

Growing up Cosmopolitan? Children of Western Lifestyle Migrants in Goa, India¹

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An increasing number of Western families lead a lifestyle whereby they spend half of the year in Goa, India, and the rest in the parents' countries of origin. Such people can be defined as lifestyle migrants. In this article, I discuss the phenomenon in terms of cosmopolitanism. I ask whether lifestyle migrant children in Goa (3 to 12-year-olds) are growing up in a cosmopolitan way. I show that the parents say that for their children their lifestyle is a great advantage: their transnationally mobile life makes the children sociable and cosmopolitan. The views and practices of children and young adults who have grown up in Goa, however, show that although they appear cosmopolitan in some respects, in other respects they do not, and deeming them cosmopolitan depends on how we define the term. The lifestyle migrant children and young people do not necessarily reach out across cultural differences but their horizons are not narrowly national either. I argue that lifestyle migrant children in Goa are multilingual, sociable and flexible in adapting to life in different places but that their engagement with the Indian other is limited. Therefore, they are cosmopolitan, but it is cosmopolitanism on limited, Western terms.

The state of Goa on the western coast of India is a popular travel destination. Hippies arrived there in the late sixties, and ever since Westerners² in search of an alternative

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2 Westerners in Goa come from a number of European countries, and from Israel, Russia, North America and Australia, but in the Goan context the West seems to become one, and national differences between the various Western nationalities often appear rather insignificant. The terms “West” and “Westerners” are also emic terms, that is, the lifestyle migrants, and local Indians, commonly use them. Crucially, a “Westerner” is a non-Indian – a citizen of an affluent industrialised country.

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lifestyle have been gathering on its beaches every winter. Many of them are not just visiting tourists, but spend several months there every year. For them, living in Goa is a lifestyle, not merely a temporary break from everyday routines in their countries of origin. They can be conceptualised as lifestyle migrants. Lifestyle migration refers to the phenomenon whereby citizens of affluent Western nations move abroad in order to find a more meaningful and relaxed life, usually in places with lower living costs and sunny climates (see e.g. Benson and O'Reilly 2009a, b). However, although lifestyle migrants go in search of a relaxed life, many of them need to work to support their lifestyle, and many Westerners make their living in Goa: some are fashion designers, while others run restaurants or guesthouses, sell jewellery or work as yoga teachers, massage therapists or spiritual healers, etc.

Goa attracts Westerners because of its beaches, but also because of the trance music scene. There is a rapidly increasing number of Western families with children, and like most other Westerners there, they tend to lead a lifestyle whereby they live half of the year in Goa and the other half in their countries of origin. The lifestyle migrants do not live in Goa permanently, for various reasons. Firstly, they need to leave India regularly to renew their visas, secondly, many of them want to escape the heavy monsoon rains, and, thirdly, those who are dependent on tourists for their income do not have customers in Goa during the monsoon months.

Lifestyle migration to Goa has a long history. Goa was a Portuguese colony for 450 years, until 1961, and the presence of Westerners has its roots in this colonial past (see Korpela 2010). The phenomenon also has its roots in the hippie movement, which in turn grew out of earlier countercultural movements. As early as the 17th century, there were alternative communities in the countryside in the USA (Zablocki 1980, 3) and Western bohemians moved abroad in the 19th century. In the 1960s and 1970s, hundreds of hippies travelled to India (see e.g., Alderson 1971; Wiles 1972; Odzer 1995; Tomory 1996), with Goa being one of the most popular destinations. Some of these early hippies had children, but the number of Western children in Goa has multiplied in recent years.

Among lifestyle migrant families in Goa, the parents are very often of different national origins, and consequently their children spend time in three countries every year, sometimes visiting other countries as well. The children have been leading this lifestyle from a very early age. In this article, I discuss the phenomenon in terms of cosmopolitanism. I start with a short overview of how scholars have defined cosmopolitanism. I then present the parents' views of the advantages for their children of growing up in Goa and leading a lifestyle whereby they move between two or three

countries every year, and after that I discuss the views of the children themselves. I also elaborate on the significance of local cultures in these lifestyle migrants' lives in Goa. Finally, I discuss the views of young Western adults who have grown up in Goa and argue that they indeed appear to hold a cosmopolitan discourse. It seems to be cosmopolitanism on rather limited terms, but cosmopolitanism nonetheless.

Cosmopolitanism: an ideal or an everyday practice?

Cosmopolitanism is a fashionable word today: it frequently appears in everyday conversation as well as in research literature. Researchers have been discussing the term for a long time, and in recent years the debate has gained new momentum. The work of the anthropologist Ulf Hannerz has been highly influential in these discussions. Hannerz defines cosmopolitanism as “an orientation, a willingness to engage with the other”. It is an “intellectual and aesthetic openness toward divergent cultural experiences”. A cosmopolitan person appreciates cultural diversity and searches for contrast rather than uniformity. (Hannerz 1996, 103)

Hannerz's definition of cosmopolitanism is, however, insufficient: it is rather vague and diffuse to define cosmopolitanism as an attitude of “openness” towards other cultures (Skrbis et al. in Jansen 2009, 75). In order to avoid such vagueness, the sociologists Magdalena Nowicka and Maria Rovisco have distinguished two analytical levels of cosmopolitanism. Firstly, cosmopolitanism can be understood as a moral ideal, as a question of tolerance towards difference and eventually as a belief in the possibility of a more just world order. Secondly, cosmopolitanism can be understood as a practice, as a question of what people do and say. (Nowicka et al. 2009, 2) The same distinction has been made by others: for example, Pnina Werbner and Chris Hann distinguish between cosmopolitan consciousness or conviction and cosmopolitan practice (Werbner 2008, 5; Hann 2008, 60). Defining cosmopolitanism as consciousness or conviction comes close to Hannerz's definition in that it is a rather abstract understanding of cosmopolitanism. Understanding cosmopolitanism as a practice, however, refers to existing empirical realities.

