**Chapter 6 / THE ELEMENTARY FORMS OF THE COSMOPOLITAN SPIRIT**

*[...] natural compassion, which lost, when applied to societies, almost all the influence it had over individuals, and survived no longer except in some great cosmopolitan spirits, who, breaking down the imaginary barriers that separate different peoples, follow the example of our Sovereign Creator, and include the whole human race in their benevolence.*[[1]](#footnote-1)

Let us now turn to the final aspect of building a cosmopolitan relationship to the world. We shall examine cosmopolitan socialisation as a long, circuitous process that is theoretically reversible, and at times even contradictory or incoherent. It involves the potential acquisition of a certain outlook through encounters with and exposure to alterity, — including forms of contact that are imagined, real or virtual — rather than the existence of a coherent and stable system of embodied dispositions, traits and tendencies.

**A self-reflexive process**

The self-reflexive process of building a relationship to otherness has four major variants, previously identified as the cosmo-aesthetic, cosmo-culturalist, cosmo-ethical, and cosmo-political orientations (Cicchelli, 2014a). These four variants were analysed separately in order to understand the conditions under which individuals do or do not espouse universalistic ideas, do or do not draw on cosmopolitan repertoires, and do or do not participate in the elaboration of transnational cultures and imaginaries in the aesthetic, cultural, ethical and political domains.

**Being and becoming**

Our approach stems from the idea that it is possible to understand the various processes of cosmopolitan socialisation without necessarily identifying to which specific cosmopolitan or local type individuals belong; instead, we seek to understand the both discourse and behaviour of individuals as expressions of their specific outlook on the world. Rather than describing cosmopolitans with a set of fixed and stable attributes, we shall therefore strive to determine under what conditions cosmopolitanism can arise through everyday exchanges and interactions (Woodward and Skrbis, 2012). Socialisation should thus been seen as a complex process through which individuals implement the cosmopolitan spirit.

Unlike in the previous chapter, where we focused on identity determinants, here we shall suggest that individuals can both *be* and *become* cosmopolitans. According to the aforementioned study conducted on Erasmus study abroad programmes (Cicchelli, 2012), students can be differentiated by the degree of their penchant for cosmopolitanism. During the interviews, there were moments where each individual’s brand of cosmopolitanism could be glimpsed. Although all of the students interviewed already shared a baseline of cosmopolitanism in their speech and behaviours, they all viewed study abroad programme as a trial to further develop their cosmopolitan outlook. We have argued that this kind of methodological approach can perhaps be applied to everyday contexts, and not just to situations that visibly involve international mobility. There are numerous ‘alterity trials’[[2]](#footnote-2) that allow us to observe how individuals can apply their specific brand of cosmopolitanism. These trials range from everyday cultural consumption practices and banal interactions with individuals seen as representing other cultures, to the various forms of acceptance or rejection of otherness (expressions of friendliness and benevolence towards others, commitments to solidarity, hospitality and generosity), and even to feelings of compassion and vicarious suffering.

By studying individual practices, we are able to confirm just to what extent social actors are involved in cosmopolitanism on a daily basis. Let us look at sports, for example: no need to wait for major international sporting events to engage in globalised practices in this realm. In every corner of the globe, individuals who play football, rugby, or basketball, whether they are professionals or amateurs, whether they play with close friends or strangers, participate fully in the representation and dissemination of sports culture on a global scale. Even though the specific football modalities may differ from country to country — the game is played slightly differently in Brazil, Argentina, Germany, England and Italy, for instance — players apply the same rules, support the same international clubs (which are not always those that represent their city or country), and purchase jerseys, shoes and shorts that are manufactured by the same major international brands (Adidas, Nike, Puma, etc.). And they all dream of imitating the great feats of international football stars, using the countless clips available on YouTube and Dailymotion to train. These activities are integrated into highly interconnected structures that range from the local scale (neighbourhood clubs and city leagues) to the national and international level (sports federation and associations).

Before examining the various processes involved in developing a cosmopolitan relationship to the world, let us first take a moment to look at the issue of the capabilities and features that help to lay the groundwork for this form of socialisation to take place. What kind of cognitive tools, identity-based resources and moral qualities must individuals possess in order to live, act and interact in a cosmopolitan world? By referring to the self-reflexivity of social actors, we shall be able to answer this question and open the black box of belonging, hitherto seen as a static and unchanging attribute.

**Cosmopolitan abilities...**

Research on cosmopolitanism generally describes two sets of individual attributes. When discussing the skills and knowledge used by social actors to wade through cultural codes, interpret differences, build bridges between social groups, open doors, cross borders or establish dialogue, scholars generally tend to refer to individuals’ *cosmopolitan capacity* for living in a plural world (Woodward, Skrbis and Bean, 2008). The expression of cosmopolitan virtues is on the contrary used to explain how individuals can inhabit a shared world, by embedding themselves within the larger circle of global humanity (Turner, 2001).

The cosmopolitan approach emphasises the ability of individuals to forge their way through various cultures by listening and watching, as well as by relying on reflection and intuition (Hannerz, 1990). Defined as a propensity for openness to other cultures, values or lifestyles, a cosmopolitan approach presupposes that social actors possess the skills necessary to master codes produced in a variety of different contexts. Sociologists like Bronislaw Szerszynski and John Urry (2002) have consequently defined the contemporary cosmopolitan as ‘a person able to transcend the global-local opposition, and to live in a *glocal* cultural universe’ (p. 471). Such individuals would thus be endowed with a degree of perspicacity that comes from the fact that they ‘were at home in many places, and could thus be both inside and out, combining intimacy with a critical external eye, blending together involvement and detachment [...]’ (Bauman, 2005, p. 88). This approach also emphasises the fluidity and porousness of individual identities, as well as the inclination to create new forms of cultural expression by using different sources. Far from striving for a coherent self through immersion in a single, homogenous and somewhat isolated culture, cosmopolitanism assumes that individuals have a certain level of creativity that allows them to imagine new ways of living by referring to heterogeneous cultural materials (Scheffler, 2001) and, from that launch pad, ‘they enrich humanity as a whole by renewing the stock of cultural resources on which others may draw’ (Scheffler, 2001, p. 112). As they possess the ability of creating identities that are both idiosyncratic and plural, individuals cannot be exclusively defined by predetermined and fixed forms of attachment to specific cultures, communities or traditions. ‘We must live in more than one of these universes in order to detect the human invention that exists behind every imposing and apparently insurmountable structure of the universe’ (Bauman, 2005, p. 88).

Certain sociologists have identified the different abilities that allow for the development of a cosmopolitan relationship to the world as follows: a) the ability to visit places, either through real or virtual mobility that is either desired or achieved; b) curiosity towards foreign places and the ability to visualise them geographically, historically and anthropologically; c) the desire to take risks by meeting others; d) the ability to situate one’s own culture historically and compare it to others; e) the semiotic skills necessary to interpret the images produced by others; and f) a degree of openness to and appreciation for other cultures, languages and individuals. The unifying principle behind these different capacities is a kind of ocular awareness that identifies and takes ownership of cultural differences through access to a large flow of global images (Szerszynski and Urry, 2002).

A more sophisticated model was proposed by Hans-Herbert Kögler (2005), who sees a triple advantage to introducing the concept of abilities to the study of how the cosmopolitan public sphere is developed. First of all, abilities can be defined as real skills acquired by real individuals, which allow them to participate in a democratic political system. Secondly, since all actions are inherently situated and embedded within structures of social interaction, this approach seeks to identify the contexts that are favourable (or not) to the emergence of the aforementioned abilities. Finally, from a hermeneutical point of view, this approach authorises us to consider the social and political experiences of individuals as the source of their normative expectations. According to Kögler, in a cosmopolitan world, one’s capacity for dialogue must be put to the test through confrontation with the strangest and most counterintuitive perspective possible for each given social actor. The dialogic experience of otherness is essential for the ego’s self-reflexive autonomy to be applied to its own cultural assumptions, since the encounter with the Other reveals the individual’s own core beliefs, values and normative commitments.

Identifying shared values and standards refers back to a social actor’s ability to follow rules and principles that may transcend his or her own cultural horizons. From this perspective, individuals are not required to choose between an ethnocentric form of attachment and the negation of their culture. In fact, individuals are seen as being capable of better understanding their values specifically by comparing them to other ways of interpreting the world. This ability relies on the encounter between different points of view, a process during which individuals learn to distinguish their position from that of others, and to refer to a common subject from a variety of angles. Since intercultural dialogue is based on the desire to be recognised by others, all of the parties involved in such an exchange are situated in their own cultural and social contexts: the possibility of going beyond one’s own perspective and adopting another’s viewpoint thus becomes crucial.

**... and cosmopolitan virtues**

The notion of virtue was made popular by Bryan Turner (2001). This concept is marked by the cosmo-ethical orientation, as evidenced by how Turner defines and uses it. Whereas competence is a proof of ability and harks back to the public recognition of one’s skills, virtue is primarily demonstrated by a moral obligation ‘towards more tolerant patterns of inter-civilizational contact’ (p. 132). According to Turner, cosmopolitans are first and foremost characterised by an ‘ironical distance’ that allows them to harbour doubts concerning the exclusivity of the norms, values and cultures associated with the social worlds which they inhabit. Thanks to irony, ‘the understanding of other cultures is assisted by an intellectual distance from one’s own national or local culture’ (Turner, 2002, p. 57), and individuals can thus cultivate a humanist brand of scepticism with regard to modern ideologies, especially those with a nationalist penchant. In addition to irony, cosmopolitan virtue is composed of the following elements, which can transform an individual into a citizen of the world: ‘reflexivity with respect to other cultural values; scepticism towards the grand narratives of modern ideologies; care for other cultures, especially aboriginal cultures […]; and an ecumenical commitment to dialogue with other cultures’ (Turner, 2001, p. 150). Worrying about the disappearance of the world’s most fragile cultures and condemning the homogenisation of cultural products are outward signs of a strong cosmopolitan conscience and a commitment to a plural world. ‘Cosmopolitan virtue also requires self-reflexivity with respect to both our own cultural context and other cultural values’ (2002, p. 57). In particular, associating cosmopolitan virtue with a certain ironic detachment highlights an essential element of one’s cosmopolitan duties: in order to recognise an obligation towards one’s own society, individuals cannot be linked to their society or lifestyle so tightly that they are unable to broaden their moral horizons, encompassing those who live outside of their social circle or do not share their point of view.

Moreover, this facet of cosmopolitan virtue can also be found in Hannah Arendt’s analysis of worldliness (Smith, 2007). Worldliness is a particular way of being in the world that relates to how individuals develop their various attachments to other people, groups and beliefs. According to William Smith’s (2007) interpretation of Arendt’s work, being worldly means publicising one’s attachments while cultivating a certain degree of distance and self-reflexivity.

We may nonetheless express some doubts regarding the presence of irony in the cosmopolitan’s moral catalogue. Can we truly accept the idea that, in a hybrid world, there is ‘no convenient place for real or hot emotions’ (Turner, 2001, p. 149)? It is difficult to imagine that openness to diversity — what Fridman and Ollivier call ‘a highly desirable trait’ (2004, p. 113) that implicitly helps to devalue and sometimes even reject what is homogenous and unitary — can be felt in a detached manner. In our study of cosmopolitan encounters (Cicchelli, 2012), we demonstrated that openness is a quality associated with the desire to perfect one’s cosmopolitan education. Individuals can be described as open if they: a) feel curiosity towards others and towards cultural differences more broadly; b) prove their willingness to learn by differentiating between the information they receive and what they experience first-hand regarding culture; c) want and manage to establish contact with others, displaying sociability and the ability to share their experiences and derive real pleasure from such actions; and d) recognise that they have learned something from an encounter. In short, openness is a form of willingness to be that is necessary to acquire a certain kind of *savoir-être*. However, this process cannot be experienced from a distance: on the contrary, it requires close emotional engagement and enthusiasm. What about the emotions tied to acts of consumption, to the reception of cultural products from abroad, to the establishment of transnational solidarity, and to the varied forms of political co-existence with cultural difference? While emotions were long underestimated by sociologists — despite the fact that their role had been highlighted by the discipline’s founders — they have become a broad subject of research and debate during the last forty years or so (Cerulo, 2009). For instance, in her work on ‘emotional capitalism’, Eva Illouz (2006) describes the emergence of the modern world’s *Homo sentimentalis*, arguing that a convergence exists between the rise of capitalism and that of an emotional culture which in turn becomes essential to marketing strategies, as well as to the functioning of consumer society more generally. We shall soon see the very important role played by emotions when we take an empirical look at the four different cosmopolitan orientations mentioned above.

