Conclusion: United in Discontent

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Globalisation and cosmopolitanism are terms with a certain theoretical and analytical attraction. Their appeal—much like the appeal of the term 'postmodernism in previous decades—relates to a certain extent to their all-encompassing character. To borrow a pertinent notion from Theodossopoulos (2007), all three concepts can be seen as 'hollow categories' in the sense that they can be filled with distinct meanings. They are shifty but catchy idioms because they can signify many different things while saying nothing in particular that is necessarily new. This observation concerns of course academics and informants alike. For, it seems that we all use these concepts as marks for political commentary although we do inexorably focus our attention on the same events and thus we do not automatically refer to the same processes. Globalisation and cosmopolitanism have no essential core. They are internally fragmented, multiple, contradictory and semantically vague phenomena. Agreeing precisely upon their content might lead us to reductionism, while tolerating their imprecision imposes—to academics at least—a certain theoretical and analytical vulnerability that is hard to swallow especially since its consequences tend to hit us when we thought we had produced a really strong argument.

The generalised discontent with the aforementioned concepts that has been documented in social analysis is of course correspondingly differentiated. Social actors around the world 'resist', but not essentially to the same events, not necessarily for the same reasons, and inevitably not in the same manner. It is then safe to argue that globalisation, cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism, as well as the resistance and dissatisfaction they evoke, cannot be seen as homogenous entities or unwavering processes. The present volume has been concerned with imagined communities of discontent, largely treating both globalisation and cosmopolitanism (and the resistance to them) as epiphenomena of more general concerns with power, inequality and political subjectivity. My use of these all-encompassing terms so far in an undifferentiated fashion has by no means the purpose

of collapsing them onto each other. They are unquestionably distinct concepts that reflect variant discursive and practical political developments. Their transformation in the perception of our informants however, into generic categories of blame entices one to discuss them as if they had a common basis.

In some ways, my discussion here starts with a call to provisionally accept an 'as if assumption': 'as if dissatisfied people around the world were entirely right in their judgment that current political and ideological developments relate closely to an unfavorable distribution of power that excludes far more than it includes'. My call is theoretical, analytical and methodological. It is theoretical to the extent that various academics have observed the close relationship between globalisation, cosmopolitanism and power. It is analytical because even if such an assumption is not entirely valid, it is true in its consequences, and it is methodological because social anthropology –since its inception- has been dedicated to view the world from the informants' point of view, to take seriously their concerns and to pay attention to the meaning of local discourse.

Resistance to globalisation is a global phenomenon that frequently utilises the very technologies of globalisation in order to express itself. New social movements acquired thus a global character that cut across cultural and national boundaries and transformed identity politics into a public and common quest (cf. Touraine 1988; Melucci 1989). Seen from one perspective the generalised dissatisfaction with globalisation relates to its economic dimension and its association with neoliberal capitalism (cf. Appadurai 2001: 4). While Eriksen observes that globalisation is perceived as an outcome of neoliberal economics (2003: 4), in this volume Goddard documents local discontent with the economic consequences of globalisation and the effects of the failure of neoliberal policies in Argentina. There are cases when indeed, as Turner argues, globalisation "constitutes an essentially unregulated intensification of the capitalist dynamic of competition, accumulation [and] exploitation" (2004: 90). Corporate-managed globalisation has been presented to the world as the only option (cf. Thornton 2004: 3), signaling a new era of "capitalism that presents itself as a gospel of salvation" (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001: 2).

