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Is London open? Mediating and ordering cosmopolitanism in crisis

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Abstract

This article analyses cosmopolitan imagination and ambivalent morality at times of urban crisis. It focuses on #LondonIsOpen – the city's media campaign in response to the nation's Brexit vote. In this case, cosmopolitanism's discursive tools – especially the ideals of the Open city and hospitality – are mobilised to summon a range of actors in defence of the city. The article analyses the mediation of cosmopolitanism in a campaign film and in Londoners' online and offline responses to it. These responses reveal #LondonIsOpen as a compelling example of cosmopolitan imagination, but also of cosmopolitanism's moral fragility in the neoliberal city. As shown, urban dwellers overwhelmingly embrace the cosmopolitan value of openness. Yet, their visions are divided between neoliberal cosmopolitanism and vernacular cosmopolitanism. By analysing the moral space of mediated cosmopolitanism, I argue that, unlike the nation, representational struggles in the city increasingly take place within, rather than against, cosmopolitanism.

The Brexit vote left many Londoners in shock. Across the global city's material and digital streets, narratives of urban cosmopolitanism became mobilized in response to the referendum result. For many, Brexit constitutes a direct attack on their city and its core values. The campaign #LondonIsOpen, led by London's Mayor, Sadiq Khan, represents a powerful example of the city's response to the vote, but also reveals urban cosmopolitanism's ethical complexities and contradictions. This article focuses on the mediation of the #LondonIsOpen campaign; more specifically, it introduces the most widely circulated film of the campaign on social media and analyses Londoners' online and offline responses to its projected cosmopolitanism. The discussion demonstrates how the city responds to the nation at times of crisis by mobilising a cosmopolitan morality, albeit an ambivalent and contradictory morality that is subject to urban inequalities. In particular, the concept of *the open city* becomes a discursive cosmopolitan tool that summons Londoners around shared values of hospitality, openness and diversity to oppose the nation at times of crisis. While openness appears as a starting - and fundamental - point of identification for many Londoners, their ethical orientations diverge, most significantly in the competing frames of cosmopolitanism they embrace: neoliberal cosmopolitanism and vernacular cosmopolitanism. The analysis reveals that for many privileged Londoners, openness and hospitality reflect a stance, a habitus and an identity, whilst for others experiencing urban inequalities, these same ideals represent a claim and a politics of solidarity. The article identifies and analyses representational struggles in the city as these increasingly take place within, rather than against, urban cosmopolitanism.

This article is organised in three main sections. The discussion starts with a review of key literature on urban cosmopolitanism, focusing on the concept of the open city, the ethics of hospitality and its mediation. Derrida's (2001) and Silverstone's (2007) theorisations of hospitality are core reference points, especially as they point to an ethics of hospitality

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through the city/polis. In addressing the limitations of these theorisations of hospitality – especially ignoring the city's internal alterity – the discussion turns to Sennett's open city (2013) and his emphasis on the ambiguous edges and the socio-cultural porosity of the city. The second part introduces the context of study, especially in relation to London's response to the Brexit vote and the #LondonIsOpen campaign. Finally, the article focuses on an empirical discussion, starting with a brief analysis of the most widely circulated video of the campaign and detailing a range of Londoners' responses online and offline. The empirical discussion analyses some critical points where Londoners' cosmopolitan ethical orientations converge and diverge, identifying vernacular and neoliberal cosmopolitanism as co-existing, but also conflicting, ethical forces. The article concludes by reflecting on the significance of urban inequalities for understanding the mediation of cosmopolitanism and the hierarchical ethical frames it embraces and projects.

Literature review: Open and hospitable cities

London's official response to the Brexit vote has been driven by the language of *the open city*. The emphasis on openness is critical, not least as it speaks to popular and scholarly articulations of cosmopolitan imagination and visions for democratic and inclusive cities. Sennett (2013) defines the open city as a site of assemblages, mutual exchanges and ambiguous edges. This is the city that contests neoliberalism's closed systems, which, as he argues, aim to integrate, control and order. In popular culture, urban openness is most influentially discussed in the novel *Open city* (2011) by Teju Cole. The novel has attracted scholarly attention precisely because it offers a rich and complex articulation of urban openness. As the book's narrative represents an ambivalent example of cosmopolitan writing within but also against aesthetic cosmopolitanism (Vermeulen 2013), it opens up avenues for

interrogating the representations and meanings of urban cosmopolitanism. More than a novel, *Open city* (2011) represents a literary tool for considering bigger conceptual questions, not least the double meaning of a city's openness: being both a sanctuary and a socio-cultural space left to its own fate (Krishnan 2015). The latter identifier of the open city is tied to one of its main conceptualisations: as a military term. In such a context, an open city refers to a condition where:

> a belligerent nation, facing possible attack, may declare the target 'an open city'. That means that the city will be unarmed and will not be defended. Theoretically, that designation should mean that the city will not be attacked (Langer in Krishnan 2015: 676).

Thus, an open city is a surrendered city. Rather differently, social scientific articulations of the open city link the concept to cosmopolitanism and inclusive urbanism – a positive and promising, if complex, affair. Even if oppositional, the two conceptualisations converge in one idea: the open city is a potential sanctuary for civilians and a home for the vulnerable.