Pnina Werbner has been a key scholar in recent anthropological discussions on cosmopolitanism, and I find her definition of the term useful. According to Werbner, cosmopolitanism means “empathy, toleration and respect for other cultures and values”. It is about “reaching out across cultural differences through dialogue, aesthetic

enjoyment and respect; of living together with difference". Cosmopolitanism is "an ethical horizon, an aspirational outlook and mode of practice". (Werbner 2008, 2)

Cosmopolitanism is often understood as an identity that is fundamentally different from that of "locals" or "nationals" (Nowicka and Rovisco 2009, 1). In similar terms, Jonathan Parry writes that cosmopolitanism means a "freedom from local or national prejudices; an openness to, and tolerance of, other ways of life" (Parry 2008, 327), and Calhoun defines cosmopolitanism to mean belonging to all parts of the world and not being restricted to any one country or its inhabitants (Calhoun 2002, 102). In short, the cosmopolitan approach means a perspective that is wider than that which is tied to a specific locality or nation. It also means an ability to adapt to different cultural environments.

Cosmopolitanism has often been understood as being available only to an elite who have the resources to travel and encounter other cultures and languages (Vertovec and Cohen 2002, 5; Calhoun 2002, 106), but although this may have been true historically, many scholars have pointed out that it is no longer the case. Cosmopolitanism is no longer class specific (Hann 2008, 61) and there is now more than one way to be cosmopolitan (Sichone 2008, 320). Scholars have come up with terms such as "working-class cosmopolitanism" (Werbner 2008, 16; Sichone 2008, 310; Nowicka and Rovisco 2009, 4), "non-elite or non-western cosmopolitanism" (Nowicka and Ramin 2009, 52), "bottom-up cosmopolitans" (Hannerz 2004), "cosmopolitanism from below" (see Hall 2008), and "everyday" or "ordinary" cosmopolitanism (Vertovec et al. 2002, 5). Ulrich Beck has pointed out that cosmopolitanism is not necessarily always voluntary: he has used terms such as forced, banal or passive when analysing involuntary cosmopolitanisms (Beck 2006 10, 19). Nowicka and Ramin accurately point out that the relevant question is not really "whether certain groups are cosmopolitan or not but which kind of cosmopolitanism characterises" them (Nowicka and Ramin 2009, 52). When analysing cosmopolitanism, it is important not to ignore structural and material conditions, and Nina Glick Schiller (2009; 2010) and Aihwa Ong (1999) have both emphasised the political and economic conditions within which particular cosmopolitanisms are possible.

Transnational mobility is often understood as a necessary prerequisite for individuals to develop cosmopolitan attitudes, but several scholars have remarked that locals can also be cosmopolitan, and cosmopolitanism does not necessarily require someone to reside, or move permanently, beyond their nation or culture (Werbner 2008, 17). Moreover, transnational movement across national borders does not necessarily lead to cosmopolitanism (Nowicka and Rovisco 2009, 8; Nowicka and Ramin 2009, 53; Falzon 2008, 38; Vertovec et al. 2002, 20). Someone may be exposed to other cultures but still

be unwilling to interact with them. In other words, being aware of other cultures does not necessarily mean that you are open to a dialogue (Nowicka and Rovisco 2009, 8).

This short overview shows that cosmopolitanism can be defined in different ways. Instead of elaborating on an ideal, I now want to look at an empirical case: lifestyle migrant children in Goa. At this point, I define cosmopolitanism as an open-minded attitude towards other cultures, as an interest in engaging with other cultures and as an ability to adapt to life in different cultural environments.

How was the research conducted?

This article is based on my anthropological research on lifestyle migrant children in Goa. I carried out ten months of ethnographic fieldwork divided into three parts, namely, during the winters of 2011, 2012 and 2013. When in Goa, I participated intensively in the lives of Western families with children (aged 3–12 years). I spent time with them on the beach, at swimming pools and in restaurants. I visited their homes, attended numerous children's birthday parties and observed various hobby groups. I also spent time in schools and nurseries.

My research material consists of detailed field diaries of my participant observation and of interviews with children, parents, and people who worked with the children, as well as young adults who grew up in Goa. In addition, I conducted a small survey in an expatriate school and organised drawing projects with children (see e.g. Thomas et al. 1998, 342; Coates 2002). In groups of between two and five, the children drew pictures for me on a variety of themes (home, family, India, Goa and the other places where they spent time, etc.). While the children were drawing, I chatted with them and recorded the discussions. They also invented stories about children arriving in Goa and drew pictures to go with the stories. The children seemed to enjoy the drawing projects very much, and they provided me with first-hand access to children's discourses (for more details on my methodology, see the appendix).

The great cosmopolitan childhood in Goa: parents' views

The lifestyle migrant families are in Goa because the parents have chosen to live there. Most of them led this kind of lifestyle before their children were born, so their original reasons for being in Goa had nothing to do with their children. However, the parents I met often emphasised that living there was of benefit to their children, with many of

them seeming to explain their lifestyle by claiming that it was better for their children. Many of them mentioned how Goa offers children freedom in a beautiful natural setting. In addition, almost every parent I spoke to emphasised that living between Goa and some other country(ies) made their children flexible, sociable and easy-going: they easily adapted to new environments.