Reflecting upon globalisation as the creation of centers of accumulation, Friedman argues that we should adopt a cyclical perspective and treat globalisation not as a new phenomenon, but as a phase in history that people have experienced before (2004: 50-52). The undesirable historicism of this approach notwithstanding, if we assume that globalisation is related to the creation of centers of accumulation, then we have to accept Friedman's second argument that "the wealth of any centre depends to a large extent on the formation of a periphery" (ibid: 69; cf. also Comaroff and Comaroff 2001: 8; Sassen 1998: xxxiv). Disaffection with globalisation then is certainly connected to unequal distribution of wealth that is partly a consequence of the over-accumulation problem (cf. Harvey 1989), as well as of changes in employment relationships (like flexible labour for instance) that come as a result of the deregulation of products and capital markets (cf. Friedman 2004: 59-62; cf. also Schoppa 2002). The character of global economy evokes hence a justifiable discontent insofar as it further marginalises certain peripheries (cf. Dirlik 1998) creating spaces of social exclusion all around the world (Castells 1998).

Another potential source of dissatisfaction with globalisation –common as I am hoping to show with certain counter-cosmopolitan perspectives- relates to its political character. Globalisation is regarded as 'depoliticising' the international public sphere (Boggs 2000: 69-70; cf. also Thornton 2004: 4; Appadurai 2001), however, as this volume argues it also produces an anti-globalist, global politicisation. Apart from the documented political resistance of new social movements (Bhagwati 2002: 4; Cohen and Rai 2000), the present collection of papers testifies to the existence of an 'imagined community of the discontented, that is paradoxically globalised in its own imagination' (cf. Theodossopoulos; Theodossopoulos & Kirtsoglou, this volume). These new imagined communities share many commonalities with the classic Andersonian ones, and especially what Anderson called 'sense of simultaneity' (1983: 31), that is the confidence in the steady anonymous, simultaneous activity of other people who are imagined to be equally dissatisfied with the new global regime. As we have argued with Theodossopoulos (this volume), this is precisely the case with Greek subjects. Imagination at the level of dreaming, as it is demonstrated by Edgar (this volume), is also related to a worldwide Islamic community united by prophetic dreams of jihad. Globalisation however, does not only produce imagined worlds (Appadurai 1996). It also

produces real interconnections of activists (Bhagwati 2002), young Muslims (Appiah 2007) and people who engage in politicised struggle seeking to "control the conditions of their own action" (Melucci 1989: 45). In this sense anti-globalism is a global project itself, carried out by interconnected social actors in a largely cosmopolitan fashion.

Inspired by the aforementioned observation, this volume has treated discontent with globalisation and cosmopolitanism not as a sign of nationalism (cf. also Cheah and Robbins 1998), closure and backwardness, but as an alternative form of globalised thinking, produced by disenfranchised subjects who are concerned with political and ideological hegemony. Indeed the volume has attested to various 'subaltern' notions of cosmopolitanism (cf. Gledhill this volume), and to types of resistance that emerge from alternative cosmopolitan visions. It has become clear I think that counter-cosmopolitanism does not only concern an array of discourses and practices of 'globalised resistance', but also the belief of many social actors that cosmopolitanism is a western ideological product, designed to serve particular political interests. Discontent with it is a marker of a generalised discontent with processes of 'colonizing' so to speak indigenous consciousness. As we have demonstrated (with Theodossopoulos, this volume), when our Greek informants for instance express their disaffection with cosmopolitanism they are concerned with the power of some to create cosmologies that serve their own interests and then to hegemonically extend those cosmologies to the rest of the world in a *naturalised* fashion. Cosmopolitanism professes on the one hand respect to difference, but indeed as Appiah argues it is rather difficult to "have any respect for human diversity and expect everyone to become cosmopolitan" (2007: xx).

Globalisation has been introduced as a new political project that would undermine nationalism and the nation, thus producing cosmopolitan forms of political identities (cf. Chuang Ya-chung 2004: 19). Indeed as Turner argues nationalist ideology has been undermined, up to a certain extent, while other institutions like the World Bank and the World Trade Organization "exercise now considerable sovereignty beyond the borders of any state" (2004: 92; cf. also Mittelman 1996; Panitch 1996). Despite the transnational operation of such economic agents, a number of authors agree that the state does not seem to be replaced by any other form of political organisation (Sassen 1996; 1998: 199; Turner 2004: 91-92; Krasner 1988: 76). Furthermore, as Billig has demonstrated,

although banal nationalism is a quite widespread phenomenon, 'nationalist expressions' in the non-western world are treated as pathological anomalies (1995).