Moreover, making irony the main building block of cosmopolitan virtue is a double-edged sword. While irony can indeed help individuals gain a certain critical distance from themselves and thus facilitate a greater degree of openness to others, it can also encourage introversion and apathy rather than public engagement and an awareness of others. Individuals who cultivate this virtue for its own sake could therefore end up shirking their cosmopolitan obligations. As a result, William Smith (2007) suggests introducing another virtue: solicitude, which he defines as taking interest in what is happening in the outside world and the desire to talk about those events with like-minded individuals.

**The cosmopolitan spirit in everyday life**

A ‘symbiotic relationship’ (Skrbis and Woodward, 2011) exists between cosmopolitanism and the idea of openness. The latter serves as the epistemological underpinning of the cosmopolitan outlook and helps to define its limits: ‘beyond openness lies a sphere of all things un-cosmopolitan’ (p. 53). It is even more surprising that this idea of openness is never explicitly discussed in debates on cosmopolitanism, where it is merely accepted as a part of the landscape. Openness is referred to as an abstract principle rather than an operational tool, thus limiting its scope. It shall therefore be useful to look at the various manifestations of cosmopolitanism in everyday life, while attempting to focus on how openness towards others can exist quite closely to narrow-mindedness.

**Ambivalence**

Ambivalence is one of the defining features of the cosmopolitan spirit. Taking into account the omnipresence of diverse cultural forms that are sometimes remote and occasionally disturbing can help us to understand the ambiguous relationship that individuals maintain with openness. One’s sense of belonging to a common humanity is often challenged by the existence of cultural boundaries that separate ethnic and social groups, by the perception of both threats and opportunities linked to globalization, and by the importance granted to one’s local environment. In one study conducted in Australia, even though the interview subjects were favourably disposed to globalization and declared that they were both citizens of their country and of the world at large, their most positive feelings with regard to the global world essentially stemmed from acts of consumption, personal choices in terms of mobility, and cultural openness (Skrbis and Woodward, 2007). A certain anxiety emerged when these individuals were asked to comment on the positive impact of globalization on jobs creation, Australian culture, cultural diversity, human rights and the protection of the environment. Concerns regarding the survival of one’s national economy and culture can limit cosmopolitan openness, with detrimental effects on the degree of empathy and hospitality expressed towards others. In one British study, it was likewise observed that in terms of cultural consumption, interviewees who appreciated foreign products overwhelmingly preferred products from countries that felt closer, and from the United States in particular (Bennett *et al.,* 2009). In such cases, cultural proximity in fact limits one’s cosmopolitan horizons. The same mechanism operates on the ethical level in the European values study (EVS) cited above: the degree of sensitivity to the living conditions of others varies significantly depending on one’s social circle, with family and close friends having much more of an impact than regional or national neighbours, other members of the European Union or the rest of the world (Halman, Sieben and van Zundert, 2012).

Other studies illustrate that individuals have become increasingly favourable to intercultural contact. When they are asked if they consider themselves to be rather open to others, interviewees tend to avoid answering no, for fear of giving a poor image of themselves (Martell, 2011). This inclination towards openness can be observed among young Europeans (Cicchelli, 2011): 61 per cent of them are accepting of the arrival of different ethnic groups in their country (Collectif, 2009). As amongst other age groups, young Europeans overwhelmingly believe that: a) cultural exchange should play a very important role at the heart of the European Union, in order for citizens from the different member States to be able to understand more about each other and to feel truly European as a result; b) these same exchanges should be used to strengthen harmony and understanding across the world, especially where conflicts and tensions exist; and c) Europe, with its ancient culture and values, is especially well placed to contribute to a greater level of tolerance at the global level. But those in the 15–24 age group (and to a lesser extent, those in the 25–39 age group) are more likely than other age groups to state that they are in contact with cultural differences — whether because they like foreign cuisine, communicate via the internet with people abroad, watch foreign movies in their original version, have friends in other countries (including within Europe), or because they read newspapers and books in a foreign language (Collectif, 2007).

This does not stop individuals from saying that they are profoundly opposed to the idea of living in a multicultural society. In a survey conducted by Ipsos in January 2013 for *Le Monde,* 73 per cent of interviewees said that it was not necessary to resort to immigration to find enough labour in France; 70 per cent felt there were too many foreigners in the country; 72 per cent felt it was not normal for school cafeterias to cater to different religious beliefs; 62 per cent no longer felt at home in their country to the same extent as before; 57 per cent said that anti-white racism was a relatively widespread phenomenon in France; and 55 per cent said that in general, immigrants did not work hard enough to assimilate. Other studies have shown that ‘the same individual can simultaneously be disposed to tolerance and intolerance, with the prevalence of one over the other depending largely on one’s environment, the information received and significant recent events. In other words, the media, public authorities and political figures all have a significant hand to play in the matter. The manner in which individuals talk about immigrants and minorities (their framework) and the willingness with which they rush to the latter’s defence or to counter xenophobic statements are essential in order to prevent individuals from falling (back) into prejudice’ (Mayer *et al.*, 2014, p. 164). Moreover, there is a disconnect between openness to the consumption of globalised cultural experiences — which provides individuals with exotic resources, thanks to which they can enrich and diversify their lifestyles and understanding of others — and the willingness of consumers to take responsibility for individuals who are physically and/or cultural distant (Kennedy, 2010). One’s appetite for cultural diversity and one’s attraction towards openness to others can therefore conflict with one’s duty to express solidarity and exhibit hospitality.

Given these elements, we can thus consider (like Ian Woodward and Zlatko Skrbis, 2007) that the ambivalence ~~associated with~~ of openness to others is a defining characteristic of ordinary cosmopolitanism, one that manifests itself when individuals formulate nuanced and well-considered opinions about the impact of globalization on their lives. This is why cosmopolitanism cannot be seen as an ideal-type elaboration of a relationship to alterity, but rather as a frame of reference for that process. It is less important to ask whether individuals become more or less open and more or less cosmopolitan, than to examine the reservations that they express when developing their relationship to cultural difference. By accepting the ambivalence therein, we can therefore glean how individuals take advantage (or not) of the everyday opportunities offered to them in an increasingly open and interconnected world.

**Components**

Before we take a look at the reasons that led us to identify four different variants of the cosmopolitan spirit, let us first clear up a potential misunderstanding. We are in no way singing the praises of *homo civicus* or *homo politicus* — at best, *homo viator* — nor are we kicking *homo emptor* into the long grass.

However, it is not at all uncommon for scholars to glorify one avatar of cosmopolitanism while denigrating the others. Access to cultural products such as the clothing and cuisine of other countries is now so widespread that some authors have chosen to see supermarkets and other commercial centres as a metaphor for a banal form of cosmopolitanism acquired through consumption (Beck, 2004b). Even though aesthetico-cultural cosmopolitanism is omnipresent in the everyday lives of social actors (Vertovec and Cohen, 2002), it is usually ethico-political cosmopolitanism that is vaunted by the existing research. The former is often negatively associated with globalised cultural industries and reeks of consumerism, tourism and leisure, leading to the result that familiarity with other cultures can be seen as merely ‘superficial or cosmetic’ (Sassatelli, 2012, p. 235). Aesthetico-cultural cosmopolitanism is sometimes even accused of locking individuals into exoticism, of reducing the experience of alterity to the sole consumption of goods. In this paradigm, jaded urban buyers are eager to engage in fleeting cultural encounters, especially when these are so inexpensive. While acknowledging the often-heated academic debate on such matters, we no not subscribe to the hierarchies thus implicitly established (Germann Molz, 2011). We have no interest in pitting a lofty form of cosmopolitanism against a narrower one, or an authentic incarnation against a more superficial variant.

Contrary to what might be suggested by a naive, normative and teleological view of the cosmopolitan world, the different variants of cosmopolitanism do not necessarily go hand-in-hand. As we have seen, it is hard to argue that cosmopolitanism is a homogenous trend across the world (Pichler, 2012), given that our attitudes towards others are fraught with ambivalence. It therefore seems useful to distinguish four basic variants of a cosmopolitan relationship to the world. The tension between these different forms contributes to the dialectic between universalism and particularism that is at the heart of the cosmopolitan approach, as we have emphasized many times before. At the micro-level, this distinction also allows us to uncover the mechanisms of a specific paradox of socialisation: the co-existence of identities that are both rigid and porous.

Four forms of the cosmopolitan spirit can thus be outlined that correspond to an equal number of different attitudes to learning, to relating to alterity and to belonging to a shared humanity. Each of these four orientations highlights a different dimension of the multifaceted experience that individuals have of the cosmopolitan world. Identifying these four configurations was made possible by taking into account one specific element that has often been underestimated in work on cosmopolitanism. The powerful processes of globalisation, thoroughly analysed in the first part of this volume, have profoundly transformed everyday life. This has translated into a) the aestheticisation of the quotidian, given the newly acquired importance of cultural consumption in defining one’s identify, as well as the creativity permitted by the widespread diffusion of amateur practices; b) the culturalisation of everyday life, with the strong comeback of exoticism — now stripped of its initially condescending attitude and its colonial underpinnings — and the widespread popularisation of the discoveries of cultural anthropology, as well as mass-scale access to tourism and contact with different cultural codes, including through journalism, documentaries, etc.; c) the ethicisation into daily life, via the quest for a good life that is compatible with the need for solidarity towards others and responsibility for the planet and future generations; and d) the politicisation of everyday life, with the gradual decline of the interpretation of democracy as the mere exercise of electoral rights, and the rise of more participatory practices of integration into the political body, which draw on a less strictly legal definition of citizenship and lead to different forms of protest and resistance, including a number of populist variants. It would be impossible to understand the socialisation of individuals in today’s cosmopolitan world without taking into account these four major ways in which everyday life has been transformed even as it has become the bedrock of individual social experience, as demonstrated by Alvin Gouldner and Erving Goffman.

For the cosmo-aesthetic and cosmo-culturalist orientations, the particular ~~and the specific are~~ is the starting points of a cosmopolitan outlook on the world, with universality being attained through the encounter between different cultures that are all imbued with equal dignity. ‘Cosmopolitanism entails recognising and appreciating the other as an Other. And this means that the other is neither completely foreign, nor an exact copy of oneself’ (Hassner, 2002, p. 198). The cosmopolitan individual is seen as culturally ambidextrous, capable of moving between cultural codes — whether invented or reinvented, codified into supposedly pure forms or the product of hybridisation — and even of displaying indifference to cultural difference (Dharwadker, 2011). Ambidextrous cosmopolitans do not linger on the threshold of cultural borders: they cross them intrepidly. They attempt to preserve critical distance with regard to the cultures that they encounter, in order to be able to move between all of them without sacrificing any.

The cosmo-ethical and cosmo-political orientations, on the other hand, are based on a kind of preconceived universalism. They stem from a feeling of belonging to a shared humanity and the aspiration of transcending cultural differences. ‘To act as a citizen is to […] leave behind one’s private identity and interests; and this self-absenting is itself often conceived visually, in terms of seeing from a vantage point that transcends particular locations and narrow horizons’: a global perspective that sees the entire world as something to identify with (Szerszynski and Urry, 2006, p. 120). This mechanism can even be applied to cosmopolitan citizenship, in which individuals are expected to go beyond their own culture.

*Table 1*

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Cosmopolitan orientations | Objective | Modus operandi | Main virtue | Emotions | Forms of learning |
| Cosmo-aesthetic | A taste for Others | Consumption | Openness | Pleasure, amusement | Aesthetic |
| Cosmo-culturalist | An understanding of alterity | *Bildung,* self-development | De-centring | Surprise, astonishment | Culturalist |
| Cosmo-ethical | Concern for others | Engagement, participation | Solidarity | Compassion, empathy | Ethical |
| Cosmo-political | Living together | Conviviality | Hospitality | Benevolence, tolerance | Political |

Each orientation of the cosmopolitan spirit is based on: a) identification with an objective when engaged with others; b) a modus operandi in terms of managing one’s relationships with others; c) a main virtue that one’s actions stem from; d) an emotional dynamic that reveals the subjective, lived experience of that virtue and gives consistency to the objective and modus operandi; and e) different forms of learning (see Table 1).