Within radical urbanism, the city's openness comes with claims to freedom and rights. In *One way street* (1997), Benjamin writes of urban porosity and transitivity, finding expression in unforeseen constellations on the street and in urban dwellers' claims to that space. With Benjamin (1997) and Lefebvre (2003) as influential starting points, generations of urban scholars explored unforeseen constellations, disorder and urban porosity as generative of democratic, inclusive cities (cf. Sennett's work on disorder 1970; Jacobs' lamenting of the aggressive modernisation of the American city 1993; Zukin's critique of gentrification 2010). More recently, Sennett mobilized the concept of the open city to identify the need for democratic and inclusive urbanism: 'The open city is a bottom-up place; it

belongs to the people' (2013: 14). Central to that claim are the conditions and demands for a city that is hospitable to different voices, a site for a representational ethics where all can speak and be heard (Silverstone 2007). This ethics is possible precisely because, as Sennett argues, the open city has porous boundaries and ambiguous edges, allowing different groups to interact and to find solutions together but to also develop skills for managing disorder and conflict, multiple connections and disconnections. 'If density and diversity give life, the life they breed is disorderly', argues Jane Jacobs (quoted in Sennett 2013: 7).

Derrida's analysis of cosmopolitan ethics of hospitality (2001) is inspired by that very same urban quality that intrigues Sennett: the long history of the city as open, porous, and receptive of newcomers. Thus, the city is the inevitable and ideal space for Derrida to locate an ethics of hospitality. While using different language, both Sennett and Derrida identify the possibility of hospitality and recognition of difference at and through the incomplete forms, the unresolved narratives (Sennett 2001) and the experience and experimentation (Derrida 2001) of the city. Derrida (2001) effectively argues that we should think through the city and beyond the nation for an *ethic of hospitality*. Hospitality, he argues:

> has to do with the *etho*s, that is, the residence, one's home, the familiar place of dwelling, inasmuch as it is a manner of being there, a manner in which we relate to ourselves and to others, to others as our own or as foreigners, *ethics is hospitality* (2001: 16-17).

In Derrida's cosmopolitan ethics, not unlike Sennett's collective vision of the open city, mutuality of engagement between those arriving and those receiving depends on shared experience. Yet, Derrida assumes a rather clear boundary between those receiving and those arriving – in his analysis, alterity remains external to the city. He refers to hosts and guests,

along the lines of cosmopolitan scholarship on hospitality that has been critiqued for, arguably, reproducing a hierarchical ordering of *Us* and *Them*. Whether one subscribes to this critique or not, Derrida's city of refuge still ignores the fact that those who were once guests are now potential hosts: the city's own migrants and diasporas. Thus, the city of 'hosts' and 'guests' carries an internal contradiction: it ignores cities' internal heterogeneity and alterity, even though it is conceptualised as a city of refuge precisely on the basis of its long history of migrant destination.

In the case of the global city (Sassen 2001) in particular, the transitivity of meanings of 'the host' and 'the guest' is far from exceptional. A global city is a city of alterity. This condition invites a number of key questions: Do we need to revisit cosmopolitan openness and ethics of hospitality in the city largely constituted by old and new newcomers? Does the global city – a city of migrants and diasporas and of rich and poor – call for a conceptualisation of cosmopolitan ethics that acknowledges plurality of experience and of ethics? Do we need to more systematically study experience at an intersectional grid of power relations that shape cosmopolitan ethics?

Anthropological and ethnographic analyses that have conceptualised cosmopolitanism through experience, remind us that city dwellers practice urbanity differently. For the transnational elites who congregate in London, diversity is primarily experienced through consumption and in regular encounters with other members of transnational elites; consequently, experience builds skills to manage and develop competencies – a cosmopolitan habitus and taste, a cosmopolitan identity (Eade 2000; Hannerz 1996; Keith 2005). In a much-critiqued, yet influential, definition of cosmopolitanism, Hannerz argues that it is: 'an orientation, a willingness to engage with the Other…an intellectual and aesthetic stance towards divergent cultural experiences, a search of contrasts rather than uniformity' (1996: 103). As the privileged cosmopolitanism that Hannerz (1996) describes depends on a

consumption-driven aesthetics (often referred to as aesthetic cosmopolitanism, Regev 2014; Walkowitz 2006), it raises questions about its ethical trajectories. Arguably, the moral drive of liberal cosmopolitanism associated with its Kantian origins (Calhoun 2012) is thereby in crisis. Instead, the rising prominence of values of cultural uniqueness associated with a certain lifestyle and stance (Regev 2014; Walkowitz 2006) point to a transformed cosmopolitanism, a neoliberal cosmopolitanism (Georgiou 2013). In the context of neoliberal cosmopolitanism, liberal values, such as those of equality, recognition and openness, become subject to taste and aesthetics, lifestyle and consumption.