They all [people in my native country] tell me “he is going to have problems merging and getting adapted”. But funnily enough, if you take a child who is seven years old and has spent all his life [...] in the same place. If you [move] him, he is going to fall to pieces. But for my children, it is a fact of life, it doesn’t matter where you put them, it’s ok. [...] [They adapt] very easily. To another climate, to another language, to another way of people, the way they look, which is very important! (Ines, 2 children)³

Wherever my daughter is, immediately she is making friends and hanging out with them... We go to America and she’s immediately joining in there and sleeping over and making friends and hanging out. Wherever she goes, she’s quite comfortable. (Susie, 2 children)

I am amazed with how my kids have grown here, I go back to Germany and my nieces and nephews are shy and barely make any eye contact, they don’t speak and my kids are blaahblaah... they’ll be friendly. [...] I find them [Goa kids] a lot more chatty, you can actually go to strangers and they are not just hiding behind your legs, like kids would do in Europe and they are not encouraged to speak to anybody else they don’t know because it’s dangerous. (Marta, 3 children)

All these mothers present a clear contrast between children in the West and their own children: they claim that living in Goa and leading transnationally mobile lives has made their children particularly adaptable and sociable, qualities that will also be useful when they grow up. During my fieldwork I was indeed often struck by the social openness of lifestyle migrant children in Goa: they willingly chatted with me or other adults, whereas children in my country of origin, Finland, are more reluctant to chat with adults they do not know well.

³ All the names used in this article are pseudonyms. The parents’ number of children and the children’s ages are correctly marked after each interview quotation. English is not the mother tongue of most of the interviewees but the grammar of the quotations has not been corrected but left as they spoke.

If we define cosmopolitanism as an ability to adapt anywhere in the world, these parents seem to think that their mobile lifestyle makes their children cosmopolitan – a quality the parents value highly. In addition, many of the parents considered that life in Goa provided their children with a unique international environment, which they would lack if they lived in their parents' countries of origin.

It's an amazing opportunity [...] They know many different nationalities that they meet and they are hearing all the different languages and they are in such an amazing place learning first hand some things instead of only reading about them in a book. (Marta, 3 children)

Marta, above, describes Goa as a place where there are people of many different nationalities speaking a variety of languages. This is a reference solely to the expatriate community of Goa, because lifestyle migrant families seldom socialise with local Indian families and the children attend different schools and hobby groups from those of Indian children. Marta does refer to the local environment when she mentions children learning at first hand things that children in the West would read about only in books, but, in practice, such learning experiences often seem to involve India as a sort of fun, sightseeing place: you can ride an elephant, monkeys come to play on your roof and cows wander along the roads. Having such experiences is fun and interesting but it does not really mean that you are “engaged with the other”. In fact, Indian people are seldom part of these “amazing experiences” about which the parents speak so highly.

The Western parents nevertheless often seem to define Goa – or, more precisely, the community of lifestyle migrants there – as multinational and thus cosmopolitan. Indicative for them is the community's multilingualism. Hearing and speaking various languages is part of everyday life, and the parents often spoke highly of the situation. They emphasised that their children get used to hearing a variety of languages and pick up a range of phrases. The parents also shared the view that exposure to several languages as a child improves language learning abilities later on. In other words, the parents seem to believe that their children are being prepared to adapt to life in different countries not only in terms of their social openness and flexibility but also in terms of their ability to learn languages. Therefore, according to the parents, life in Goa prepares children for a cosmopolitan adulthood.

Below, a mother explains why she prefers Goa and does not want to live in her country of origin.

It is terrible [in my native country]. Narrow-minded, primitive, stupid. No, I don't want my children to grow up like this. I like it here [in Goa]! Cosmopolitan, open-minded. (Ines, 2 children)

The open-minded and cosmopolitan environment that Ines, and many others, talk about refers to the community of lifestyle migrants in Goa. In fact, lifestyle migrant families in Goa can be understood as trying to live outside local cultures or at least to be choosing for themselves what suits them and when. The families do not tend to participate in local Goan festivals: if they do, it is on a very ad hoc basis. They also do not socialise with local Indians. At the same time, the parents often want to distance themselves from the cultures of their native countries, which they define as narrow-minded and repressive, as Ines's comment above illustrates. In fact, Ines explicitly states that she and her spouse want to be detached from local cultures and customs everywhere, especially from the cultures in which they themselves grew up.

M: Are you teaching your children about the Israeli, English or Indian culture? Do you celebrate some holidays or...?

I: We are bad. We are bad because we choose it. We are global players, we don't want any identification of religion, nothing. We don't want any traditional mark. What the children will pick up from the environment, we are not gonna give to them. If they see it in the environment and if they like it, ok, what can I do, you know? But I won't give them a path, no way. This is 100% their own choice. We don't celebrate any holiday. (Ines, 2 children)

Ines' comment is rather extreme and many other parents in Goa are not so determined to avoid traditions or cultural celebrations. However, they are not particularly keen on following them either. Usually, the parents have a very practical approach: they celebrate whichever festival is fun and suitable in terms of timing and practical arrangements but they do not put much effort into trying to teach their "native cultures" to their children. Ines's comment reveals a very individualistic approach: she seems to think that people – including her children – can choose which traditions they want to follow and celebrate. Such a discourse of extreme individualism and such a strong ethos of freedom are common among lifestyle migrants in Goa (Korpela 2014). This is obviously a very privileged position, embedded in particular political and economic circumstances in the current global order.

