-

tions, together with an ethics of care based upon various proximate groundings. What is less clear though is how such cosmopolitan predisposition and practice intersects with and is refracted by local, national, ethnic and gender practices. But its development will undoubtedly inflect civil society, transforming the conditions under which 'social actors assemble, organize, and mobilize' (Cohen and Arato, 1992: 151). And as they do assemble, organise and mobilise differently, so there will be new, unpredictable and emergent cosmopolitan cultures and cognitive praxes (see Eyerman and Jamison, 1991).

Third, this cosmopolitanism, of what we might call the global *and* the grounded, is placed upon the visual and narrative 'staging' of contemporary life, as the public sphere is transformed into a cosmopolitan public stage or screen (Szerszynski and Toogood, 2000; Sheller and Urry, 2000). Television and travel, the mobile and the modem, seem to be producing a global village, blurring what is private and what is public, what is front-stage and what is back-stage, what is near and what is far (Meyrowitz, 1985). Especially, they blur what is co-present and what is mediated, what is local and what is global, what is embodied and what is distant (see Harvey, 2000: 85–6, on reconciling material embodiment and universal rights).

The effects of these transformations upon the possibilities of cosmopolitan democracy in the twenty first century remain to be seen, but even a hesitant growth of a cosmopolitan culture does suggest changes in the context within which social and political life has been historically understood.

Lancaster University

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Notes

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- 2 See Harvey 2000, for an extensive reworking of the *Manifesto*.
- 3 *The Soul of Britain* was conducted by the Opinion Research Business (ORB) for the BBC, 1000 telephone interviews being carried out in May 2000. The authors would like to thank Gordon Heald of ORB for making available data and cross-tabulations from the survey.
- 4 The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) funded *Global Citizenship and the Environment*, award number R000236768.
- 5 For two of the most impressive, see Held, McGrew, Goldblatt and Perraton 1999; and the UNDP Report 1999.
- 6 For an elaboration of post-national citizenship in terms of global risks, global rights and global duties, especially relating to nature and the environment, see Urry 2000, chapter 7.
- 7 See Tomlinson 1999, chapter 6; E.M. Forster himself interestingly criticises 'cosmopolitan chatter'.
- 8 It should be noted that our data here is extremely limited in time and place – for example, taking place well before the September 2001 attacks on New York and Washington, after which the notion of cosmopolitan openness and tolerance has at once been qualified in the

West and also trumpeted as one of its defining features. Obviously researching the global in some ways requires global data sets. We hope that others will find our specific research of use in developing studies of cosmopolitan cultures in other times and places.

- 9 The connections between cosmopolitanism and ethnic difference needs much more examination elsewhere.
- 10 For a critical account of the use of global imagery in consumer culture, see Franklin, Lury and Stacey (2000).

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