Against the elite experience at the core of Hannerz's (1996) analysis, Werbner (2006; 2008) describes vernacular cosmopolitanism. Werbner locates cosmopolitan subjectivities in symbolic and material spaces, which are 'trans-ethnic, collectively emergent 'worlds', shared discourses that transcend cultural boundaries and parochial lifestyles' (2008: 50). Emphasising that cosmopolitanism is not a property of the elites, she emphasises that cosmopolitan subjectivities of different classes and ages can contribute to transethnic cultural and ideological worlds. Along these same lines, Hall (2008) identifies vernacular cosmopolitanism as not being about choice but being about survival, especially for migrants and diasporas: 'They have to acquire the same cosmopolitan skills of adaptation and innovation which an entrepreneur requires – but from a different place...So, culturally, they are living 'in translation' every day of their lives…not the global life as a reward for status, education or wealth, but the global life as one of the necessities imposed by the disjunctures of modern globalisation' (2008: 347).

If cosmopolitanism in the city reflects the diversity of its dwellers' experience, then its ethical orientations cannot be singular. This is where analyses, such as those by Derrida and Sennett, fall short: openness is about possibilities of hospitable, democratic and inclusive cities. But who speaks and who benefits from hospitality and from the vision of the

cosmopolitan city? Harvey famously asks 'In whose image is the city made?' (1973 (2009)) and we could extend this question to ask: 'In whose image is the cosmopolitan city made?'. What and who is represented as the open city and what modalities of openness and hospitality do representations of cosmopolitanism promote? Silverstone (2007) starts answering these questions by calling for a representational ethics of the mediapolis, where difference is seen and also heard:

> It is the continued co-presence of multiple voices that defines, both actually and potentially, the possibility of mutual hospitality in the mediapolis. For hospitality begins in the recognition of the other and in the sound of his or her voice. It is the hospitality of a cosmopolitan society and of an intensely mediated culture. It involves sharing that space and taking responsibility for it. And it involves all parties accepting the obligation to open their space to the stranger irrespective of their position in the media hierarchy. (2007: 143).

Silverstone's representational ethics is reflected in media hospitality, or rather in the demand for media hospitality as the extension of responsibility to seeing and hearing others in the media. Is a media campaign for and on behalf of the city that puts forward an ethics of hospitality, and which adopts a language of cosmopolitan openness, an example of such representational ethics? Does the ethics of hospitality of #LondonIsOpen expand a space for hearing and seeing diverse London? Which cosmopolitan experience and ethics are privileged and which are silenced? As will be shown below, #LondonIsOpen puts forward an ethics of urban openness and hospitality against ethno-centric parochialism. A powerful message within the national context, it does little to represent urban cosmopolitanism in its

complexity. As shown in the responses it attracts, the mediated message of urban cosmopolitanism marginalizes the very politics that makes it possible.

Context of study: Post-referendum London Blues

The national referendum on the UK Leaving the EU in the summer of 2016 triggered sentiments of despair, disappointment and fear among many Londoners. While the country voted to leave the European Union with a majority of 51.9%, London voted to Remain with 59.9% of the vote - with some parts of the city voting Remain by more than 70% (BBC 2016). On the material and digital streets of the city, disbelief and protest revealed the disenchantment of the city with the politics of the nation. Most importantly, as reflected in campaigns, statements, protests and social media responses to the vote (Villamy 2016; Mandler 2016), many Londoners felt that cosmopolitan values were under attack. Values that many consider distinctly personal, distinctly urban, and distinctly London, were now in crisis. These cosmopolitan responses derived from the city's long history of migration and its diverse socio-cultural assemblages. In a city demographically constituted primarily by minorities and only secondarily by the national majority (BBC 2012), revolt against Brexit[i] comes as no surprise: against a vote for firmer borders, less migration and revived nationalism, London appeared to project its own, and *other* to the nation, cosmopolitan orientation. Londoners' vote appeared as more likely to surpass generational and class differences that defined vote divides in the nation. How is urban cosmopolitanism narrated and imagined at times of crisis and as a crisis? And what values do Londoners project vis-à-vis the post-cosmopolitan politics of Brexit?

A note on methodology

The analysis introduces the #LondonIsOpen campaign and focuses on the short film *London is the city of film*. This film was launched on October, 14 2016 and posted on the Mayor's Facebook page and on YouTube. This is the most widely viewed and circulated campaign film across social media. Its appeal is most prominent on Facebook, with almost half a million views on the Mayor's page and almost 5,000 shares on the same page, as of the end of February 2017. Given that this is an official campaign production, these levels of viewing and sharing are impressive. The attractiveness and emotional appeal of the film was also evident in the numerous comments on the Mayor's Facebook page and in the many lively and contradictory responses among participants in the focus groups I conducted with young Londoners.