A central theme in research on children is the process of socialisation, almost to the extent that sometimes the only purpose of childhood seems to be preparing for

adulthood (Jenks 2005, 34; Olwig et al. 2003, 2). In every culture, adults want children to learn the necessary skills to survive and succeed, and it is considered important that children are taught cultural values, norms and practices. Lifestyle migrant parents in Goa seem disinclined to socialise their children, at least not strictly, in the cultures from which they themselves originate, but they consider it important for them to learn to be flexible and to be able to navigate in a variety of environments, which can be interpreted as a strategy of making the children cosmopolitan. This, the parents believe, will make their children successful in today's globalising world. Preparing children to be global subjects is by no means restricted to lifestyle migrants in Goa – parents in other places adopt a variety of strategies to achieve the same goal (see e.g., Woronov 2007; Anagnost 2008) – but Goan lifestyle migrant parents' denial of their own cultural roots is rather unique.

Nina Glick Schiller, Tsypylma Darieva and Sandra Gruner-Domic (2011) argue that cosmopolitan attitudes on the one hand and deeply rooted views on the other can co-exist rather than having to exclude one other. Among lifestyle migrant families in Goa, however, rootedness is a tricky issue. The parents seem to hold a discourse of raising themselves above cultural roots, when they distance themselves from their native cultures: belonging to the countercultural community of lifestyle migrants in Goa is more important for them. At the same time, however, the parents define the lifestyle migrant community as multilingual and multinational, which indicates that roots and background matter after all.

Nevertheless, when the parents talk about their children's lives in Goa, they describe rather gloriously the great childhood that their children have the privilege of experiencing. According to them, living in Goa provides children with cosmopolitan attitudes and characteristics – flexibility, social openness and awareness of a variety of languages and nationalities – that will be useful to them in the future. It is, however, not enough to listen to the discourse of the parents. In the following section, I focus on the views of the children themselves.

The everyday cosmopolitanism of lifestyle migrant children in Goa

M: What is your favourite food?

E: In India?

M: Somewhere!

E: Em...I don't know. [...] Like my dad made up some nice sauce for the chicken you grill. And then we sometimes have that. And we do schnitzel and food from all over the world.

(Ella, 8)

Ella above is confused by my question. Because she has experience of food in various places, she is not sure which country I am asking about. Mobility is the norm for lifestyle migrant children in Goa. Most of them have never lived in a single location for a whole year but are used to spending time in different places. The children with whom I spoke in Goa seemed to enjoy this mobile lifestyle.

M: Is it nice to move, not to stay in one place?

L: Yeah. Otherwise you would get too bored, living in the same place, same town, same school. (Lilie, 9)

The children's frequent transnational mobility is reflected, in various ways, in what they say, as can be seen in the comments above. Being exposed to a variety of locations does not, however, necessarily lead to cosmopolitan attitudes and practices.

While the parents praised the language skills of their children and the fact that they adapt easily to different places, some of the children were less positive. They brought up some difficulties, although none of them considered these to be serious. Many children were confronted with the issue of language skills.

M: When you are in Spain do you feel different from the other children there? Do they live a different life?

L: Yeah, they live a different life there because I don't know this lower [slang] Spanish cause I don't, it's not really the language that I speak so much. I normally speak Spanish all the time and when I come from Goa to Spain, it's very hard. And I'm different from them... because I come from a different country and I speak a different language. (Lilie, 9)

Nine-year-old Lilie above expresses a rather reflective view when she analyses why she feels different from other children in her mother's country of origin, where she spends several months each year. Although she speaks Spanish fluently, she prefers English (her father's mother tongue) and is uncomfortable with the slang used by her peers in Spain. Therefore, although the lifestyle migrant children speak several languages, their skills are not necessarily at the same level in all those languages and their multilingualism should not be idealised.

Some 9 to 12-year-olds also mentioned that they felt different from their peers in their parents' native countries because they did not know about local sports teams or TV shows. They all said they liked to spend time in those countries, but they did not appear as easy-going as their parents claimed.

Everyone plays football [in Italy] and everybody has their own team that they like. I don't know [the teams] and then they come and ask me which one I like in football and I am like "I don't like any football team" and they are like "What? What's wrong with you?" "I don't have my own team because of travelling" and they say, "Travelling? So that explains it." (Bruno, 11)

Although Bruno, above, describes a situation in which he feels different from his peers in his mother's native country because he does not live there permanently, he is able to circumvent the situation by adopting the identity of a traveller.

The younger children, however, did not express such problems: their lifeworlds were filled with fun and play wherever they were.

M: What do you like to do in England?

R: I like to play in the snow in England...and the bouncy castle. (Ruth, 4)

If we take flexibility as a quality of cosmopolitanism, we can define lifestyle migrant children in Goa as cosmopolitan. The younger children seemed to adapt easily wherever the family went. Some older ones mentioned problems but nevertheless adapted, while others said they felt at ease in all the countries they spent a lot of time in. All the children with whom I spoke said that they liked to spend time in different countries. It is, however, important to note that this is what they say: I did not meet or observe them outside Goa. They may have spoken differently had I interviewed them elsewhere. Moreover, they do not seem to have experience in adapting to new and different environments because they keep moving between places that are familiar to them.

One aspect of cosmopolitanism is personal knowledge of cultural differences. Many lifestyle migrant children in Goa complained that people in the West do not know about India and ask them stupid questions about it.