Discontent with cosmopolitanism has been frequently mistaken with nationalism (cf. also Cheah and Robbins 1998) as a pathology (Gellner 1997) "of non-Western, primordial, irrational and backwards Others" (Wang Horng-luen 2004: 30; Gledhill 2000: 14;). Cosmopolitanism however, is commonly distrusted for being an imposed idea that seeks to undermine cultural difference and to enforce upon various nations and peoples western sovereignty and suzerainty. Hannerz distinguishes between cultural and political cosmopolitanism, arguing that while 'the former is more often bottom-up', the latter tends to relate to top-down processes (2004: 79). He claims that the association between political cosmopolitanism and a global government –the reason behind many peoples' dissatisfaction with cosmopolitanism- is misguided, because political cosmopolitanism is related to global 'governance' and not 'government' (ibid). In turn, he goes on to describe governance as a form of global civil society (Hannerz 2004: 72). Nevertheless, global governance is easily (in practice) turned into a form of global government that disenfranchises less-privileged groups in the configuration of global power.

Various authors have attested to the emergence of a global regime –economic or otherwise (cf. Chuang Ya-chung 2004: 19, Friedman 2004: 57; cf. also Marcus 1999). In turn, civil society, according to Gellner, relates to the plurality of institutions that oppose and balance state power ensuring "the impossibility of ideological monopoly" (1994: 1, 3-4, 211). Concepts such as globalisation, cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism however, have been almost *naturalised* in contemporary political discourse and presented in international forums as the only politically correct choices as well as guides to strategic action and political intervention. The anti-cosmopolitan arguments wish sometimes to challenge precisely this kind of ideological monopoly and subsequently the political actions legitimised by it. Indeed, seen from a particular theoretical and analytical perspective Turner's argument that follows is difficult to resist:

> "Disturbingly, the transnationalists' master trope, the binary
> classification of local societies and cultures as 'inertial' and lacking in
> dynamic capacities for resistance or change, while all agency, dynamism
> and effectively invincible force is ascribed to transnational processes of

> the global system, repeats the most ethnocentric and ideologically imperialist chronotope of all, the evolutionist vision of the dynamic historically innovative and spatially expansive West as the bearer of global progressive change to the historically inert, spatially closed and culturally traditional Others. The global system is US; local communities are Them; the myth of the historic 'break' constituted by transnationalism puts Them in the past and makes Us the bearers of history" (2004: 110-111).

Much like postmodernist, heterodox scholars (cf. Argyrou 2002), the uncritical advocate of cosmopolitanism seems indeed to occupy a space *above* the world, from which s/he is able to gaze down the world liberated from various backward types of single identification like cultural, ethnic or racial, and thus capable of celebrating an 'enriched cultural territory' (cf. Friedman 2004: 64) amidst of course bitter disputes and confrontations of nationalist/tribal/ethnic/racial character that torment virtually every continent of the world. Seen from this perspective, certain scholars who speak about 'elite' cosmopolitanism (cf. Dirlik 1998; Robins 1999; Freedman 2004) appear to have a strong point. Of course cosmopolitanism is by no means the prerogative of elites (cf. Hannerz 2004; Appiah 2007) and it does not come in direct confrontation with notions of belonging (Werbner 2006). The concepts of 'flexible citizenship' (Ong 1993), 'traveling cultures' (Clifford 1992; 1997), 'nomadic subjectivity' (Rapport 1997), and 'rooted cosmopolitanism' (Werbner 2006; 2008) are theoretically useful, analytically powerful and ethnographically substantiated.