The discussion below is informed by a discourse analysis (Philips and Jorgensen 2002) of the film *London is the city of film* and a thematic analysis of responses to it, as these are recorded on the Mayor's Facebook page and in comments generated by the film during focus groups with young Londoners of different social and ethnic backgrounds, aged 17 to 22. The participants and domains of study represent two key groups and two key dimensions of mediation. On the one hand, Facebook participants represent the range of voices – Londoners and non-Londoners – who engage with London's openness in social media, arguably the active participants of the mediapolis. On the other hand, young people are purposefully selected as focus group participants, because they are those who imagine a future and experience the prospect of Brexit at the beginning of their adult life. In their combination, online and offline samples reflect a range of experiences and imaginaries surrounding city's openness at times of crisis. Focus groups, composed of 5 or 6 young men and women each,

were conducted in December 2016 and January 2017. I chose to focus on young people, as I was interested in understanding the urban imaginaries and trajectories ofOne focus group consisted of middle-class A-Level students preparing for university; one of 17 and 18 year olds at work and undergoing training and of primarily ethnically diverse working-class backgrounds; and the third of London-born minority youth, particularly Alevi Turkish and Kurdish students of working-class and middle-class backgrounds. Participants were invited to discuss their use of media and sense of belonging in London; they were shown the film as part of the conversation, asked to comment on what they thought it represented, and whether and how they could relate to it, if at all. As the discussion examined wider themes of urban life, media use and belonging, the comments on the film were analysed within this broader context of participants' responses.

In addition to the focus groups, 317 comments in response to the film on the Mayor's Facebook page were thematically analysed. The two main themes driving the analysis were neoliberal cosmopolitanism (as this relates to narratives of openness, worldliness, individual values, lifestyle and aesthetics, drawing from Hannerz 1996, but also from the critique of Regev 2014 and Walkowitz 2006) and vernacular cosmopolitanism (as this relates to experience in the city and in the world, especially through migration and as linked to individual and collective values, drawing from Werbner 1999, 2008 and Hall 2008). Quoted individuals commenting on Facebook have given written consent as recommended by AIOR (2012) and Ess (2009), as did, of course, all focus group participants.

The study: #LondonIsOpen: Mediating openness

The campaign #LondonIsOpen was launched less than a month after the referendum, in July 18 2016, but continued through 2016 and into 2017. The use of a hashtag in the campaign's title is crucial, not least as it points to the city's attempt to expand its appeal through intermediation and traction. #LondonIsOpen became a powerful hashtag in the post-referendum months and years and it has been revived within different campaigns in support of the city's diversity. For example, the hashtag was widely used after the June 4, 2017 terrorist attacks in the city. In the range of its uses to celebrate London's diversity, #LondonIsOpen reached almost 17 million unique users by mid-June 2017 (keyhole.co, 2017).

The Mayor-led campaign unfolds in three main media domains: the official campaign website; a series of six short films under the umbrella heading #LondonIsOpen circulated across social media (Facebook, Twitter and Youtube official channels); and in the mainstream media coverage of the campaign. It is important to note the distinctions between narrations of openness in the three different media domains. The official campaign website (londonisopen.com) focuses on London as a financial powerhouse, visibly targeting audiences from within the global corporate and financial sectors. The website is simple and lacks interactivity but has a number of tools that link the message of openness and diversity with investment opportunities, not least through the neoliberal language of open markets. As highlighted on the top of the page:

> London is open for business. We are an outward looking city with one of the most open and dynamic economies in the world. Many international businesses and entrepreneurs have chosen to make London their home and we look forward to welcoming more in the future.

In this case, the city that is open is a market that is open.

On social media, the campaign appears as more complex in its design and narratives. The six short films around which the social media campaign develops are titled: *London opens its doors to the world; Our message to the rest of the world; Sport stars join Mayor Sadiq Khan to spread the message; London is the city of film; London is the city of dance; London is the city of shopping*. Each film is under a minute long. The first three films, which were produced earlier in the campaign, represent direct ethical responses to Brexit through visual and discursive narrations of We-ness, tolerance and openness. Most directly, the message of hospitality is core to the film *London opens its doors to the world* with a series of images of opening doors into London's shops and homes and with the Mayor opening his door at the end of the film and inviting the viewer in. The three last films' narratives are more clearly structured as city branding exercises (Banet-Weiser 2012), framing openness around three distinct cultural industries: film, dance and fashion. As the campaign matures and as shown in the last three films, the emphasis shifts from being about putting the city's voice forward (vis-à-vis the nation's), to commodifying openness and incorporating it in a vision of post-Brexit London where cultural industries still thrive. At the same time, and in their differences, what the films share is the adoption of images and discourses associated with vernacular cosmopolitanism and their adaptation to a framework of aesthetic cosmopolitanism. The films' aesthetics puts Londoners at the core of narrations of openness. The Mayor, business people, representatives of institutions, celebrities and some ordinary Londoners appear on the films. The common theme is that Londoners speak in all of them, but, of course, the Londoners who speak are carefully chosen individuals, as will be discussed further in the next section. The shared message in all films beyond their differences is clear: protect our city, celebrate diversity, and keep the city open. But open to whom?

Alongside social media, in mainstream media the campaign appears as merging the official website's and social media's tactics, narratives and aesthetics. Mainstream media – many of which appear as sympathetic to the campaign, with London's daily *Evening Standard* being at the forefront of positive coverage – give voice to certain Londoners and discuss extensively the challenges for London's financial and corporate sectors post-Brexit. The Mayor, Sadiq Khan, is regularly interviewed. In the *Evening Standard*'s coverage of the launch of the campaign (2016), for example, the Mayor talks about London being open for business, but the coverage goes beyond that official and corporate vision. In the coverage of the campaign, the humanistic message of cultural diversity, respecting difference and the history of the city's migrations is always present, even if it appears most often as secondary to the economics-driven message.