Sometimes people ask questions like “Do you live in a forest?” or “Do people have computers?”... and “Do snakes come to your house?” And like “Are there cannibals in India?” and like, “Is your family cannibals?” and everything, and I’m like “Seriously?” (Jonathan, 10)

Such comments demonstrate the children’s frustrations with other people’s ignorance. Jonathan has been to many different countries and is able to reflect on the simplistic and prejudiced views that some people have of those places, especially of India. Similar to many parents’ comments, he expresses a clear difference between the non-cosmopolitan people he encounters in the West and those who have lived in Goa and thus have a wider perspective. Yet, the India that the children talked about referred above all to the natural world and to the life of the community of lifestyle migrants in Goa. When I asked children to draw me pictures of Goa or India, they drew swimming pools, beaches, sunsets, coconut trees, banyan trees, dogs, cats and cows, but never an Indian person. None of them even talked much about the local population, and if they did it was often in negative terms. For example, an 8-year-old complained about the drunk Indian men who disturb her on the beach. The fact that the children hardly mentioned Indian people to me indicates that they seldom have encounters with them. Interestingly, many of the young children told me they do not have any Indian friends but that they would like to. They said that it was difficult – even impossible – on a practical level, because they attended different schools, kindergartens, hobby groups and leisure activities.⁴

Many children constructed a boundary between themselves and Indians, and claimed not to like many “Indian” things.

A: I am from India.

B: And why don’t you eat with your fingers?

M: Fingers?

B: Because the Indians, they eat like this.

4 The Western families spend a lot of time on the beach and at swimming pools. Local Indian families do not spend time in these places.

M: They eat with their fingers... You like to eat with your fingers? Rice and dal you eat with your fingers, do you like that?

B: Disgusting. (Amir and Bobby, 4)

R: I got a hundred Barbie dolls.

M: A hundred Barbie dolls?

L: Me too.

M: And you have the Indian Barbie dolls, with the sari and...?

L: I had an Indian Barbie, I had it for my birthday but my sister didn't have any Barbie. Then I gave her one, the sari one.

M: Oh, that's nice.

R: I don't like the sari Barbie...I just like Barbie dolls that have dresses and... I don't like sari Barbie. (Rose and Lisa, 4)

In the above discussions, the children are aware of the Indian other – the custom of eating with one's fingers and wearing saris – but they view such things negatively. They express an awareness of the other but no willingness to appreciate it or to engage with it. In fact, the children's knowledge of Indian cultures and practices is rather limited. For example, once when a musician entered a school attended by lifestyle migrants with a *sitar*, none of the children recognised the instrument despite its centrality in Indian music.

The Western parents in Goa often speak highly of the fact that their children grow up multilingual and thus cosmopolitan. This multilingualism, however, refers solely to the native languages of the lifestyle migrants: none of the children knew Konkani (the spoken language of Goa) or other Indian languages. This is a clear sign of their lack of engagement with the Indian other, a lack of a cosmopolitan mode of practice towards Indians. Karen O'Reilly has studied lifestyle migrant children and teenagers in an international school in Spain. She claims that the international school is "an institution established to preserve the continuity of the Western lifestyle": the aim is to keep the children "uncontaminated by local cultures" (O'Reilly 2012, 121). In other words, children are not socialised into the local surrounding cultures but into "a Western lifestyle". Since most lifestyle migrant children in Goa attend expatriate schools that follow British or European curriculums, the situation there is very similar to that described by O'Reilly. Local people and cultures are "out there", possibly observed from a distance, but they are not part of the lifestyle migrant children's everyday experience. The India they

experience usually involves nature – beautiful beaches, exciting jungle, exotic plants and animals – and not people or cultures.

The world is open; how open are the individuals?

M: What are the advantages of your lifestyle for your children?

A: The spectrum of what the children see and what they experience is so much bigger than what you see and experience when you stay only in one place.

[..]

The advantage of living in two countries is that you get to see two different cultures, your mind doesn't get stuck in only one way of doing things [...] So it's kind of like an alternative LSD you could say. It's like you get another perspective. (Andre, 2 children)

The lifestyle migrant parents in Goa often emphasised that their lifestyle exposes their children to a wider range of experiences than living in one place would. Yet, during the interview that I quote from above, Andre did not talk much about India but about the alternative life and values that his children are exposed to within the lifestyle migrant community in Goa. The children attended a home schooling project in Goa that emphasised spiritual values and arts, whereas in Europe they attended a regular school. In Goa, they also got the chance to observe, and even participate in, various New Age ceremonies. All in all, “the other perspective” that the father mentioned did not include much Indian culture. This particular family did in fact socialise with some Indians and the children thus knew some Indian adults, but many other Western children in Goa had no such contact at all.

In spite of the fact that they live in Goa, India is little present in these lifestyle migrants' everyday lives. Their contact with the local population is usually instrumental: they know shopkeepers, cleaning ladies, motorbike mechanics, restaurant owners, taxi drivers, etc. Some parents mentioned that they had some Indian friends but that they were “modern” and “westernised”. In other words, the parents seem to think that in order for friendships to be formed between Indians and Westerners, Indians need to understand Westerners but not vice versa. If cosmopolitanism is defined as a willingness to engage with the other, this attitude does not seem cosmopolitan. In fact, it requires Indians to be cosmopolitan, as the Westerners are unwilling to engage with “the other” unless “the other” is open to their views and ways. Pnina Werbner writes that cosmopolitans are able to imagine the world from “an other's” perspective and are able

to envision the possibility of a borderless world of cultural plurality (Werbner 2008, 2). Among lifestyle migrants in Goa, however, there is not much interest in understanding “the other’s” perspective: the boundary between Indians and Westerners persists and if parents are unwilling to cross it, their young children cannot socialise with local people either because they cannot usually decide for themselves where and with whom they spend their time.