**The cosmo-aesthetic orientation**

In a world where heterogeneity ‘is on the way to quickly becoming the universal aesthetic of the new world order’ (Turgeon, 2002, p. 230), the cosmo-aesthetic orientation manifests itself by curiosity and attraction towards the products and practices of cultures whose codes are situated outside of an individual’s national aesthetic canon. These products and practices include artistic and literary productions, as well as cultural offerings in a broader sense, including gastronomy and tourism. Exotic cultural products and practices can sometimes have localised connotations, whether these draw on pre-existing traditions or are invented from scratch, and their circulation can lead to hybridisation with local cultural forms (Cicchelli and Octobre, 2013). In this context, exoticism can be defined as the desire to consume goods that are significantly at a remove from the dominant tastes and standards of one’s social group (Holt, 1998). From tropical fruits to interior design, today exoticism and cultural difference are seen as positive values (Woodward and Skrbis, 2012). We are used to seeing our restaurant tables and our supermarket aisles overflowing with foodstuffs that used to be rare, if not downright inaccessible. Ulrich Beck (2003) sees this availability as the primary ingredient of a ‘culinary cosmopolitanism’ that contributes to the creation of a global society. Studies on the cosmo-aesthetic orientation, frequently associated with consumption, often draw on examples from the world of tourism, fashion, and food and beverages to study the emotions, practices and patterns of thinking that stem from having access to such products (Germann Molz, 2011).

Existing literature on the subject refers to the consumption — and reception — of globalised cultural products as a kind of aesthetic pleasure. Since the now-seminal studies conducted by Ulf Hannerz (1990) and John Urry (1995), the cosmo-aesthetic orientation has been viewed as a collection of impressions, sensations and emotions, a set of cultural skills that represents the ordinary dimension of functioning in everyday life (Germann Molz, 2011). In order to explain how individuals acquire a taste for alterity, we should flesh out this definition even further, by adding access to cultural goods and the development of one’s identity through various forms of creativity and expression. One’s taste for alterity is thus defined as a set of abilities for understanding, and appropriating through personal use, aesthetic objects that are seen as otherwise culturally distant. The cultural and artistic knowledge associated with this taste preference forms a number of repertoires whose transnational content encourage the acquisition of an indispensable aesthetic culture to feel comfortable living and moving around in a global society.

We may nonetheless wonder if the desire and voracity (Sullivan and Katz-Gerro, 2007) that are displayed when consuming the artistic and cultural expressions of others are themselves vectors of cosmopolitan openness. In fact, there is a giant step between constructing aesthetic imaginaries of otherness and gaining an awareness of others. It is possible for the transnational circulation of cultural goods to foster cosmopolitan emotions without provoking interest or a real involvement in the lives of others (Cicchelli and Octobre, 2018). In fact, continuous and diffuse exposure to intercultural contacts may in the long term produce forms of habituation or even indifference, building relationships with otherness that do not necessarily call for any self-reflection. We must therefore seek to better understand what translational cultural products can teach us, on the one hand, and to determine whether mass consumption of popular culture has an impact on how individuals comprehend the global world, on the other. Does the circulation of cultural products help to cultivate cosmopolitan feelings, or does it merely reproduce mainstream culture?

**The cosmo-culturalist orientation**

While this second orientation shares the dimensions of curiosity and pleasure with the first, cultural cosmopolitanism is more explicitly concerned with learning the different codes associated with encountering specific cultures. In addition to exhibiting a certain degree of exotic escapism, this orientation is also interested in understanding others. From this perspective, social actors are seen as endeavouring to establish connections between their culture of origins (values, social norms, behavioural codes) and the expressions of a foreign culture. The potential outcome of this process is moving away from one’s centre of reference (decentring oneself) and being able to relativize one’s own culture — or on the contrary, choosing to glorify it. The cosmopolitan spirit can of course manifest itself in the consumption of cultural products, but it can been seen more clearly in forms of international mobility, especially in the case of educational trips abroad or other long-term forms of living with and experiencing alterity (Cicchelli, 2008; Amselle, 2013). In this context, immersion in another culture is less about attempting to reduce the world’s complexity than about trying to experience the world in all its complexity (Cicchelli, 2012). More so than when the cosmo-aesthetic orientation is adopted, here it is assumed that social actors possess sufficient skills to master the cultural codes produced by different national contexts. This mastery relates to culturalist codes and not aesthetic ones: whereas cultural products can be considered as both the expression of a specific ethno-national cultural group and as a relatively autonomous form of language (and are consequently aestheticized), cultural codes — norms, values, lifestyles — most often refer back, through synecdoche, to a well-circumscribed form of societal belonging (and are thus culturalized). Acquired by comparing cultural traits, the aptitudes of this cosmopolitan orientation allow individuals to understand how a foreign culture operates and help them navigate the inter-linkages with which they come into contact, thus situating themselves along a scale of belonging. It remains to be seen whether forms of cultural contact — either real or virtual — render the boundaries between the self and the other more porous, or if on the contrary they only serve to make them more rigid. It is also uncertain whether these processes culminate in bridges being built between individuals who do not share the same culture. Such exchanges naturally contain their fair share of incomprehension, misunderstandings, and errors of appreciation; they can therefore give rise to caricatured opinions, give new life to old stereotypes or produce more or less explicit hierarchies between values.

**The cosmo-ethical orientation**

The cosmo-ethical orientation can be identified by its main trait: concern for others. It is based on the ideal of transnational solidarity. Beyond its association with an urban lifestyle and its veneration of cultural difference, cosmopolitanism also entails an ethical imperative: the need to shoulder one’s responsibility with regard to the world’s problems. The cosmopolitan spirit can be seen in social actors who are keen to assume their moral obligations with respect to other human beings, including those who are culturally different from them. This orientation is at its base a pro-active one: patriotism, like other forms of local attachment, could even be a step towards cosmopolitanism, as over the course of their lives, and notably at the end of childhood, individuals can develop broader forms of loyalty that go beyond their family, their community and their neighbourhood, as these different scales of belonging are not necessarily in competition with each other. Much as there is no reason to believe that loyalty to one’s family makes citizenship and attachment to a national political community problematic, this orientation assumes that loyalty to a nation-state does not preclude identification with a shared humanity — which is at least theoretically how solidarity comes to be extended to those beyond our national borders (Kleingeld and Brown, 2006). On a more empirical level, however, it should be examined whether individuals can elaborate a form of cosmopolitan responsibility that is exclusively based on the criterion of humanity, without any reference to ethnicity, religion, national, political affiliation or social class (Brown and Held, 2010).

**The cosmo-political orientation**

What is at play with the cosmo-political orientation is how individuals view a) living with cultural plurality, which requires expressing tolerance and hospitality towards individuals from different cultures; and b) national immigration policies, transnational political regulations and global governance.

The modus operandi of the cosmo-political approach to coexistence is hospitality. ‘Cosmopolitanism does not wait for emperors to impose forced marriages, nor does it descend like the grace of a higher deity. It starts in every small gesture of reciprocity. [….] Hospitality on the basis of no expectations may sound rather idealistic, but it also rests on the more pragmatic principle that one should receive a stranger with the presumption that he or she may be a god in disguise’ (Papastergiadis, 2012, p. 196–197). Since multiculturalism has not provided a satisfactory answer to the question of what attitude one should adopt towards cultural difference (Hollinger, 2002), we must ask whether contemporary individuals still rely on the virtue of conviviality when imagining cosmopolitan ways of living together in plural societies. Do they view hospitality as a universal welcome? How do they share urban spaces despite ethnic differences (Anderson, 2012)? What kinds of open- and close-mindedness can be observed regarding the issue of immigration? What kinds of national or international regulatory and governmental bodies are accepted or even demanded?

**Living as a cosmopolitan: Four areas of field work**

To illustrate our argument, we shall present four different areas of field work with on the aforementioned cosmopolitan orientations. These studies should not be misconstrued as fixed scenarios that assign individuals once and for all to mutually exclusive categories, but rather as examples of orientations that can be partially or fully embraced, depending on the context. None of them can claim to represent an orientation in its pure form. This necessarily incomplete presentation is designed to help the reader understand what it means to live as a cosmopolitan, by describing how cultural plurality is recognised, extolled and transcended (or not), on both the aesthetico-cultural and ethico-political levels.

As certain historians have shown, the affective dimension of the self flourished within a cosmopolitan culture that was built on the consumption of exotic goods. In an oft-cited work on the practices of ‘daily modern global life’, Mica Nava (2007, p. 89) shows how middle-class women in London were able, at the beginning of the 20th century, to express a vague cosmopolitan conscience (a ‘cosmopolitan structure of feeling’, p. 160) through their consumption of international products of fashion and interior design. Nava argues that this kind of consumption transformed cultural difference into a source of interest and pleasure for many women. Despite being concomitant with the birth of the society of consumption and initially only driven by the desire for higher social status, this phenomenon has not lost any of its critical potential. Even in its most fashionable forms, Mica Nava suggests, the manifestations of cosmopolitan style have accompanied broad social changes for women, by encouraging their increasing distance from more conservative attitudes. The existence of emotions linked to purchasing practices also reveals two key elements: on the one hand, the fluidity and excitement associated with modern urban life — which allows for unprecedented physical mobility and multiple points of contact with strangers — and on the other, the emergence of a typically modern consciousness, characterised by the mental, social and physical eagerness of experiencing newness and difference.

Emotions are essential components of the cosmo-aesthetic orientation. We find them in all of the examples associated with the consumption of exotic products. In recent decades and throughout the whole world — though most particularly in Europe — we have witnessed the proliferation of music and art festivals (Giorgi and Sassatelli, 2011). Several factors may have contributed to this rise, such as the globalisation of culture, migratory flows, and the gradual erasure of the distinction between legitimate (high-brow) culture and popular (low-brow) culture, thanks to the ever-growing diversification of cultural products and the democratisation of tastes. The study of festivals is in fact an excellent entry point for understanding one of the dimensions of the cosmo-aesthetic orientation: the performance of national cultural uniqueness is largely based on artistic and stylistic elements that draw freely on imported sources to complement local traditions (Regev, 2007). And yet, to understand this dynamic, we must be careful to distinguish between inadvertent cosmopolitanism and advertent cosmopolitanism (Regev, 2011). The first is linked to the circulation of products manufactured by large multinationals in the cultural sphere, a process that is both a source of hybridisation between global musical, artistic, and culinary trends and the persistence — or even reinvention — of local forms of expression. This kind of cosmopolitanism can be deemed involuntary because in such cases, individuals do not consciously engage when encountering otherness. It is likewise banal because consumers do not reflect upon their purchases, unlike advertent cosmopolitans, who exhibit agency and self-reflection. Individuals who adopt this orientation are actively and consciously involved in cultural practices and consumption, thanks to which they go beyond the borders of their own national and ethnic cultures. Often equipped with multiple diplomas, these cosmopolitans are constantly trying to stay up-to-date, to follow the most recent cultural innovations and artistic trends, especially those that they feel best correspond to the most fashionable aesthetic canons and which they would like to see adapted to the cultural products of their own ethno-national group.

However, the cosmo-aesthetic orientation represents more than just the cultural consumption habits of the middle and upper classes, which mirror their ease at living in a world dominated by the widespread circulation of cultural products. More nuanced studies should be conducted to determine how this orientation manifests itself among working-class individuals, and in particular among the children of immigrants. The multilingual skills of the latter, as well as their access to products from their parents’ culture and society in addition to their own,[[3]](#footnote-3) mean that these cosmopolitans belie the elitist image generally associated with the phenomenon. This brand of cosmopolitanism would be better understood by studying the powerful mechanisms of hybridisation made possible by the cultural practices of such individuals. For example, take the case of rap and raï: although the original models that led to the birth of these musical genres were obviously foreign, they gradually became independent entities that now play a significant role in French musical creation. These two genres offer a perfect example of openness to foreign traditions that, through hybridisation, have ultimately become part of national musical culture (Cicchelli and Octobre, 2017).