The multiple dimensions of the campaign's media strategy show that the concept of the open city is mobilized to draw a complex vision of cosmopolitanism that is relevant to businesses, as well as to citizens and consumers in the city and across the world. Most prominently, and as demonstrated in social media's emphasis on a humanistic, culture-centric and people-centric narration of urban cosmopolitanism, the open city speaks directly to an ethics of hospitality. An ethics of hospitality is mobilized at times of crisis and when the global city feels under pressure to close its gates to outsiders. Thus, and in this way, #LondonIsOpen adopts visual and discursive narratives of hospitality, emphasising that the city welcomes everyone: in the films, the opening doors of London's homes and shops and in the parade of different individuals and cultures on screen, this message is projected repeatedly, clearly, and firmly. If these narratives are indeed promoting an ethics of hospitality, a politics of cosmopolitan solidarity could be assumed as an underlying theme. Yet, this is a politics that is subdued, if not marginalised in the campaign.

Cosmopolitan openness is about hospitality but it is also a campaign for open markets. The open city does not only feed into a liberal vision of the city, but also taps and expands London's aggressive neoliberal orientation, as expressed in recent years' local and national policies of austerity. 'London is open for business' is one of the core #LondonIsOpen messages, especially on its official website and in mainstream media communication. Importantly, this economics-driven vision is marginalised on social media; in this case, the aesthetic cosmopolitanism of short films and interactive communication becomes prominent, tapping into emotional and ethical narratives of openness. The investment in aesthetics is neither coincidental nor a mere reflection of advertising agencies' predictable choice: London has for long built its economic power upon layers of established symbolic power. Thus, the emphasis on cultural narratives of openness does not contradict the economics-oriented ones. On the contrary, the story of London as an open city for people and corporations is persuasive precisely because it is always a story of the rich and productive encounters and mobilities upon which the city's symbolic power has been built (Georgiou 2013).

London is the city of film

The short film entitled *London is the city of film* is based on famous quotes from movies and literature that 'tell of London's uniqueness and openness to all those who live, visit and work in the city', according to the campaign's press release (Mayor of London 2016). As already noted, in the press release, London's openness refers to *the people*, both those inside and those coming in. The film represents a seamless collage of the voices and faces of famous actors, directors and the Mayor himself. The 12 celebrities in the film deliver individual lines that make up the 57-second film. Gemma Arterton, Richard Curtis, Louis Theroux, Amma

Asante, Cressida Bonas, Harry Enfield, Dominic Cooper, Noel Clarke, Jack Whitehall, Gurinder Chadha and Stephen Woolley, as well as Sadiq Khan recorded their lines at various locations around London. As noted on the Mayor's website: 'The #LondonIsOpen campaign was launched to spread the message that London remains united, full of creativity and open for business following the EU referendum in June' (2016). While the message 'open for business' is central to the Mayor's public talks and media interviews, this message is completely absent from *London is the city of film*. Rather, its narrative taps into emotional and ethical concerns surrounding the risks of London not being open, hospitable and diverse after Brexit. Indeed, the film represents an impassioned celebration of London's cosmopolitanism, as this is voiced by a carefully selected group of individuals.

Visually and in the faces of each speaker in the film we see the long history of migration, hospitality and conviviality: we see white English celebrities next to others of Asian and Black Caribbean backgrounds. They all merge in communicating an uninterrupted cosmopolitan message. 'In London everyone is different and that means anyone can fit in', says the director and producer Richard Curtis, followed by the film director Gurinder Chadha: 'It is a roost for every bird'. The Mayor, Sadiq Khan, adds his voice: 'Because it is not the walls that make the city, but the people who live within them'. And the actor and director Noel Clarke recites lyrics from *Mary Poppins*: 'There's things half in shadow and halfway in light, on the rooftops of London. Coo, what a sight!' in a poetic format, wearing a baseball cap and being surrounded by the busy streetlife of the city; the face reciting the words and the streets surrounding Noel Clarke are strikingly different to Mary Poppins' white English London. The visuality of the film aims to capture London's aesthetic and lived diversity in a warm, welcoming and unthreatening manner. Importantly, the film is in black and white, perhaps in an attempt to look more cinematic than factual, but also reflecting a nostalgic glance into London: a selective representation of a city that most will recognize and

many will desire. There is no doubt that the collage of represented ethnic and gender diversity is very carefully collated, even orchestrated, to project, not just a message of unity, but a message of unity in difference.