Being able to keep your distance from local cultures and populations indicates a privileged position. Lifestyle migration to Goa happens within particular material and economic circumstances: their relative economic wealth allows lifestyle migrants in Goa to keep their distance from local populations. It may, of course, be that local people would not be interested in socialising with foreigners – I did not study that aspect – but it is nevertheless rather remarkable that many lifestyle migrants seem to view Indian people as servants or employees and not as their social equals.

When Western adults and children in Goa talk about their transnationally mobile lives, the world often appears to be an open arena of fun and leisure. The world is like a supermarket from which they can choose pleasing things. It is not so much a question of immersing oneself in a range of local cultures and social environments but of consuming a variety of places for one’s own pleasure. For example, one family gave me lengthy descriptions of snorkelling opportunities in various locations around the world. Their interest in visiting those places was snorkelling, not the local cultures or people. Tourists are often said to seek sun, sea and sand – that is, aspects of nature (Hannerz 1992, 248). Tourism, however, is a matter of a short-term visit after which people return to their settled everyday life at home. For the lifestyle migrants in Goa sojourns in different places are not temporary breaks from their everyday routines but are part of their lifestyle, yet they still view the world very similarly to tourists. Interestingly, the parents’ native countries sometimes become defined in similar terms.

M: Do your children like to go to France?

S: They love it. We love the journey, we love the airplane, we love to go. They love the airplane, the airport, enjoying yourself a little bit, running around. Flying, going on trains and metros and the whole thing. And France they love to go to the supermarket and they are just like “Ahhhh, what do we want?” You know like all the yogurt section and all the salami and the cheese and all, they love it. [...] Flea markets we go, we look for clothes and shoes and books and toys and we buy little things, it’s nice. We go to nice cafes and... (Stella, 2 children)

In Stella's comment, France is defined in terms of consumerism. The comment reveals, again, a privileged position: Stella, and her children, have the means to "consume France". Consuming and material aspects often appear in what the children say as well.

F: We are soon leaving Goa.

M: Do you want to go or would you like to stay?

F: I would like to stay because I want to go again to the water park.

Y: But in Israel, there is a huge park too.

F: I know... actually I think it is even better in Germany.

M: Germany, you also go there?

F: Yeah because there are so much legos... I had one airplane but it broke, an electric airplane, there is also one airplane made from paper that is hard. The airplane flies and has a big propeller, like this big... (Fred, 6)

When the lifestyle migrants and their children describe their stays in various places – in India or elsewhere – engagements with local people are seldom mentioned. Lifestyle migration to Goa is strongly embedded in today's global political and economic circumstances. It is a privileged lifestyle that is available to some people, and it results in a particular kind of cosmopolitanism.

Cosmopolitans after all: reflections of young Western adults in Goa

M: If you compare the West, either England or Greece, to Goa, what is better and what is worse?

A: To?

M: Here or there.

A: Well, each country has their own things that are good. So I can't really say this country has this or this country has that, because over there I enjoy what they have there and over here I enjoy what they have here, so I can't really say anything other than that. (Anton, 17)

During my fieldwork, I interviewed a few young Western adults (17 to 23-year-olds) who had spent most of their childhood in Goa. I wanted to find out what they thought about their childhood and youth in Goa and about their transnationally mobile lifestyle. The interview extract above indicates that my young interviewees were sometimes more

cosmopolitan than I realised; the interviewee above seems to be confused, even irritated, by my question, thus questioning my comparative approach to viewing the world.

Although with regard to some issues, the young adults I interviewed found the comparative approach pointless, they also gave lengthy reflections on differences between Goa and the other countries (usually their parents' countries of origin) where they had spent a lot of time. Above all, the young adults I interviewed often expressed that they felt more open and more sociable than their peers in the West, thus sharing the discourse with some of the lifestyle migrant parents of the young children.

M: Do you feel different from the other people who are of your age in Europe?

S: Yeah. They are a bit more closed. The mentality is quite... they are a bit more frozen. In some other aspect, I think even a bit stupid. But that's maybe from the way I see it. Maybe from the way they see it, they think I'm the strange one, coming from here. But it doesn't seem... sometimes even they say it. When we go into new places, maybe you meet people that you don't know a lot. I'm more talkative, more friendly. They are more closed. And sometimes they say "You are more open, you are more friendly. We wouldn't be able to integrate like you in a group, coming in a group of 30 people where nobody knows you."

(Stefan, 23)

Stefan, above, defines himself as an open and sociable person who can easily make friends in new situations, and he believes that such characteristics are typical of Westerners who have grown up in Goa. The ability to adapt to different social situations in different places is an attribute that can be understood as cosmopolitan. Here, however, it is good to keep in mind that this is the way my interviewees talk; I did not see how they act when they are away from Goa. Nevertheless, the young adults seem to share with their parents the discourse about their lifestyle making them flexible and social. One young interviewee, however, told me how she found it difficult to socialise with people when she spent a few months in a European country that she had not visited before. This may, in fact, indicate that the flexibility that some young adults described to me applies only to countries they are familiar with and not necessarily to new places, which raises the question of which kind of cosmopolitanism it is. The interviewee who had had trouble in the new destination blamed the local people for being unfriendly and closed, which can, again, be interpreted as a request for "the other" to be open and tolerant, that is, cosmopolitan.