Different everyday contacts with otherness, especially ones that may initially appear to be extremely prosaic, are at the heart of the cosmo-aesthetic orientation. Food is a particularly important component. Although just a few years ago, national dishes were still strong markers of affiliation with a given culture, today a much more complex dynamic is at play. The pride associated with one’s ethnic or national gastronomy is coupled with a very strong emphasis on the pleasure experienced by tasting other world cuisines. The proliferation of foreign restaurants in the urban landscape, including international chains, world food restaurants, ethnic eateries and establishments with a local focus, is one of the most visible transformations wrought by globalisation. Access to foreign cuisines is a very efficient way of putting individuals in contact with cultural difference. In a sense, we are witnessing a kind of miniaturisation of the world, culinarily speaking: any large city like London, Paris, New York, Montreal, Tokyo or Buenos Aires could be described as a ‘gastronomic Tower of Babel’ that allows individuals to have ‘the world on a plate’ (Cook and Crang, 1996). Thanks to their international culinary offerings, cities have become a place to consume the world (Turgeon and Pastinelli, 2002), a micro-space of ‘idealised contact with world cultures’ (Turgeon, 2002, p. 225). In a study of ethnic restaurants in Quebec City, Laurier Turgeon (2002) unmasks the various strategies used by restaurant owners to satisfy the demand for ‘authentic’ dishes prepared by ‘real’ foreigners (p. 221). Everything is implemented to combine exotic elements from a foreign culture that are likely to seduce clients, with elements from the local culture that are preserved to put them at ease. Customers, on the other hand, say that they are looking for ‘the authenticity of difference, exotic experiences’ (p. 224). By diversifying their experiences and visiting a wide variety of exotic restaurants, they can explore the world through culinary consumption. The latter is ‘presented as a means of increasing one’s awareness and understanding of the Other. All of the customers interviewed displayed a positive attitude towards foreign cuisine and expressed a desire to better understand the countries associated with those cuisines’ (p. 225).

The cosmo-aesthetic orientation can also manifest itself through the consumption of products with wide international circulation. Drawing on qualitative studies conducted in the Second Cup and Starbucks chain coffee shops in Toronto, Sonia Bookman (2012; 2013) demonstrated that ordinary cosmopolitanism could be glimpsed through the interactions between a brand and its customers. By interacting with the environments carefully crafted by the two aforementioned chains, consumers engage in ‘cool’ and relaxed forms of cosmopolitanism. Both North-American chains clearly call on customers’ emotions in their marketing strategies. The meticulous design in their cafés is calculated to allow customers to ‘construct intense aesthetic and emotional experiences that will produce added value for the brand’ (Bookman, 2012, p. 245). By using emotional triggers to evoke imaginaries, such environments invite customers to ‘feel’ cosmopolitan, to express cosmopolitan sentiments and to believe that they are learning about the world. Customers thus experience a specific kind of pleasure drinking coffee in a space that appears to celebrate cultural difference. Whether they are standing or seated, in line or just passing through, customers can familiarise themselves with the history of coffee shops throughout the ages, thanks to the various posters, drawings and poems hung on the walls and to the books and brochures available on site. When consumers are asked to comment on this aspect, they often mention ‘a sense of global diversity’ (Bookman 2013, p. 62). Some feel ‘connected with various to different cultures and places around the world thought virtual travels and tastes’ (p. 62). Collecting ‘stamps’ for their coffee shop ‘passports’ and buying coffee beans from exotic locations provide consumers with reflexive experiences akin to tourism. They nonetheless maintain an ironic distance with regard to their virtual travels by playing on the possibility of cosmopolitan encounters facilitated by the brand. In this process, they ‘perform a certain worldliness, expressing cosmopolitan sentiments of delight in encounters with difference and openness towards other cultures’ (p. 63).

This strain of cosmopolitanism has its own limits, however. First of all, even if exhaustive data is not available, most field studies emphasise the fact that, among individuals with a cosmo-aesthetic outlook, it is more common to come across members of higher social classes, for whom cosmopolitan consumption is well on its way to becoming a standard of good taste. While cosmopolitanism seeks to transcend cultural differences, the consumerist ideology that characterises contemporary late-stage capitalism is on the brink of creating new social cleavages in the name of the very openness championed by this approach to alterity. Going back to the example of food, the ability to keep one’s bearings amidst a sea of gastronomic specialities has become a social marker, given that the public which has increasingly easy access to an ever wider variety of exotic cuisines tends to live in more well-off neighbourhoods (Germann Molz, 2007). This is why some sociologists argue that cosmopolitanism is an urban lifestyle and that cosmo-aesthetic forms of consumption are more visible in wealthier, gentrified areas, where access to exotic international cultural products is the most widespread (Binnie *et al.,* 2006). It is indeed in cities, and most specifically in global cities, that we are most likely to encounter this proximity to alterity that encourages cosmopolitan consumption habits. Such cities are cosmopolitan in part because they are more fully integrated into the transnational system of trade than with their national context, and also in part because they are the places where flourish ‘tastes, consumption patterns, and forms of entertainment are drawn more from an emerging global culture than from the national culture’ (Cohen, 1997, p. 167).

Festivals can be seen as rituals through which middle and upper class individuals with high education levels glorify and perform what they believe to be the aesthetic standard of good taste in contemporary society. Festivals are like ‘cultural pilgrimages in which cosmopolitan omnivores can congregate as peers’ (Regev, 2011, p. 122). Although the relatively homogenous public in attendance at festivals is an ideal entry point for understanding this population, other studies on cultural practices have also confirmed the socially situated nature of this ‘ostentatious openness to diversity’ (Fridman and Ollivier, 2004, p. 109). It ‘more closely reflects the cultural resources of the most educated classes, insofar as it presents as desirable a certain number of attitudes that these individuals can adopt more easily, thanks to the greater diversity inherent to their cultural repertoires’ (p. 109).

Must we therefore consider these cultural consumers to be ‘cosmopolitan omnivores’ (Kendall, Woodward and Skrbis, 2009, p. 109)? Before answering this question, let us first recall that the term omnivore represents a new figure of cultural sociology, one that has replaced its predecessor, the ‘cultural snob’. Whereas as snobbery relies on the exaltation of the arts and disdain for more popular forms of entertainment, ‘omnivorism’ embodies the ability to enjoy the aesthetic merits of a wide range of cultural forms encompassing the arts as well as a whole swath of popular and folk forms of expression. Omnivores are seen as exhibiting a certain open-mindedness that predisposes them to appreciating everything (Peterson, 1992). The transformation of the figure of the exclusive snob into the inclusive omnivore is part and parcel of a broader historical trend towards greater tolerance for those with different values (Peterson and Kern, 1996). Omnivores have the ability to identify repertoires associated with aesthetic forms and symbols that transcend specific cultural boundaries. Such traits, which mirror the cosmopolitan virtues of openness, do not prevent omnivores from accumulating a certain cultural capital that is associated with mechanisms of distinction. While certain salient traits of the omnivore reflect what might be expected of a cosmopolitan, the two figures do not overlap perfectly. According to Richard Peterson, who developed the concept of omnivorism, cosmopolitans are in fact a specific subset of the broader omnivore category. ‘Even if cosmopolitanism refers to taste preferences that go beyond national borders, omnivorism seems a more appropriate term, as it implies taste preferences that not only transcend national borders, but also those separating social classes, sexes, ethnicities, religions, ages and other such cleavages’ (2004, p. 159).

While there are omnivorist aspects to the cosmo-aesthetic orientation, the latter cannot be fully explained by the concept of omnivorism. Certain elements that could allow us to nuance our understanding of cosmopolitan socialisation are missing. Alongside openness, eclecticism and a penchant for consumption, the mechanisms behind how individuals establish linkages with alterity remain unknown, despite being at the heart of cosmopolitan socialisation. How do individuals approach others? What place do they grant the Other? What are the effects of such encounters? Moreover, if our emphasis on cosmopolitanism is to bear fruit, we must study how aesthetic cosmopolitan tastes, preferences and repertories are developed, lest we make aesthetic cosmopolitanism the sole purview of omnivores, and verify to what extent a univore (an individual with rather targeted cultural consumption patterns) can or cannot engage in cosmopolitan consumption.

Secondly, the debate is still open regarding what the aesthetic dimension contributes to cosmopolitanism. Those who minimise the former’s importance see aesthetic cosmopolitanism as incapable of producing anything more than fleeting aesthetic impressions: there is therefore no guarantee that the expansion of one’s cultural horizons or the development of culturalist and hermeneutic abilities would translate into the birth of a new feeling of responsibility towards the whole of the cosmopolitan world (Tomlinson, 1999). For others, however, introducing the aesthetic dimension marks a significant change in how we view cosmopolitanism, first conceived of as an abstract political and ethical concept and then viewed as a lifestyle associated with consumption. ‘In other words, global citizenship revolves not just around political engagement or civic participation, but also around cosmopolitan tastes, styles and patterns of consumption’ (Germann Molz, 2011, p. 37). Nikos Papastergiadis is convinced that an ethical and political feeling towards others cannot develop without a baseline level of interest in the other’s culture. He argues that aesthetic cosmopolitanism plays a fundamental role in that regard, since it depends on ‘the individual and collective capacity for making an image of the world’ (2012, p. 94), with art and culture being seen less as truthful representations of the world than as instruments to imagine one’s own reality.

Without denying the important contribution of the cosmo-aesthetic orientation to the process of socialisation to alterity, it should nonetheless be emphasised that the former is not based on structured and organised knowledge systems, conveyed by educational institutions or other legitimate channels, but rather on the gradual accumulation of ordinary exchanges and encounters, experiences that are often fleeting and incompletely, leading to representations that one can, like on Facebook, like or not like, share or not share (Cicchelli and Octobre, 2017). By training an initially aesthetic gaze on other cultures — and thus hypothesising that their beauty stems precisely from their difference — we run the risk of reifying alterity and of forgetting the stakes involved in building a relationship to others (Marotta, 2010). Studies on visits to foreign restaurants (Hage, 997) have shown that, contrary to stated objectives, the pure pleasure of taste wins out over the desire to discover another culture through its cuisine. Moreover, by over-emphasising compulsive discovery, we forget that behind every form of learning, including culinary exploration, there is a long period of getting used to and incorporating new techniques, codes and capabilities. Paradoxically, this superficial encounter with cultural difference, encouraged by the exotic imperative of consuming difference for difference’s sake, helps to perpetuate significant ignorance regarding a specific culture. Laurier Turgeon even wonders whether foreign restaurants were not a ‘new and more modern manifestation of colonialism, now practised at home’ (Turgeon, 2002, p. 228). In other words, for the detractors of aesthetic cosmopolitanism, going to a foreign restaurant embodies a post-colonial relationship that relegates the Other to its full otherness.

In conclusion, we can perhaps establish a link between the development and spread of aesthetic cosmopolitanism through the consumption of cultural products at the global level, and contemporary consumer capitalism (Binnie and Skeggs, 2004). The cosmo-aesthetic orientation can thus be seen as belonging to the cultural logic of global capitalism, which consists of staging and promoting cultural products. Instead of serving to establish connections with foreigners, in this context alterity is assessed in terms of commercial profitability. This return on investment, so to speak, is what gives value to someone else’s culture and gives meaning to any encounters with others. Given the market’s tendency to both assimilate and exploit cultural differences, it seems fair to ask whether more universalist cosmopolitan aspirations can in fact take root through consumerist practices.

**The intelligence of others**

Mobility, which is a ubiquitous feature of contemporary life (Urry, 2006 [2000]; Stock, 2008), can also take a wide variety of forms: tourism, travel for work, internships and study abroad programmes, trips for the purpose of personal or professional growth, expatriation and even exile. These forms of mobility can be one-time or definitive events, adopting a linear round-trip structures or more complex, circulatory patterns — without, of course, forgetting the oldest form of mobility, diaspora, today more relevant than ever.[[4]](#footnote-4) Mobility has also become more morphologically complex, since it is no longer limited to physical and bodily movement. Far more than in the past, travel can also occur in one’s mind, including through highly evocative images of natural and urban landscapes, monuments and lifestyles (Szerszynski and Urry, 2006) circulated on all sorts of media platforms. Thanks to new information and communications technologies, novelty is now provided by virtual voyages that shrink geographical distances (Szerszynski and Urry, 2006). More than a quarter of a century ago, Dick Hebdige (1990) was already highlighting the important role played by television in voyages of the imagination. Today the proliferation of satellite dishes allows members of the diaspora to access information, news, documentaries, sporting competitions and other television programmes from their home countries. These same technologies also allow ordinary individuals to feed their imagination regarding the countries or geographical areas about which they are curious or to which they feel drawn. As for text messages, instant messaging, social networks, online games and the Internet in general, such new technologies have extraordinarily increased our capacity for long-distance communication (Szerszynski and Urry, 2006).