These cinematic representations of diversity can be read as a call to an ethics of hospitality, where as emphasised, everyone is welcome. Yet, there are two visible absences from this articulation of hospitality. Importantly, the non-white English participants in the film represent the established ethnic minorities – South Asian and Black Caribbean – while more recently settled diasporas, such as the Turkish, Arab, Cypriot or Polish diasporas are totally absent. This choice could be read as an attempt to avoid a direct confrontation with the most xenophobic claims for Brexit, as embraced by many popular media. In these claims, new migrants and diasporas are directly targeted as part of 'the problem' with the country's pre-Brexit 'openness'. Another important absence appears at the intersection of class and ethnicity: all accents in the film are eloquent, fluent and mostly variation of middle-class elocution. Intonations associated with working-class or minority Londoners are absent. Arguably, the largely common accents bring all speakers into a shared space of a linguistic order associated with symbolic power and social hierarchies (Bourdieu 1992). As Bourdieu argues, integration into a single 'linguistic community' reinforces ideological domination, as certain symbols become recognized as ordinary and universally shared (ibid.), marginalizing at the same time other linguistic and cultural experiences.

The clear and globally recognized pronunciation of all speakers, also complemented by subtitles in the film, reaffirm the commodification of a cosmopolitanism that is accessible and consumable among global audiences. Celebrities can speak the language of difference, yet this is a difference contained within a safe and commodified urban culture represented by celebrities. Thus, in the film, ethnic difference becomes the spectacle. Yet, the values that surround the recognition of ethnic difference are commodified and stripped from the

transformative politics of the street, nourishing instead 'the utopian romance in the eroticised imaginary' (Keith 2005: 108) of the diverse city.

To sum up, *London is the city of film* mobilises aesthetic and moral props associated with neoliberal cosmopolitanism: visionary, sensitive and firm on London being a welcoming, inclusive, global city but, at the same time, selective and hierarchical in terms of who speaks and on behalf of whom and in what kind of a voice. Its narration of diversity and of a cosmopolitan ethics assumes that both speakers and audiences are individual agents equally enjoying cosmopolitan values and lifestyles. Yet, the range of experiences outside this imaginary are fully silenced.

Responding to the film's liberal cosmopolitanism

Online and offline responses to the film were emotional, both on social media and in the focus group discussions. Converging in terms of values (openness, hospitality, diversity), responses diverge in their interpretation of what these values mean and on who they speak for and to. Responses are analysed and discussed below in two subsections, each corresponding to one of the two main themes recorded: neoliberal cosmopolitanism and vernacular cosmopolitanism.

Embracing neoliberal cosmopolitanism. The overarching cosmopolitan narrative of the film captures the imagination of many on social media and in the focus groups. There is an almost universal agreement with the representation of London as a cosmopolitan, diverse city (with the exception of 12 comments out of 317 on Facebook). This agreement is almost taken-for-

granted: a cosmopolitan position that represents the starting rather than the endpoint in urban imaginaries. The appeal of the line 'it [London] is a roost for every bird', cited by Chadha in the film, is evidence of the convergence of urban and cosmopolitan imaginaries (Binnie and Skeggs 2004; Cinar and Bender 2006). This is the most commented upon line of the film on Facebook, presenting vivid evidence that an ethics of hospitality is at the heart of Londoners' understanding of cosmopolitan openness. 'It's definitely about the moral way that the world is', said a young male focus group participant pointing to the film's welcoming message. Another young male respondent commented positively on the film: 'It shows people from all different backgrounds: age, ethnicity, gender'. The city's diversity is understood by many, both online and offline, as a fundamental element of openness: an open city is built on long histories of migration, as many noted. While Londoners in this study experience the city very differently, the official narrative of London's cosmopolitanism is finding most in agreement: 'London is a multicultural city' (male); 'I am a supporter of diversity and I'm sure everyone else should be' (female); 'Outside London people experience racism' (female). A sense that London is a city of refuge is not uncommon among most. Yet the convergence of respondents around the fundamental values of urban cosmopolitanism (diversity, hospitality, openness) is interpreted differently: for some being taken-for-granted and for others being under attack and fragile.

For those embracing the film's neoliberal cosmopolitanism, two subthemes appear as important: identification (identity) and aesthetics (consumption). Numerous respondents on Facebook and most in the middle-class students' focus group commented on how they could identify with the film's characters and narratives. 'Shows how diverse our city is', said a young male participant, linking this statement to the fact that the London Mayor is British Asian. 'He started from the bottom', he said in admiration and then asked: 'Did he come over?', getting a response from a female participant: 'Yes, he [the Mayor] is an immigrant'.

Most in this same focus group said that the film made them feel proud to be Londoners, a comment appearing repeatedly on Facebook too. When asked who the target audience of the film is, focus group participants pointed to themselves and one said: 'the good young audience' and another: 'I'd say we're the ones who are 100%' [sharing the values of the film]. A young female participant explained further why she could identify herself as being targeted and represented in this film: 'Because of what the actors are wearing'. The cosmopolitan, middle-class representations of individuals within the context of celebrity were warmly welcome by middle-class participants and a number of respondents on Facebook. For these Londoners, who have relatively privileged access to the city's material and symbolic resources, diversity, hospitality, celebrity and consumerism represent elements of life in the cosmopolitan city. For them, the selective representations in the film construct an urban reality they experience or they aspire to experience.