Another characteristic that all my young adult interviewees mentioned when comparing themselves to their peers in the West was that living in Goa had made them open-minded.

S: Having had the opportunity to live here, I think we got a bit more open mentality and we saw more things.

B: And because of living in India you have to deal with so many funny things every day... Things that you don't see in Europe, like cows on the road and people, the locals, they are a bit crazy sometimes. The people in Europe who would come to Goa and see the things for the first time, they wouldn't know what to do...

S: They would be a bit like shocked...

B: ...but we've seen it since we were small, we are a bit more open to everything, you know? But some Europeans have a very closed mentality. (Stefan, 23 and Beatrice, 21)

In the above dialogue, Stefan and Beatrice are actually reflecting on “the wider spectrum” that a father mentioned in an earlier interview extract. Interestingly, Stefan and Beatrice are talking about *seeing* many funny things – a spectacle – not about getting involved with the other. Seeing all those things for several years does make them a part of your everyday reality and thus likely affects your views and attitudes but it is not necessarily a mode of practice or an engagement with the Indian other.

M: Do you have local friends, Indian friends?

S: Not in the group [where we usually hang out] but yeah. You could call them friends. Not close friends but... It's a bit hard being... really close with a local.

M: Why?

S: Cause... maybe I'm mistaken but they have a bit different mentality. First of all, also the young ones, I have a girlfriend and they are like, “Oh you have a girlfriend?” Very shy and timid. And some other ways...

B: It depends, there are so many places in Goa...

S: Yeah, that depends...

B: Like I have a lot of Indian friends but... from my [boarding] school.

S: But your Indian friends, it's a school that already, to enter it there, they are a bit, not posh people but... they have a different way of thinking.

B: Yeah, but they are still locals, they are still Indian.

[...]

S: They have money to go to the school, money makes them a bit, maybe they travel a bit more, they open a bit more to think. I'm talking about the locals that stay in the villages. They are more closed.

B: Yeah.

S: Of course, we cannot talk about Ajey.

B: Yeah.

S: He drives a BMW, he goes to England... he's like us. Just dark skin. [...] We are talking about Goans here. [...] In some ways you feel that you can't relate with them a lot, like you could with others. (Stefan, 23 and Beatrice, 21)

Stefan and Beatrice, above, are, in fact, talking about a class difference. When they define upper-class Indians as those who are able to understand Westerners, and thus able to form friendships with them, they align themselves with the upper class, the elite. Lifestyle migrants in Goa are an interesting case in terms of their class status. In their native countries, they are not an elite but are middle class or even working class in terms of their income and professions, and many lifestyle migrant adults in Goa have little formal education beyond secondary school. In Goa, however, they are doing quite well financially and can afford a lifestyle they could not have in their native countries: they frequently eat in restaurants, they have domestic servants and they live in spacious villas. In other words, although outsiders in relation to the local social system, they have enough money to live like an elite in Goa. Karen O'Reilly argues that in the case of British lifestyle migrant children in an international school in Spain, it is not merely the Western lifestyle that is being preserved, but a class-based one: the children are educated to become the future global elite (O'Reilly 2009, 113). Lifestyle migrant children and young adults in Goa seem to adopt a racially biased class-based identity as well: they are an elite based on their non-Indianness. While Stefan and Beatrice express a willingness to engage with the other who is "like us", they appear unwilling to reach out over cultural differences and they expect "the other" to reach out to them.⁵

Nevertheless, although Stefan's and Beatrice's cosmopolitanism is somewhat questionable with regards to their limited engagement with the other, in other respects they do appear cosmopolitan in what they say. The following dialogue from their

⁵ Some young adults who had lived in Goa permanently claimed to have many local Indian friends. The situation in Goa now, however, is very different from how it was when the young adults were children. At that time, there were no lifestyle migrant schools or kindergartens and few Western children, whereas now there are several such schools and hundreds of Western children.

interview is a good example of how at least some young adults who have grown up in Goa are able to take a reflective view of cultural tolerance.

S: One thing that is not nice in Europe is that there are many people who are racist. When I see that, I hate it. I just take... I [would like to] take each one of them when they are a bit racist and with a snap of my finger. One thrown here in Goa, one in Africa, China... Then I want to make them deal with people being racist against them. I hate...

B: But it's true also the Indians can be racist.

S: Indians are very [racist], Goans [are very racist].

B: Everyone's racist.

S: Everyone is. The thing that could help you against this racism is living a bit around the world.

[..]

B: There're annoying people in every country. (Stefan, 23, and Beatrice, 21)

Criticising racism can be understood to mean respect and tolerance for cultural difference – qualities that can be understood as cosmopolitan. In the above extract, a distinction between the non-racist cosmopolitan self and the racist national or local other is constructed. In other words, Stefan and Beatrice say that leading transnationally mobile lives has made them non-racist and cosmopolitan whereas those who lead non-mobile lives lack these qualities. This section has thus shown that the young adults share the parents' discourse about their lifestyle making them cosmopolitan. The distance from local Indian people is, however, rather remarkable and leads us to consider what kind of a cosmopolitan empirical reality it actually is.