The critique articulated here is not directed at cosmopolitanism as a discursive and practical political option, but to the imposition of cosmopolitanism as an ideology that is regarded by many as seeking to hegemonically legitimise western ideological authority. Also, and perhaps most importantly, the need to address cosmopolitanism in a critical and reflexive manner is connected to its property as a 'grand narrative' that has the potential to Otherise, exoticise and ultimately create more dichotomies and oppositions than the ones it seeks to resolve. A similar argument is put forward by Zizek with reference to multiculturalist openness when this is juxtaposed to new forms of fundamentalism (1998: 1008). Multiculturalism, Zizek points out, can be easily seen as the opposite of "self-

enclosed, authentic" communities creating an artificial distinction between the localist/fundamentalist, fossilized cultural subject and the multiculturalist who is observing, consuming and analyzing it from the "distance rendered possible by his privileged universal position" (Zizek 1997: 44).

Distrust to the concept of cosmopolitanism might also spring from the perception that is largely unattainable and therefore an empty rhetorical tool in the hands of the powerful. The disbelief to the possibility of cosmopolitanism in practice has itself its roots in the fact that the "ideal of cosmopolitan democracy… depends too much on the presumption of universal 'world citizens', while the definition and classification of these citizens… hinges on the institutions of the nation-state system" (Wang Horng-luen 2004: 31). This argument relates to my earlier point that although the nation-state has been ideologically undermined, it remains the *par excellence* form of modern political organization. To corroborate this point I will suggestively refer to Kymlicka who argues that "most important moral principles should be cosmopolitan in scope –human rights, democracy and environmental protection- and we should seek to promote these ideals internationally. But our democratic citizenship is, and will remain in the foreseeable future national in scope" (2001: 326). Multiculturalism is in turn treated with similar suspicion, often much for the same reasons. For it is vague enough in order to serve as 'an alibi' that "exonerates the existing privileged inequities and class differences" (Miyoshi 2000: 44).

Discontent with globalisation, cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism also relates of course for certain people to modernity's broken promises of transparency, equality, rationality, openness and trust. The flamboyant exhibition of power on behalf of states and coalitions, political unilateralism and the undermining of the importance of public debate (cf. Beck 2000: 4) create a sense of worldwide political frustration. Social actors do not feel that they live in a more transparent (cf. West and Sanders 2003), or a fairer (cf. Kirtsoglou 2006) world and they are thus eager to pinpoint the problematic relationship between globalisation, cosmopolitanism and power (cf. Driessen 2005: 137). The cold war political legacy and the development of the global capitalist system "has forced a partial abandonment of the post war social contract", led people to question the potential of political equality and intensified mistrust to the sincerity of the great powers (Turner 2004: 91; Kirtsoglou 2006; Marcus 1999). The presence of a hegemonic global

empire (Stewart-Harawira 2005) that 'exports' so to speak and imposes ideologies and policies alike is felt strongly in various parts of the world.

As we have argued with Theodossopoulos (this volume) modernity produces disenfranchised subjectivities. Seen in this context, discontent with globalisation and cosmopolitanism is emblematic of the people's struggle for agency and the power to produce and shape history. In this sense some authors rightly point out that the identity politics of new social movements relate closely to the control of historicity (cf. Touraine 1988; Chuang Ya-chung 2004; Trias I Valls this volume). My observation here does not mean to offer support to Touraine's notion of 'levels of historicity' that distinguishes between post-industrial and developing societies (cf. Escobar 1992; Chuang Ya-chung 2004: 15). I believe that political participation, contribution to historical processes and the power of self-representation are different dimensions and expressions of the same quest for agency. Hence I agree with Theodossopoulos (this volume) and others who extend the discussion of counter-cosmopolitanism to tourist practices and connect the later with the presence of certain elites. Touching upon the concept of cultural difference, Friedman argues that "cultural difference is consumed [by the elites] in the form of cultural products" (2004: 64-65). Despite the fact that some local communities succeed in turning this to their advantage by gaining visibility (cf. Stewart and Strathern this volume; Swain 1989; Tice 1995), some other actors are left disempowered by the process of consumerist exoticism (cf. Kirtsoglou and Theodossopoulos 2004). The appreciation of 'difference' advocated by cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism is then closely related –analytically at least- to the standpoint of the respective actors and depends on whether we 'consume' each other from similar structural positions of power, or whether this process generates further inequalities and frustrations.