This is also evident in the middle-class participants' engagement with the film's aesthetics and positive message. They could all identify 'the nicer areas of London' (male) in the film; they all agreed that it is normal and expected to show the nice side of London in a film. Asked if anything is missing from these representations, a male participant said: 'you're not going to make it a horrible video, are you?', showing awareness that London is not only represented in the film, but also sold to audiences. This awareness of the branded city is confirmed in numerous comments on Facebook. Some are comments by London visitors and tourists who embrace the film because, as they note, it represents the city they love to visit, to shop, to enjoy. The commodification of the city through narratives of aesthetic cosmopolitanism is also expressed in the words of another male focus group participant. When asked to comment on the video's content he said: 'I was too busy trying to recognize all the celebrities so haven't paid much attention'. Almost all noticed the aesthetic

construction of London in the film through narratives of consumption; one of them for example identified 'the nice shop at London Bridge'.

Aesthetic cosmopolitanism captures the imagination of many responding on Facebook as well as the middle-class focus group participants. What becomes evident, is that the cosmopolitan values prominent in the film – diversity, openness, hospitality – represent a starting point for many privileged Londoners and London visitors to identify with the film. While these values appear as fundamental to identifying themselves, they also act as a springboard for self-making. Aesthetic cosmopolitanism links the cosmopolitan values represented in the film to their own. As individuals who freely move and consume in a diverse city and in an interconnected world, privileged respondents identify with openness as a quality and as a stance associated with their own individual freedom and identity.

Beyond neoliberal cosmopolitanism: vernacular responses. London is an open but also an unequal city. Neoliberal cosmopolitanism, as reflected in the film *London is the city of film,* focuses on the city's openness and ethics of hospitality but, at the same time, it sidelines inequalities by ignoring diversity's very different biographies and histories. The selective and ordered representation of openness and diversity was picked up in many online and offline responses. Responses coming primarily from those who experience the city as an unequal and hierarchical system embraced the campaign's ethics of hospitality, but rejected its neoliberal articulation. Most strikingly, a different ethics of hospitality was revealed in a number of vernacular cosmopolitan responses on Facebook. I refer to these responses as vernacular, as they are tied to the experience of the many different layers of the city and its alterity. Unlike neoliberal cosmopolitanism, as will be shown below, these responses are less about vision and more about a politics – or the need for a politics – of solidarity and care.

Within the main theme of vernacular cosmopolitanism, two prominent subthemes can be identified in the online and offline responses to the film: inequality and collective values. Speaking through and about experiences of inequality, some respondents adopted a reflexive dialogue with the film's articulation of hospitality: while welcoming it, they also critiqued its politics for enhancing privilege and marginalizing difference. One of the film's lines – 'When a man, or a woman, is tired of London, then they are tired of life' – generated passionate responses on Facebook:

> I used to think when I was tired of London I'd be tired of life. Now I'm just tired. As a single working mother not on benefits almost all of my income goes to rent and childcare and all of my time working or commuting. The city is becoming less and less for the average family and certainly [not] for the average single parent.

> Mr Sadiq Khan, need your attention. Yesterday it happened. A very awful incident with a woman she was in hijab. Someone tried to remove from her in yours (sic.) city London. Kindly make freedom well known for every one specially (sic.) for women.

These responses represent a painful realization of the contradictions that an ethics of hospitality involves. The core cosmopolitan values of the film – and of the city's leadership – are shared by these participants. Yet, importantly, those who speak are the ones who also need these values, not in order to construct an identity, but to find a place in a city which they see as increasingly less welcoming and open to social and cultural difference. In this painful realization of inequality and discrimination, there is also a projection of collective values vis-à-vis the individual project that liberal cosmopolitanism promotes. The call to the Mayor to protect Muslim women is a call for hospitality for those who are not *like us* (as often assumed

in cosmopolitan imaginaries), but who indeed are part of the city. The people who - in Derrida's and Silverstone's hospitality - seek refuge, yet who, in the city in London still depend on an ethics of hospitality, even though they are themselves Londoners.

The complex requirements of an ethics of hospitality are also captured in the two focus groups constituted by Alevi Turkish and Kurdish youth and working class youth of diverse ethnic backgrounds. Among these participants, a cosmopolitan commitment remains prominent. As a male participant in the Alevi focus group said, in explaining what he saw as the main message of the film: 'London's a multicultural city open to anyone. You'll fit in. There's opportunity'. And a female participant added, in reaffirming a commitment to the cosmopolitan city: 'It's the best thing there is. It's very moving, political message out there'. Yet, her identification with the cosmopolitan city was itself political: 'You know, showing the world that London's a very, very nice place, but that's all it's [the film] saying. There are so many problems that people, citizens, that citizens themselves see...Go out on the street at night and you see tonnes of people are homeless'. For working class and ethnic minority participants, the props of aesthetic cosmopolitanism are not only unattractive, they are alienating. In a response that projects the need for solidarity against celebrity, an Alevi male participant said:

> He [The Mayor] tried to bring a lot of celebrities to it, because the celebrity culture's big, obviously. So [he] tried to pass on a message through celebrities but for me it just, the celebrity influence is nothing to me. Who knows? London is open, Central London is open, but everywhere is [sic.] dying from poverty.

Similar sentiments are expressed by the young working-class focus group participants. The selected people in the film are 'diverse, yet upmarket', as one female participant put it,

identifying a commodified difference, which is distant to her. Alongside her criticism, two others wondered where the Muslim Londoners and the Polish Londoners were… absent, as they noted.