Cosmopolitanism on limited terms

Vered Amit argues that becoming cosmopolitan is a very slow process. Acquiring new ethical horizons, and engaging with and appreciating a wider range of cultural and social possibilities, requires the formation of prosaic routines and relationships, which takes time. She emphasises the importance of mundane, everyday efforts when developing cosmopolitan aspirations. (Amit 2012, 65–66) In the case of the lifestyle migrants in Goa, such mundane relationships and situations are largely missing. They are not exposed to Indian people and cultural practices in their everyday lives. Consequently,

although they are aware of “the other”, they are not engaged with it. Nevertheless, their horizons are clearly not mono-cultural or narrowly national either.

This empirical case leads us to consider whether cosmopolitanism means openness to any culture or only to specific ones, and to what extent everyday interactions with “the other” are needed. The bottom line seems to be whether cosmopolitanism is defined as an identity and an approach or whether the everyday engagement – a mode of practice – with the other is emphasised.

Nowicka and Ramin define cosmopolitanism as the project of an individual. Cosmopolitanism helps you to appreciate the experience of difference and to overcome the difficulties and stress of resettlement (Nowicka and Ramin 2009, 68). Also Anthony D’Andrea argues that cosmopolitanism is not an altruistic gesture: it is ultimately more about the self than about the other (D’Andrea 2007, 15). Such an approach emphasises the flexibility of the self. The lifestyle migrant children and young adults described in this article seem to have qualities of flexibility that enable them to adapt to a variety of environments. They share a cosmopolitan identity and approach, but in their discourse the emphasis is clearly on the self and not “the other”, as they lack everyday engagement with “the other”.

Cosmopolitanism by definition implies that the world is divided into cultures, and that some individuals – the cosmopolitans – are able to navigate between the various cultures whereas most people – the nationals – are tied to cultures that are attached to their immediate localities. The case of lifestyle migrants in Goa is interesting in these terms because their cosmopolitanism seems to take place to a large extent within circles where everyone is transnationally mobile and somewhat detached from their national cultures.

In this article, I have shown that lifestyle migrant children in Goa are flexible and adaptable but that, in practice, their cosmopolitanism is a very Western project. This is a very similar situation to that described by Anne-Meike Fechter regarding expatriates in Indonesia. She describes the expatriates’ identities as cosmopolitan but prefers terms such as internationally-oriented or Western international (Fechter 2008, 105, 165), because cosmopolitanism demands so much and these terms describe the empirical reality better. Such definitions seem suitable for lifestyle migrants in Goa too. I would also add the term “cosmopolitanism on Western terms” because it is very much defined by the Westerners, not by “the other”, and because their multilingualism and social openness tends to include several Western languages and nationalities but to a large extent excludes the rest. The cosmopolitanism of lifestyle migrants in Goa also appears to be about consuming various places by choice, that is, lifestyle migrants taking from

each place what pleases them (e.g. snorkelling opportunities) but not engaging with “the other” in other ways. Local people may not, of course, be interested in engaging with foreigners, but lifestyle migrants nevertheless seem to hold a particular discourse of superiority towards them.

Conclusion

Cosmopolitanism can be defined either as an aspiration or in terms of real-life practices. This article has presented certain limitations to real-life cosmopolitanism among lifestyle migrant children in Goa. The parents speak highly of how their children grow up to be cosmopolitan and what they say seems to reflect a particular and ideal version of cosmopolitanism: they describe a happy lifestyle that produces flexible and open-minded global subjects. This cosmopolitanism also includes a discourse of cultural detachment. The children confirm some of the parents’ views, although they do not necessarily appear to be as flexible as the parents like to claim, and some of the children’s comments actually hint at cracks in their cosmopolitan practice. Adding the views of young Western adults who have grown up in Goa to this equation leads me to argue that lifestyle migrants in Goa have cosmopolitan views and characteristics, but it is cosmopolitanism on limited terms: in particular, it is cosmopolitanism on Western terms and within the (multilingual and multinational) lifestyle migrant community. Moreover, instead of engaging with “the other”, the lifestyle migrants seem to move between locations with which they are already familiar. Yet, although their cosmopolitanism may be limited, it is cosmopolitanism nonetheless. A significant characteristic of this cosmopolitanism is that of consuming a variety of places according to one’s needs and pleasures, which in turn indicates a very privileged position, with particular structural, political and economic circumstances allowing particular individuals (and their children) to view the world as an open arena within which they can choose their destinations and their degree of engagement with “the other”.

Appendix: Details about methodology

During my fieldwork in Goa, I knew about 150 lifestyle migrants and socialised more closely with about 20 families. People who participated in my research represented various nationalities, for example British, Irish, French, Italian, Danish, Swedish, Norwegian, German, Swiss, Austrian, Italian, Polish, Russian, Dutch, Israeli, American, Canadian, Australian, Japanese etc. It is difficult to give complete statistics because many of my research subjects, especially most of the children, held two nationalities. The parents were in their late 30s or in their 40s, some were in their 50s. Their youngest children were new-born, the oldest were teenagers; but the majority of the lifestyle migrant children in Goa are between 2 and 13 years old. Most families that I knew had 1-2 children, a few had 3 children. I conducted 25 formal interviews (13 adults, 8 children and 5 young adults). I conducted, however, many more interviews during my participant observation, that is, they were not pre-scheduled or recorded but I took detailed notes. In addition, I conducted 34 drawing sessions with groups of 2-5 children. Each group consisted of children of the same age, the youngest being 4-year-olds and the oldest being 12-year-olds. During the drawing sessions, I carried out informal group interviews as well as informal individual interviews with the children. In addition, my research material consists of hundreds of pages of detailed field diaries and hundreds of photographs and drawings that the children made.

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