The growing circulation of people and imaginaries thus produces significant effects on how social actors can broaden their awareness of global culture, utilise their ability to compare different places, and sharpen their imaginaries of alterity (Szerszynski and Urry, 2006). ‘And few persons in the world today do not have a friend, relative or coworker who is not on the road to somewhere else, or already coming back home, bearing stories and possibilities’ (Appadurai, 1996, p. 4). Without getting into the details of research on the forms of hybridisation, blending and creolisation associated with migration (Dufoix, 2008), let us look at the studies that have emphasised the liminal place occupied by diaspora movements (in particular the work of Homi K. Bhabha (1994) by drawing on subaltern and post-colonial studies. Diaspora groups are situated neither on one side (the metropolis, the West), nor the other (the colony, the country of origin), but somewhere between the two. This ‘third place’ where the diaspora lives is rich terrain for hybridisation (Bhabha, 1994). Far from seeing ‘global cosmopolitanism’[[5]](#footnote-5) in a positive light, Bhabha puts forth a figure of cosmopolitanism based on hybridisation. The ‘vernacular cosmopolitan’ moves in between cultural traditions and ‘reveals hybrid forms of life and art that do not have a prior existence within the discrete world of any single culture or language’ (p. xiii). This is a form of cosmopolitanism that measures global progress from the perspective of minorities.

Diaspora situations can also encourage multiple affiliations among individuals. This is illustrated by Peggy Levitt (2001) in her work on exchanges between a Dominican village, Miraflores, and a suburb of Boston called Jamaica Plain, where many Dominican immigrants now live. The author presents these transnational lives in detail in order to show how ideas and information circulate between the two communities, whereby inhabitants develop a feeling of dual belonging. Several studies on migratory phenomena in Europe (Recchi, 2013; Faist, Fauser and Reisenauer, 2013) have also revealed that individuals who have experienced mobility tend to have a higher degree of cosmopolitan capital. One of these studies, conducted on a sample of German residents, showed that a greater demand for supranational institutional regulation and a higher degree of tolerance (or even acceptance) towards foreigners were correlated with the degree of individual investment in transnational practices (Mau, Mewes and Zimmermann, 2008).[[6]](#footnote-6)

Tourism and other forms of travel can be analysed from the perspective of the desire to experience exoticism and openness to the world, and thus understood as the expression of a cosmo-aesthetic orientation that takes place primarily through physical contact. The importance of the sensory dimension in mobility has been underscored (Le Breton, 2006; Urry, 2000). Sight, sound, smell, touch and taste are all heavily called upon during travel. It is through physical contact with alterity that cosmopolitanism can flourish and truly come into its own. In his autobiographical novel describing his long stay in Bombay, the Australian writer Gregory David Roberts describes his first encounter with the city as follows:

The first thing I noticed about Bombay, on that first day, was the smell of the different air. I could smell it before I saw or heard anything of India, even as I walked along the umbilical corridor that connected the plane to the airport. I was excited and delighted by it, in that first Bombay minute... (2004, p. 4).

Travel possesses another dimension that is not aesthetic, however: understanding otherness by comparing it to one’s own culture, decentring through immersion in another symbolic system, and the kind of self-reflection that occurs post-exposure to cultural difference. Our contemporaries seem to have forgotten that throughout the ages, opinion has been divided on the usefulness of travel and that ‘Europe and its various societies have, with varying success, persistently fought against vagrancy, attempting to follow historical trends in order to fix, limit and control the lives of men’ (Roche, 2002, p. 20). Despite the fact that, throughout history, all the various forms of mobility were experienced in Europe (Asséo, 2002), as well as worldwide, it took a long time for the notion of travel to brand itself as the formative experience par excellence (Roche, 2003). It was especially at the end of the 18th century that travel became the preferred means of perfecting the education of young people from the ruling classes, giving rise to what was called the Grand Tour in English-speaking countries. Before entering into adult life, young men and women travelled to several countries, most often accompanied by a tutor. While the Grand Tour initially focused on Italy and Greece, it later came to include Istanbul, Northern Africa and the Middle East during the second half of the 19th century. Travel thus came to be seen as ‘the foundation for building an identity of circulation that could be expressed in a particularly rich fashion through cosmopolitanism’ (Roche, 2002, p. 19).

Some aspects of mobility as expressed in the past still inhabit our imaginaries surrounding youth travel. Books and films often describe such experiences, which include: a) the dialectic of discovering oneself while meeting others in a context that is far away from home; and b) a significant feeling of incompleteness that drives young people further afield, to have new experiences, and to broaden one’s horizons. For those who leave home, travel holds the promise of learning via contact with others. Although the real benefits of travel may be debatable, our culture has indubitably created a long-lasting imaginary surrounding this experience, an imaginary which is itself inherently part of the experience of travel. The civilisation-shaping wonder produced by the major explorations of the past is no longer in fashion (Greenblatt, 1991). What has followed is personal amazement in the face of cultural difference. It is on this emotional element that the process of learning about others is based (Cicchelli, 2012). Today, geographical mobility is a given (Stock, 2008), both virtually and physically, and many virtues are conferred to movement. Travel in particular is seen as opening one’s mind and helping to learn the codes of etiquette in an international context. It has become a cliché to believe that ‘all of the knowledge in the world, or at least all of its indispensible components, could be acquired by completing a trip, so long as this journey were pushed far enough, both in terms of distance and one’s degree of curiosity. And this curiosity assumes that one’s gaze is reversible: when the latter is willingly turned towards the other with attention, it will hopefully have sufficient flexibility to turn back onto oneself and one’s familiar environment at some later point, making the known appear foreign. For it is from this feeling of strangeness that the desirable level of critical distance can be acquired with regard to one’s culture of origin [...]’ (Cogez, 2004, p. 208). Such is the credo of our contemporary societies: travel must guarantee that the traveller learns about others through contact and the process of shifting away from one’s cultural centre (by decentring themselves).

The notion of a cosmopolitan *Bildung* has been put forth to describe the kind of socialisation that occurs during formative travel (Cicchelli, 2012). This notion encompasses both stages of acquiring an enlightened education and of developing openness towards others. This was highlighted by the Germanist and translation theorist Antoine Berman (1984, p. 75): translation is structurally inscribed in the concept of *Bildung,* which represents a gradual expansion, a shift from the particular to the universal which, at its core, entails casting what is the ‘same’ into a dimension that will transform it. It is also ‘the experience of alterity, the formation of the self through the experience of alterity’ (p. 45).

During Erasmus programmes, which are seen as formative periods of travel (Cicchelli, 2012), students view their time in a foreign country (at least six months) as an essential condition to achieve the goals they associate with living abroad. They expect their time abroad to hone their perspective towards others, to, in turn, help them better understand their own culture, and to potentially experience a transformation of the self. Few Erasmus participants experience their time abroad as defectors or exiled nationals (two expressions foreigners living abroad often use to describe themselves). It is important to note that Erasmus students do not see themselves as emigrants fleeing their own country and seeking asylum (or hospitality) in a new host country.

Although this kind of travel abroad is not only yearned for but actively sought out, travellers may still experience significant difficulties when encountering a landscape that is partially or wholly foreign to them. A different situation, labelled by turns as ‘strange’ and ‘bizarre’, forces observers to turn a critical eye onto their own culture. By systematically being called upon to compare the familiar and the foreign, Erasmus students abroad enjoy a privileged moment of self-reflection. In short, this situation of social liminality and cognitive and emotional *estrangement*[[7]](#footnote-7) leads students to become cultural anthropologists of both their host society and their home country, and to engage in the work of cultural decoding (Cicchelli, 2008). It draws on several dimensions of individual experience and allows students to discover their own plurality by creating space for others in their own self-definitions. In our investigation, interviewees implemented a number of cosmopolitan reasoning processes. The fundamental heterogeneity of European societies underpins their interest in learning about others. It is precisely because there are specific differences between European societies that acquiring knowledge in the field, so to speak, during an Erasmus programme allows students to perfect their own *Bildung.* In order to become 21st-century men and women, these young people believe that they must learn about the various cultures of their neighbours through a three-pronged approach: by explaining the latter’s behaviour, by orienting themselves within the different European societies, and by knowing how to situate their degree of belonging according to different scales (infranational, national, supranational). Ultimately, this process leads to the acquisition of a cosmopolitan expertise that allows young people to deploy new practical skills to deal with daily life in a foreign country.

Similar mechanisms used to establish a relationship between the self and other were observed in a study conducted by Jennie Germann Molz (2007) on food travellers: individuals who travel with a specifically culinary objective in mind. By strongly associating food with cultural difference, for which it becomes symbolic, culinary tourism gives individuals numerous opportunities to access alterity through its most exotic dimension. Germann Molz looks at the effects produced on travellers by the strangeness of the dishes they encounter, and how they accommodate, present, and consume this strangeness, in particular the most well travelled individuals. Such globetrotters use their bodies as a vehicle for openness to alterity. By tasting a wide variety of foreign cuisines during their travels, culinary tourists literally embody the cosmopolitan characteristics of adventurous curiosity, willingness to risks, and desire to consume contrast (p. 85). This includes eating foodstuffs that they had hitherto considered to be unpalatable, dirty, perhaps even unfit for consumption, to get sick, to gain or to lose weight. Instead of consuming products that they already know, in order to feel like they are at home while being across the globe, such travellers on the contrary look for products that are far removed from their normal tastes, in order to experience a shift away from their cultural centres. By associating food with specific locations, food travellers reactivate an imaginary geography of alterity that differentiates places by their cuisine, in the process learning how to recognise a wide variety of different flavours.

As with the previous orientation, there are certain limits to the cosmo-culturalist orientation. First of all, mobility in no way guarantees the development or the acquisition of a cosmo-culturalist orientation. Sometimes mobility is entirely focused on self-discovery, a process that can occur autonomously without acquiring knowledge about others. This can be the case in shamanic tourism, for instance, during which the consumption of psychotropic plants is designed to procure ‘access to the spiritual models buried deep within each individual and which are supposed to attest to an origin that is simultaneously personal and collective. Returning to the source, to the origins — effecting a true “retrovolution” — seems in fact to be the goal of this kind of exploration culminating in a new starting point’ (Amselle, 2013, p. 8).

Secondly, the serious interest in others exhibited by the Erasmus students in our study can correctly be seen as the defining trait of the cosmo-culturalist orientation, which translates also into a desire for diverse types of encounters. Nevertheless, the students interviewed expressed both a certain enthusiasm at the idea of discovering another culture and, in a much more unexpected fashion, irritation at the behaviour of locals, with whom they ultimately gave up socialising (Cicchelli, 2012). In the interviews, it is not rare to encounter stereotypical images of local culture, and even to witness a certain backtracking with regard to the initial curiosity expressed by interviewees about their host culture — a finding that seems to go against the promises of formative travel. The young people interviewed likewise expressed doubts regarding the possibility of broadening their sense of belonging, even leading some individuals to reassert their national identity with a newfound fervour. In short, even if a cosmopolitan outlook stems from the growing awareness of the need to have contact with other people, it does not prohibit moments of disappointment or reversal. Nor does it translate into an unconditional love for others, or entail the dissolution of national affiliations. In short, the opinions and beliefs that constitute the cosmo-culturalist orientation can be quite volatile and its lessons reversible.

**Concern for others**

Cosmopolitan empathy, or the ability to understand the feelings of individuals who may belong to very socially distant circles from one’s own, plays a fundamental role in the development of the cosmo-ethical orientation, as we shall see in several field studies below.