Having said that cosmopolitanism has often been associated with elites (Hannerz 2004: 74) and an outward movement from centres to peripheries, I also wish to agree with Stewart and Strathern (this volume) when they argue that "cosmopolitanism does not necessarily belong only to the multicultural metropolitan contexts of life". Indeed, the authors are right to draw our attention to the ways in which people tend to exercise agency by creating "new centres in which their peripheral status can be overcome" (ibid). This last observation compels me to briefly comment upon the importance of space, place

and locality in the appreciation of discontent with globalisation, cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism.

Much of this volume has been devoted to discontent as the 'cosmopolitanism of the powerless and the disenfranchised'. Imagining the Other as sharing the same political predicament with oneself – that of being dispossessed – entails of course a certain degree of cosmopolitan empathy and interconnected, globalised thinking. To a great extent this kind of cosmopolitan empathy utilises – as we have shown with Theodossopoulos (this volume) – 'analogical thinking' (Sutton 1998). Extending slightly Sutton's original concept of analogical thinking, we have argued that imagining oneself as another in the political sense requires a certain merging of the past, the present, the local and the global in terms of contexts, strategies, means, ends and ultimately in terms of the distribution and the effects of power diachronically. This argument is similar to Appadurai's appreciation of the relationship between local and global (2001), but it has also certain ramifications for the importance of space and locality. Space, place and locality are important references to the articulation of political discourse and the engagement in political practice (cf. Buechler 2000) because as Friedman argues human experience is always localized (2004: 55) and to a great extent space and place-specific.

The critiques of globalisation can thus be better understood –in their distinctiveness- as local versions of global awareness (Theodossopoulos this volume), that find their impetus in local histories and the politics of everyday life (Appadurai 2001). These localized versions of discontent that popular magazines like *Sabili* express (Watson this volume) are nonetheless potent in expressing dissatisfaction with global processes. At this point, I would like to take the argument slightly further and claim that it is not only space and place that matter, but also embodiment as a 'version' so to speak of locality. Our bodies can be seen as intersection points of different discourses and practices, the material loci from which we engage with the world (Kirtsoglou 2004). Discontent with globalisation, cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism is also expressed in embodied ways, in demonstrations, protests, dress codes and violent confrontations. The body is then directly relevant to political practice although its importance has not been fully exploited analytically.

I have started this last chapter of the volume by stressing the elusiveness of the terms it wished to discuss and by pinpointing a double impossibility: we can neither reduce the complexity of globalisation and cosmopolitanism, nor remain comfortable with the analytical vulnerability that comes as a result of their semantic vagueness. Acknowledging the internal differentiation of these concepts both at the level of discourse and practice, and the inherent multiplicity in people's discontent with them is a way of dealing with our theoretical and analytical deadlock. Grounding our commentaries in ethnography is another means of capturing otherwise unstable political processes. Discontent has many faces, origins and expressions. Some of them are entirely valid and some others slightly far fetched. Sometimes we tend to empathise with our informants, and some others we indulge in a reserved skepticism on the validity of their claims, the effectiveness and the wider consequences of certain extreme forms of political expression. In more than one way we frequently find ourselves as belonging to –or at least empathizing with- the imagined communities of the discontented. Above all however, we consistently try to capture and convey the importance of local meaning that in this particular case has, as we have all argued, global and cosmopolitan resonance. The excesses of power will not disappear with another academic publication. Nor we will ever become capable of doing away with all forms of inequality and all kinds of dichotomies and oppositions in the wider political and public sphere. The task of ethnographic documentation and critical analysis has itself its own limits, but it is nevertheless a step in the desired direction. After all, democratic dialogue, public debate and attention to the importance of different opinions are the very political processes that cosmopolitanism promises to the world. In a sense, this volume is evidence that despite its faults and deficiencies it also delivers.

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