Much as Benedict Anderson (1983) highlighted the role of novels and the press in the development of the ‘imagined communities’ which would go on to form the basis of 19th-century nationalism, Lynn Hunt (2013) also illustrated the importance of the diffusion of sentimental literature in the 18th century, in particular with regard to the birth of ‘imagined empathy’ and a change in attitudes towards humanity, which would ultimately lead to the invention of human rights. By further exploring subjectivity — an investigation which had begun during the Renaissance and thanks in part to the rise of Protestantism — sentimental novels provoked new emotions and sensations and definitively imposed the modern idea that the strength and richness of one’s inner life were the source of one’s individuality. The literary imaginary of the 18th century bolstered the ideal of a community founded on empathetic but autonomous individuals, capable of referring to higher, universal values and whose horizon of meaning was situated well above family and community ties, religious affiliations and national belongings. In order for human rights to truly become a sine qua non for ordinary citizens during the time of Jefferson and Lafayette, Mirabeau and Saint-Just, it was necessary for such individuals to develop a new sensibility that could encompass the whole of humankind; this process unfolded not primarily through personal experiences, but through the mediation of reading. Thanks to novels like *La Nouvelle Héloïse* by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1761), readers learned how to expand their empathy to include people other than those in their immediate circle. Through reading, readers could identify with characters that transcended traditional class barriers, imagining their contemporaries as their peers — and most importantly, as human beings capable of feeling the same emotions. Without this lengthy learning period, the concept of equality would not have become one of the key values of Western modernity.

Somewhat unexpectedly, a number of cosmo-ethical attitudes have been transformed by the rise of consumption. The cross-cultural encounters made possible by consumption practices have been shown to modify consumers’ attitudes and facilitate the emergence of a truly global consciousness (Germann Molz, 2001, p. 48). Consumers can even go beyond the opportunities provided by international brands such as Starbucks and Second Cup. They sometimes express the cosmopolitan values of ethical engagement by displaying a global consciousness and a sense of responsibility towards the planet, whilst nonetheless remaining sceptical as to the ability of these major brands to accomplish such goals. Some interviewees believe that the ethics of responsibility should be incorporated into commercial practices, instead of just serving as a pretext for companies to sell already lucrative products at an even higher mark-up (Bookman, 2012).

We may wonder, nevertheless, if the cosmopolitan sentiments associated with consumption practices are capable of eliciting interest in major global problems, of instigating commitment to key cosmopolitan ideas such as human rights or global justice, and of promoting solidarity.

Is there transformative potential within cause-based cosmopolitanism, or are “ethical” and “compassionate” consumption merely marketing trends designed to preserve the status quo? Can a viable cosmopolitical agenda for global social justice be attained through consumption? Or must cosmopolitical aims necessarily be pursued outside of the regime of consumption? (Germann Molz, 2011, p. 48).

Answers to these questions can be found in studies on alternative consumption movements and practices. Alternative consumption is based on the idea of responsible citizenship and the exercise of ‘responsibility in the face of the social and environmental consequences of consumption’ (Pleyers, 2011, p. 18). The major contribution of the food chain to environmental degradation and climate change has become one of the central arguments behind attempts to seriously reform food production and consumption markets.

Other studies have shown how this ethic sensibility manifests itself by translating (or not) into various forms of engagement with the wider world. Let us first mention the phenomenon of compassion towards other human beings who are unknown to us, before moving on to transnational mobilisations incited by indignation.

The importance of the compassion elicited by tragic events was described by Gérôme Truc (2006) in his analysis of reactions to the 2004 terrorist attacks in Madrid. The author starts from the premise that compassion is an emotion with many incarnations, and goes on to illustrate that an emotional register is associated with each different audience, each one conferring a slightly different significance to the tragic event, a significance which may well compete with other interpretations of the event and subsequent reactions thereto. Drawing on the study of a vast corpus of messages sent by strangers to the victims of the 2004 Madrid attacks, Truc concludes that each audience establishes a variant of closeness with the victims on which its type of compassion is then based. When individuals refer primarily to the city of Madrid or to national affiliation, they adopt a ‘communitarian register’. On the contrary, the ‘universalist register’ is used by message-writers who call upon a shared humanity. The latter messages take on a number of cosmopolitan characteristics, given that they express the compassion of a single individual with regard to a single victim. This is a cosmopolitanism ‘of the heart, imbued with presence, underpinned by the relationship between one single human being and another; it cannot be reduced to a rational form of universalism. This cosmopolitanism does not reside in the content of a message (which it is unlikely, at any rate, that a victim will read), but simply in the very fact of sending a message to a person that we do not know, and of baring our soul to them as we would to a friend’ (p. 198).

In a work examining the logic behind various forms of attachment to the world (Cicchelli, forthcoming), we examine how concern for others is expressed by young French men and women when events such as nuclear catastrophes or natural disasters strike, even when the people affected are geographically or culturally distant. In order to understand how individuals develop an ethical cosmopolitan conscience, we have separated the elements of fear, compassion, empathy or indignation expressed by our interviewees from their willingness to translate such emotions into individual and/or collective action. Two different ways of talking about the contemporary world can be observed. The first is based on individual experience with closeness, neighbourliness, community affiliation, and feelings of belonging. The second is based on more abstract, universal considerations. The first stems from a ‘grassroots’, bottom-up vision of the world that is primarily based on close-knit communities, whereas the second corresponds to a ‘top-down’ vision of humanity that stems from identification with a shared humanity. Cosmopolitan reasoning of the ethical variety is displayed when humanity is considered as a fully contributing social actor, independently of any consideration of cultural differences between human groups. We tested for this kind of reasoning among our interviewees by looking at how they reacted to a specific event: the Fukushima nuclear disaster in Japan in March 2011. The young people interviewed drew heavily on universal notions to express their feelings about the catastrophe. All of them exhibited immediate compassion for the people affected, but the universalist line of reasoning (‘we’re all in the same boat’) was particularly favourable to self-reflection. For those individuals, the Fukushima disaster was an opportunity to rethink the role of nuclear energy production in France. There appears to be, however, a difference in terms of emotional impact between catastrophes that strike locally (such as the explosion of the AZF chemical factory in Toulouse in 2001) and those that happen well beyond one’s national borders.

Emotions play a fundamental role in spreading transnational protest movements (Benski and Langman, 2013). Starting in December 2010, public ‘square movements’ (Pleyers and Glasius, 2013) began to crop up in many countries around the Mediterranean Basin (Tunisia, Egypt, Israel, Greece, Turkey, Spain, Portugal and Italy), in Europe (France, Ireland) and in the United States. Indignation was the motor behind the eruption of these largely internet-driven movements. With the rise of new technologies, ‘networks of indignation’ were able to flourish (Castells, 2012, cited by Pleyers, 2013, p. 8), thanks to which the ‘shift from the private and virtual space to the space of public squares’ was able to unfold (Pleyers, 2013, p. 10). The global impact of the Spanish *Indignados* movement and the international success of Stéphane Hessel’s 2010 tract *Time for Outrage!* [originally titled *Indignez-vous!*] doubtless helped to cement the role of indignation in analyses of this phenomenon. In his book, Hessel reminds us that his political engagement was first and foremost based on resistance to Nazi barbarity and the hope of building a democratic future for France. A causal link is clearly established between the feeling of outrage and the act of revolt itself: indignation is seen as a driver of action. Nevertheless, in the so-called square movements, indignation was not the sole catalyst. Studies show that protests are also the emotional expression of a marked downturn in living conditions and the gradual loss of social status by young people, whose futures look much grimmer than those of their parents did. The severity of the economic crisis has most likely given rise to criticisms of government policies in the matter (Benski and Langman, 2013). The fact that a growing percentage of the population lives in precarity as a result of such government policies has provoked feelings of anger against leaders, anxiety about future and humiliation at the impression of being ignored. Emotional reactions predispose individuals to accept certain explicative frameworks that are adapted to the circumstances and to envision alternatives: ‘anger and indignation toward the elites may not only motivate joining and participating in social movements, but further protect the self from feelings of shame and humiliation’ (p. 530). Moreover, ‘participating in social movements can per se provide the actor with a variety of more pleasant gratifications, from a sense of community to a reaffirmation of an individual’s worth and dignity’ (p. 531).

Although we can of course not explain all of these movements with the same logical arguments,[[8]](#footnote-8) they do all share a number of highlight interesting traits (Pleyers and Glasius, 2013). These movements convey the ideals of a ‘deeper and more direct democracy that validates the dignity of each individual and ensures social and economic equality, which leads to different ways of considering and engaging in economic relationships’ (p. 75). Consequently, ‘by closely linking socioeconomic and cultural concerns, these indignant individuals call for a recasting of how we conceive of and practise emancipation, citizenship, democracy, dignity and social justice’ (*ibid.).* These movements all share certain transnational characteristics and their success is determined by mobilisations in the name of now-universal values that underpin the desire of living in a ‘decent society’ (Margalit, 1999). Participation is crucial to direct democracy, as it occurs *in situ*, through permanent contact established via social networks and/or contact with other forms of protest taking place in parallel, either nearby or far away.

Research on this cosmopolitan orientation still has some lacunae, however. The issue of solidarity is only brought up when individuals are left free to choose, notes David A. Hollinger (2006), when they can ‘exercise some influence over just what “we” they help to constitute’ (p. xii). Solidarity is an example of elective affiliation. Some individuals are more confident than others in the unity of the group to which they belong and on behalf of which they get involved; such individuals are thus better placed to distance themselves from their immediate context in order to imagine more abstract ties of solidarity. As Ilija Trojanow so eloquently writes in his novel, *The Collector of Worlds* (2011), ‘if every person were close to you, who would you care for, who would you suffer with? Man’s heart is a receptacle of finite capacity, whereas the divine is an infinite principle’ (p. 273). In the future, studies should seek to explore how these different forms of solidarity take shape in a context that goes beyond social ties of proximity. How can individuals achieve a cosmopolitan form of engagement, that is, involvement in an action that targets humanity as a whole? Under which conditions, by encompassing the circle of humanity, can individuals experience certain feelings with the result that they ultimately come to see that they have an irrefutable and non-transferable responsibility to others that they cannot ignore?

As we highlight a number of cosmo-ethical horizons, we should reconsider the existence of an ideal path (a sort of ‘cosmopolitan career’) whose various stages would be outlined as follows: a) feeling attached and moved by what happens in the world; b) not only being interested in outside events, but feeling concerned by them — that is, having a specific relationship to what is happening (‘this affects me, I can’t escape it’); c) making an effort and getting involved — going to look for information, reacting, discussing, acting with a view to solving a problem or helping. The demanding and teleological nature of this trajectory could lead us to overlook the first two steps while focusing on the third, when action and mobilisation occur. Rather than focusing on what prevents individuals from moving to concrete action, we should also seek to understand what heightens their awareness of a specific event that unfolds far outside of their national context. How do individuals create an impression of proximity with regard to the populations affected by environmental or humanitarian crises or terrorist attacks? Are these impressions of closeness formed on the grounds of a shared experience or history?

In the case of natural catastrophes, humanity and the planet’s well-being are not enough to push individuals to action (Cicchelli, forthcoming). Most of the young French men and women interviewed about the Fukushima nuclear disaster said that they occasionally gave money to charitable organisations when humanitarian crises occurred. However, they took other forms of mobilisation off of the table, placing compassion and personal intervention on two separate levels. They recognised that national interventions alone were insufficient, and argued for international unity as the ideal solution. The idea that individual actions are largely ineffective also appears in studies on ethical consumption (Pleyers, 2013). Although ethical consumers place significant emphasis on fighting climate change and developing global solidarity, ‘the limited success of ethical consumption stems largely from the fact that consumers remain somewhat reluctant to envision personal accountability with regard to the consequences of the consumption choices’ (p. 22).

More generally, the difficulty associated with taking action reflects the fragile nature of commitment typically displayed in modern societies. In an incisive text, Michelle Perrot (1998) reminds us that:

A vassal pledges himself to his lord by an oath, a written text that seals his word and faith, his bond of personal subordination to a lord that he henceforth cannot betray without committing treason. In the army, voluntary recruits sign up for a period of time that they cannot rescind without deserting, whereas members of the clergy who pronounce their vows promise their order and their Church — and through them, Christ himself ­— that they will adhere to the virtues of poverty, chastity and obedience, or in other words, a total oblation of body and mind. Religious figures who pronounce these vows may only be “relieved” of them by their superiors. Shame befalls those who are dishonourably defrocked’ (p. 5).

In all three of these cases, commitment involves ‘a lengthy period of time, giving up one’s own will, subordination to a higher power, and dedication to a cause that gives commitment meaning, but always in a public fashion. Commitment is ultimately a personal matter: it is the voluntary act of an individual who binds himself, often in a solemn and public manner’ (p. 5). Such acts of dedication to a cause suggest that individuals can identify with institutions and remain loyal to those institutions in exchange for recognition or appreciation. We must wonder, however, whether contemporary institutions can continue to count on such strong loyalty from social actors. The examples cited by Michelle Perrot tell us nothing about the capacity of institutions to elicit loyalty merely by offering recognition for fulfilling one’s duties. Richard Sennett (1998) examines how ‘mutual loyalties and commitments’ can be cultivated within institutions that are ‘constantly breaking apart or continually being redesigned’ (p. 10). For Sennett, commitment nowadays is not supposed to offset the inconsistency of human beings and human emotions, but rather the inability of contemporary institutions to offer forms of regulation and socialisation that are capable of ensuring a long-term sense of accomplishment in individuals who fulfil their duties. According to Sennett, the characteristics of the new capitalism, and in particular the emphasis placed by the latter on the buzzwords of ‘projects’ and ‘flexibility’, ultimately corrode the character of social actors. ‘Instability is meant to be normal, Schumpeter’s entrepreneur served up as an ideal Everyman. Perhaps the corroding of character is an inevitable consequence. No “long term” disorients action over the long term, loosens bonds of trust and commitment, and divorces will from behavior.’ (p. 31).

**Living together**

The areas of investigation used to illustrate the cosmo-political issue of living together are all attempts to answer the following questions:what are the consequences of an attitude that entails refusing to see foreigners (or those who live near us, but appear to be quite distant from a cultural perspective) as individuals who belong to our community, our society, our world, or even a shared humanity (Kendall, Skrbis and Woodward, 2009)? What are the consequences of increasingly rigid identities, of the construction of barriers, and of the exclusion of others from one’s identity? What are the consequences of refusing hospitality to foreigners? To answer these questions, we shall first by looking at the work done by the seminal Hellenist scholar Jean-Pierre Vernant (1999) on the myth of Dionysius’ return to Thebes in disguise and the misfortunes that befall his banishment by the city’s inhabitants. Disguised as a woman and more significantly, adopting the traits of an ‘Oriental foreigner’ followed by a retinue of inebriated women, he challenges the hospitality of the residents of Thebes by confronting them with the image that they have of alterity: that of a wandering and vagabond god, a god who is from everywhere and nowhere at once, Vernant explains. The women of Thebes are bewitched by the rejected god and consequently kill the soldiers. In the throes of a hallucination, Agave the queen mother is deceived by Dionysius and dismembers her own son, King Pentheus, brandishing his decapitated head on a thyrsus and triumphantly waving it in front of his father Cadmus’ face. After suffering unprecedented woes, the residents of Thebes finally understand that their demand for purity will lead them to commit monstrous acts if the Other — whosoever is different than them — has not been considered and incorporated into their identity. Jean-Pierre Vernant argues that the moral of this story is clear: not recognizing and accepting one’s own share of otherness, projecting it onto others selected as arbitrary scapegoats, demonizing others by excluding them from a shared humanity, all of this will create ‘monstrous identities’. Let us cite this beautiful passage in the text:

When Dionysius returns home, to Thebes, he is met with incomprehension. His arrival provoked dramatic events as long as the city remained incapable of establishing a link between local inhabitants and foreigners, between sedentary communities and travellers, between its desire to always stay the same and refusing to change, and on the other hand, the foreign, the different, and the other. So long as there was no possibility of harmonising these opposites, a terrifying thing would occur: those who embodied an unconditional attachment to the immutable and who argued for the need to uphold their traditional values in the face of what was different and presented a challenge, or that forced them to take a different look at themselves — these very individuals, the Greek citizens who were so sure of their superiority and their identities, these were the ones who tipped over into absolute alterity, committing horrible, monstrous acts [...] Horror came to project itself onto the face of the very individuals who were unable to make room for the Other (p. 190–91).

More so than the other orientations, the cosmo-political orientation is very sensitive to national variations, especially in terms of conceptualising how others should be integrated into the social fabric, including issues of co-existence with minorities and hospitality towards foreigners. Cultural plurality is defined, recognised and appreciated in a very different fashion within the French Republican paradigm than in the American melting pot or the Canadian, Australian and British multicultural systems. Moreover, the tenor and scale of public debates on immigration and political solutions dealing with cultural difference in the public space are heavily influenced by the colonial and migratory history of individual countries.

There are moments in history where the issue of living together becomes more pressing. During the second half of the 19th century in the United States, when ‘native’ Americans — those who had arrived during the first wave of migration from England — were asked to welcome a new ‘foreign’ population — the Irish — such tensions quickly escalated to violent conflict. *The Gangs of New York,* published by the journalist Herbert Asbury in 1927, describes the bloody confrontations that erupted in the Five Points neighbourhood of lower Manhattan, between American and Irish criminal gangs, with the first claiming to have exclusive possession of the neighbourhood since their ancestors had been the first to arrive in America.[[9]](#footnote-9) Similarly, in France at the end of the 19th century, Belgian and Italian workers suffered numerous acts of aggression. In August 1893 in Aigues-Mortes, for instance, the tragic massacre of Italian workers unfolded in amidst a socio-economic crisis — caused by growing challenges to traditional society, an economic depression and a strong uptick in immigration — coupled with a burgeoning sentiment of national pride led by the elites of the Third Republic (Noiriel, 2010).

The rise in ethnic conflicts throughout an increasingly globalised world has doubtless helped to push two major issues to the forefront of public debate within European and Western societies more broadly. These issues relate to: a) the responsibility to provide assistance and establish policies to welcome immigrants, as well as the duty to exhibit hospitality towards migrant populations in the name of respect for human rights and a shared humanity, on the one hand; and b) the need to accept the plurality of cultural models within a single national community, whilst recognising the value of cultural diversity, on the other hand.

Of all the ideas that have been used to describe both the pluralism of contemporary societies and the policies that enshrine diversity at the heart of a given national community, multiculturalism has undoubtedly been the most controversial. ‘Whereas nationalism was the dominant cultural and political idea of the modern world, multiculturalism has emerged as the dominant idea of the post-modern world’ (Parsanoglou, 2004, p. 3). Thanks to its polysemy, multiculturalism has been put to a wide array of uses. Without delving too deeply into the various meanings that have been attributed to the concept, let us examine the criticisms directed at multiculturalism by the cosmopolitan orientation. The historian David Hollinger (2002) has largely helped to draw attention to the question of the ethnicization of American society. Hollinger criticises multiculturalism for being founded on principles that are too vague to give its advocates the possibility of finding consensus around a basic definition, while the vocabulary of multiculturalism is not precise enough to fully encompass the wide variety of problems at hand. From this point of view, multiculturalism resembles a great number of other movements that reflected the hopes and fears of a specific time and place, but it seems incapable of dealing with the challenges faced by contemporary societies, due to the overly broad nature of the obligations that these challenges require. Hollinger identifies two different political methods of dealing with cultural plurality and integrating difference into the social fabric. The first method relies on an extreme appreciation for particularities. According to its consensus definition, multiculturalism is a commitment to ‘recognise, maintain, and to accord respect and value to the different cultures that coexist within a territorially defined space, be it that of a nation, city, region or locality’.[[10]](#footnote-10) A more radical version of multiculturalism, a variant that can lead to ethno-national conflicts, is based on strong affiliations to a tribe and a nation. As we saw when examining the various ways that culturalist differentialism can go off course (Chapter 3), what is at stake for the champions of this flavour of multiculturalism is preserving a primary, homogenous and permanent collective identity with deep roots in shared memory that is strongly invested in its legacy (Fridman and Ollivier, 2004).

Hollinger (2002) puts forth a second, cosmopolitan variant of multiculturalism, one that brushes over the radical particularities that would otherwise trap each culture within its bubble of specificity. Cosmopolitan multiculturalism, he argues, is based on an individualistic and pro-active understanding of identity, where each individual composes a sui generis identity using the various elements of his or her cultural legacy and of the various cosmopolitan repertoires that are available. ‘Cosmopolitanism would therefore lead to the emergence, out of nowhere, thanks to the vagaries of history and geography, of new ethnical and cultural communities. According to Hollinger, cosmopolitan multiculturalism is infinitely superior to the pluralist position, since it leads to strong social integration and reduces the possibility of conflict between ethnic, racial and cultural communities’ (Fridman and Ollivier, 2004, p. 115). The champions of pluralism emphasis the boundaries that separate different groups and often claim to protect the cultural rights of minorities. Cosmopolitanism and pluralism do share a number of traits: they both promote tolerance, openness to others and recognition of diversity, leading some to confuse the two. However, cosmopolitanism is more individually-oriented. It assumes that individuals are capable of taking on several affiliations and of identifying with broad communities. Pluralism is a more conservative ideology: it is oriented towards pre-existing groups. It attributes a primary identity to each individual, within what is considered to be a unique community. While the defenders of pluralism are more concerned with protecting and perpetuating the cultures of well-established and well-defined groups, cosmopolitans are more likely to ‘encourage the voluntary formation of new communities with wide scope’ (Hollinger, 2002, p. 231). Cosmopolitans are very interested in new people, places and things, whereas pluralists focus their efforts on conservation of what already exists.

In contemporary society, rent by deep internal cleavages, the question of ethnicity functions according to the principle of performativity as a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy. Jean-Loup Amselle (2009) has wondered whether the French market has a veritable penchant for particularity and fragmentation that serves the interests of ethnicity entrepreneurs. According to Amselle, governments must confront the problem of the ‘proliferation of contradictory identity claims in the context of globalisation and the existence of “diasporas”’ (p. 7). Due to the decline of republicanism and its universalist and assimilationist model of society, followed by the rise of a strict and divisive conception of belonging that feeds into all sorts of religious and ethnic fundamentalisms, French society has been prone to increasingly rigid forms of identity. To counter this trend, Amselle argues that it is urgent to defend the concept of a shared humanity whose various segments are constantly interacting and intermingling.

Since the dawn of time, the cultures of the world have been ceaselessly mixed together, with the result that the current stitches can only be seen on products that have been “mended”, that are the result of previous collages, and not on the segments that come from primordial cultures. A patchwork of patchworks, in some sort... (p. xxii).

During a period where identities are exacerbated, individuals retreat to inward-looking attitudes and various fundamentalist strains have re-emerged throughout France, it is important to remember the benefits of republican universalism, while nevertheless recognising the difficulties inherent to its application. According to Amselle, rather than adopting the current French disposition to multiculturalism, it would be better to shift towards a world where multiple forms of belonging were engaged in privately within the anonymous context of French citizenship. The universalist stance does not mean refusing to recognise specific identities; it does, however, reject the universal pretences of particularist demands. An attitude that respects human rights and the whole of the human community requires a certain understanding of the historical trend of increasingly rigid individual identities in order to better ‘protect what is universal inside all of us’ (p. 179).

With multiculturalism increasingly unable to overcome the challenges faced by plural societies constantly buffeted by transnational phenomena, it is urgent to adopt a more cosmopolitan approach to living together. Three arguments can be made in this regard (Delanty, 2009). First of all, the idea that minority ethnic groups can be seen as culturally distinct entities from the majority population of their host societies has now been rendered obsolete. The cosmopolitan perspective is sceptical about the possibility of neatly separating locals from non-locals, natives from foreigners, indigenous populations from newcomers. Secondly, it is necessary to examine the highly sensitive issues of institutional discrimination and everyday racism. Finally, the creation of multicultural communities is a challenge that requires a broader perspective than that authorised by national policies on minorities. The contemporary multicultural reality is composed of global migrations and the intermingling of populations. This is why, according to Gerard Delanty (2009), a perspective based on multicultural cosmopolitanism must first begin with a dialogue between social groups that transcends local and national communities, in order to reconcile diversity with a shared common culture within the public sphere. The normative and inclusive foundations of cosmopolitanism call for the development of a shared culture, which can only emerge if both natives and migrants resolutely commit to transforming local culture from the inside. ‘This cosmopolitan vision of multiculturalism goes far beyond conventional liberal approaches to community, due to the fact that it creates the possibility of achieving unity through diversity’ (p. 133).

Simmel has shown that in urban spaces, where individuals are constantly forced to interact with cultural diversity, a certain cosmopolitanism of proximity can develop (Anderson, 2004). Consequently, we shall use two urban field studies to illustrate the theoretical position presented above.

Using the research conducted by urban sociologists on the feelings of fear, suspicion and mistrust that can sometimes inform individual behaviours in the public space, especially with respect to members of minority groups or foreigners, Elijah Anderson (2012) examined whether urban environments were also capable of offering consumers, residents and passers-by alike tools to combat and mitigate such feelings. Following a meticulous anthropological study of several Philadelphia neighbourhoods, Anderson described the existence of what he called ‘cosmopolitan canopies’. In particular, he spent several years observing behaviours inside a popular shopping centre in downtown Philadelphia, Reading Terminal Market, as well as other environments where people could similarly wander around within a relatively confined space, isolated from the streets. Anderson’s work reveals that because these commercial centres offer the possibility of consuming goods on-site, making purchases, sitting next to strangers, eavesdropping on others’ conversations, people-watching and spontaneously engaging in conversation with someone new, they can also help to reduce racial tensions and to strengthen intercommunity ties. In a country like the United States, marked by the persistence of important interracial tensions (Singh, 2005), the existence of such places for encounters, dialogue and exchange should not be underestimated. Under the protective auspices of the ‘canopy’, instant communities of strangers from different ethnic groups can be formed. Around the tables of coffee shops and restaurants serving all kinds of food, visitors to a shopping centre have the impression of coming to a safe and pleasant place, conducive to mutual trust and allowing them to cross ethnic barriers and to see themselves as members of an urban community. The great diversity of foods on display also gives them the feeling of participating in a kind of ethnic food festival.

On any given day, one might see a Chinese woman eating pizza or a white businessman enjoying collard greens and fried chicken or an Italian family lunching on sushi. When diverse people are eating one another’s food, strangers in the abstract can become somewhat more human. [...] As people become intimate through such shared experiences, certain barriers are prone to be broken. The many lunch counters also help encourage strangers to interact, as they rub elbows while eating. At certain counters in particular, there seems to be a norm of talking with strangers (Anderson 2004, p. 17).

Other studies have shown that establishments that serve foreign cuisine function as micro-spaces allowing for intercultural contacts. These are deterritorialised areas where clients can consume the culture of others without having to bother with a passport or other form of identification (Turgeon, 2002). One common practice in Asian restaurants in Quebec City involves inviting guests to all help themselves to the same dish placed in the middle of the table. Restaurants with strong ethnic connotations are seen as reinforcing the contemporary trend of making restaurants friendly places of togetherness (Finkelstein, 1989). In short, cosmopolitan canopies give individuals from all backgrounds the opportunity to spontaneously engage in a fun anthropological exploration into the customs of other cultures. A model of civility emerges from such contexts that can sometimes be transposed onto other public spaces. When visitors to the Reading Terminal Market leave to head home, they share their experience with their friends, describing the cosmopolitan ambiance that they enjoyed and the discoveries that they may have made about others.

Let us shift our focus a little bit to look at the question of hospitality; that is, the right offered to people arriving from outside of a given community to share the spaces to which inhabitants claim prior possession. Take the case of a foreigner who has recently moved to a new country, and is thus neither a local nor a long-time resident. ‘Whether he is a traveller or an immigrant, the foreigner is always an envoy from another city and consequently feared. He is moreover in a disadvantaged position, due to his distance and status as a seeker of sorts,’ notes Anne Gotman in her work on hospitality (2001, p. 56). In *Strangers and Neighbors,* Andrea M. Voyer (2013) conducted a meticulous study of how strangers were gradually included in the city of Lewiston, Maine in the United States. The starting point for her research was a small-town news event: in October 2002, Lewiston’s mayor at the time published an open letter, with the city’s Somali community as its intended recipient. The massive and sudden influx of Somali immigrants during the few months prior to this letter — in a city that otherwise has the highest percentage of white people in the United States — had pushed the mayor to ask the newcomers for their cooperation in order to avoid economically, physically and emotionally overwhelming local inhabitants. ‘This large number of new arrivals cannot continue without negative results for all,’ the mayor warned (p. 2). He then called on the newly established Somali community to exercise greater disciple to reduce the stress on the city’s limited financial resources. The mayor’s entreaty to spare the local population’s generosity an undue burden caused a commotion in Lewiston, which spread throughout the state and even the rest of the country. Organizations sprouted up to defend the mayor’s position, others to condemn what they saw as his xenophobic attitude. Andrea Voyer decided to move to Lewiston in order to observe interactions between local inhabitants and the new Somali community over the course of several years. She followed the city’s efforts to refute the mayor’s declarations and achieve, over the course of the next few years, the globally successful integration of the Somali community. Without diving further into the author’s Lewiston-specific analysis, we should nonetheless emphasise the value of what she calls the ‘cultural sociology of immigrant incorporation’. Working from the hypothesis that cultural processes have a significant impact on the dynamics of hospitality, Voyer illustrates the link between public discourse and social action in Lewiston. She analyses the three-pronged process of integrating Somali immigrants. First, the creation of symbolic inclusive borders with regard to the newcomers. In Lewiston, the process of inclusion was only able to work thanks to the idea that the Somali community had a number of cultural differences that were acceptable and even desirable, and by rejecting any rhetoric that suggested the opposite. Second, the diffusion of an epistemology and praxis of hospitality. While the former sought to identify social disorder in the rejection of otherness, the latter worked to promote the establishment of good practices to ensure successful cohabitation between culturally distant communities. The goal was to encourage solidarity towards immigrants by developing practices, institutional mechanisms and public policies at the local level. Third, the implementation of a ‘system of disciplinary procedures’ (p. 6) that allowed individuals to internalise the discourse of openness to others, the importance of contact and the emphasis on the shared humanity of the newest members of the urban community through all sorts of seminars, workshops and activities. These three elements provided a framework for ‘the moral constitution of [a] welcoming community’ (p. 193) and helped with the creation of individual and group identities that were resolutely anti-racist and focused on integrity. Although the costs and benefits of this process of inclusion were not necessarily distributed in an even fashion, at least interactions between the host community and foreign immigrants never became a zero-sum game. A new identity was born among the Somali immigrants, one that was a hybrid based on certain American values, such as the importance of hard work, faith, family and economic self-sufficiency. This identity developed through assimilation did not, however, erase all Somali cultural traits; in fact, characteristics seen as typically Somali were valued when Somali individuals appeared friendly and assimilated easily.

Even more than the other orientations that we have discussed, the cosmo-political orientation requires individuals to have the desire to accept and transcend cultural differences — but it still has limits. We must therefore take into account certain elements that go against its stated objectives. In the first part of this volume, we looked at how the rejection of others can operate within the cosmopolitan world. Identitarian closure can take on a wide variety of unexpected features. At the individual level, for instance, a strong interest in cultural diversity can co-exist with: a) equally strong forms of closure, including a total rejection of the other, especially with regard to specific ethnic groups (Mayer *et al.,* 2014); b) the dissemination, throughout public discourse, of xenophobic speech and the emergence and/or resurgence of virulent forms of Islamophobia and anti-Semitism (Fine and Achinger, 2012); and c) the rise, as has been the case in many European countries over the course of the past decade, of populist parties whose platforms are often centred around fighting immigration, limiting the expansion of the European Union, and a stronger push towards community-based political integration processes.

Amidst this landscape of increasingly inflexible identities and the rise of intolerance, let us stop to examine the growing rejection of others observed in France, a trend that has been indisputably confirmed by surveys. In 2013, for the fourth consecutive year, the longitudinal tolerance index decreased, and this ‘decrease now exists with respect to all minorities and even affects socio-political groups that had hitherto escaped the “xenophobic temptation”’ (Mayer *et al.,* 2014, p. 159).[[11]](#footnote-11) The past few years, ‘we have witnessed freer speech and increased media coverage of forms of intolerance that had until now been limited to the most extreme fringes of the population’ (p. 161). Nor are the most highly educated groups immune to this xenophobic trend. ‘Since 2009, the tolerance of highly educated individuals (with postgraduate degrees) has dropped 16 points, compared to a 15-point drop for the least educated individuals’ (p. 163). Most notably, refusing foreigners the right to vote in local elections has gone from one-third to two-thirds of individuals in the sample population: ‘the proportion of those who felt there were “too many” foreigners similarly increased by almost 30 points since 2009, reaching three-quarters of the population now’ (p. 169).

French public opinion has been deeply unsettled by the strategy deployed by the Front National, which has cannily managed to present itself not only as the defender of the French nation — as was to be expected — but also of the Republic. Marine Le Pen’s continued emphasis on secularism (*laïcité*) and gender equality — rights guaranteed by the Republic and allegedly consubstantial with the nation itself — has led to the development of an ethnic-identitarian view of citizenship that is completely at odds with the universal objectives of the Republic, whose laws should be seen less as the expression of a national community’s values than as a set of provisions allowing individuals from different cultures to live together in mutual respect (including of the aforementioned laws). Republican universalism has consequently fallen back on national particularism. The strategic superposition of these two layers increases the ethnicization of French society as well as the communitarian enclavement that it supposedly hopes to fight, by further dividing society into separate groups that cannot be assimilated. It feeds off of declinist and reactionary perspectives declaring the end of the nation and ultimately, of European civilisation as a whole.

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What kind of education, what kind of culture do individuals need to become citizens, employees, entrepreneurs, travellers, decision-makers — or just merely inhabitants — of the cosmopolitan world? We have outlined the answer in this chapter by taking into account four major processes: a) the development of a system of likes and dislikes with regard to international cultural products; b) self-reflexive comparisons between two or more cultural codes; c) the development of universalist ethics; and d) the co-existence of different human groups amidst large-scale communities. These processes are the key elements of a form of socialisation whose end result produces individuals who inhabit a shared and plural world: a world that they try, for better or for worse, to master in their daily lives. The different manifestations of the cosmopolitan spirit have allowed us to look at a well-understood version of cosmopolitanism that is deeply rooted in the lived experience of social actors and relies on complex emotional dynamics that can lead to new kinds of learning — knowledge that nonetheless remains partial, unstable and potentially reversible. According to Gérôme Truc (2005), ‘cosmopolitanism pits everyday socialisation against what happens beyond the confines of any given society, on the horizon of humanity’ (p. 77). In order to exploit this tension between the specificity of everyday experiences and the universality of humanity, we have defined cosmopolitan socialisation as work undertaken by social actors to align themselves — imperfectly, incompletely, or creatively — with the key mandates of our cosmopolitan world. We have thus explored both ‘a way of being in the world’ and ‘a way of constructing an identity for oneself’ (Waldron, 2000, p. 227). Contrary to the utopian models sometimes produced by cosmopolitan theorists, our concept of cosmopolitan socialisation seeks to describe the experience of the human condition in a cosmopolitan world (Lu, 2000).

1. Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, Discours sur l’origine et les fondements de l’inégalité parmi les hommes,* 1755. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. On the subject of trials, see Martuccelli (2006). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. To this can also be added elements such as mobility — with more or less frequent travel between the country of origin and the host country, as well as contact with friends and family living abroad. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. For a highly detailed analysis of the use of the word *diaspora,* see Dufoix (2017) (je te donnerai la réf en anglais) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Global cosmopolitanism is seen as being based on ‘ideas of progress that are complicit with neo-liberal forms of governance and free-market forces of competition.... [It] celebrates a world of plural cultures and peoples located at the periphery, so long as they produce healthy profit margins within metropolitan societies’ (Bhabha, 1994, p. xiv). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. This indicator of transnationality comprises three variables: the number of private transnational relationships; the number of times where the interviewee had been abroad in the 12 months leading up to the study; and the total time spent abroad for periods of at least three months. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. On the use of this word, see Cicchelli, 2012. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. The difference in perspective should be emphasised between those who fight for a better future in countries that are already democratic — and where a segment of the population is outraged at the deterioration of institutional and representative democracy — and those who fight to establish democratic regimes at home. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Martin Scorsese’s film *Gangs of New York* (2002) was loosely based on this book and was nominated for an Oscar for best original screenplay. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. ‘Sharing Diversity. National Approaches to Intercultural Dialogue in Europe’ (available at http://www.interculturaldialogue.eu). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. The longitudinal tolerance index was created in 2008 using a method developed by the American political scientist James Stimson. Its goal is to provide an overall measurement of the evolution of public opinion over time (Mayer *et al*., p. 159). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)