For some, the critique of aesthetic cosmopolitanism is a critique of neoliberalism. A young woman in the working-class group became frustrated with the representation of London's diversity and the staged ordinariness that excludes real people's experiences: 'Go a bit deeper than just black, white, Asian or whatever. Get more in there'. And others used this campaign as a point of reflection on the contradictions of the values and realities that surround them, especially racism, poverty and inequality. One of the male participants in this same focus group picked up on these contradictions to emphasise that London, the city in which he was born and bred, is not hospitable for him:

> [Living in London] is extortionary. So, like, I'm guessing they only need a certain type of person or people in London in the next, let's say, ten, or 15 years and I might not even be here myself. So, I don't know if I'm really a Londoner or not. I don't really know the rules.

This response is a painful realization that the openness of the city does not extend to those who need it. As media hospitality applies selectively to certain voices and certain experiences, some participants felt even more alienated from the open city and its representations. For this young man of Caribbean background, the inequalities of the city which forms part of his family and personal history, and whose story he is part of, are growing and hospitality is being denied. Hospitality is redirected to those who can afford it, participants in both working-class and ethnic minority groups noted again and again. For them, the film's selective representations enhance urban inequalities that deny them a voice.

Critical and reflexive responses in these two focus groups and in a series of comments on Facebook point to liberal cosmopolitan's limitations. For many, fundamental values associated with cosmopolitan ethics become reduced to a set of aesthetic but alienating media representations.

Yet, and against this selective extension of (media) hospitality, those experiencing urban inequalities articulate a politics of dissent through reference to what the city ought to be. This politics is prominent, both in the focus groups and in a number of comments on Facebook. Against the similar-sounding voices of the film's protagonists, a male respondent on Facebook speaks for the voices and experiences of marginality that are missing: 'Where's the cockneys, the old skool east Enders (sic.), the Bermondsey and Brixton sounding boys…I see actors, I don't see any actual Londoners'. And in another's words: 'London is open…if you have money'. Such comments can be read as a claim to the right to the city (Lefebvre 2003). The right to the city directly challenges urban inequalities as it emphasizes that all, beyond class, ethnicity and gender, have the right to participate in shaping the city and enjoying its material and symbolic resources. Such dissent from the film's representational narrative is not only political, but also points to another kind of cosmopolitan politics that needs and depends on solidarity and on inclusive participation (Benhabib 2006; Calhoun 2012).

What ethics and who is hospitality for?

This case demonstrates that, more often than not, the global city presents us with cosmopolitanism's divided ethical frames, rather than with divides between parochialism and cosmopolitanism. The city's long history of migration and its diverse socio-cultural assemblages have advanced openness and hospitality. These values are widely shared, though

they remain conditional. Not unlike in its military definition, *the open city* remains unprotected and fragile for many Londoners. Not least when it comes to the ethical predicaments tied to its internal diversity and inequalities.

As shown above, neoliberal cosmopolitanism works with familiar and well-established narratives of aesthetic cosmopolitanism. These are visible in the celebratory narratives of openness where values of diversity and world interconnectedness go hand in hand with urban worldliness and economic prosperity. While it draws from cosmopolitan ethics of openness and hospitality, it is a project that negates these very values when it comes to responsibility and collective sharing of the city's resources. For many middle-class Londoners, there is no other way to be, to think, and to consume, but within a cosmopolitan frame. This way of life is reflexive and aware of difference and its complexities. However, its ethics is limited to acknowledgement of diversity but without commitment to it; it is an ethics of respect without recognition. As one of the young participants said: 'You're not going to make it a horrible video, are you?', showing he understands that the open city is more than an aesthetically pleasing commodity. Yet, the least pleasing side of the city is one that should stay hidden, voiceless. The process of making visible is a relation of power, argues Keith (2005), and the invisibility of those who actually need hospitality is acceptable and legitimized within the media of neoliberal cosmopolitanism. In this way, neoliberal cosmopolitanism reproduces a moral(-istic) vision that assumes a shared experience, which however is not widely shared. This is a vision which is blind to inequalities, especially when framed as aesthetic cosmopolitanism. Neoliberal cosmopolitanism could be even seen as controlled difference (Douthat 2016), a new order (Sennett 1970) incarnated as ordered disorder, or as the mere tolerance of real difference. Yet, tolerance, as Derrida (2001) reminds us, denies recognition.

How do we understand vernacular cosmopolitanism's ethical orientation in the context of Brexit's post-cosmopolitan politics? In the contemporary cosmopolitan but unequal city,

vernacular cosmopolitanism cannot be content, proud or happy. Rather, vernacular cosmopolitanism appears as sober, injured and changing, precisely as the world around it is changing. It is aware of the intersectionality of discrimination that brings together experiences of ethnicity, race, gender, and class in the neoliberal city. Not unlike neoliberal cosmopolitanism, vernacular cosmopolitanism is about experience, yet the experience of inequalities makes it more difficult to be self-referential and defined through consumption. Thus, vernacular cosmopolitanism is more reflexive and aware of its limits and increasingly interested in what and how others think, live and are represented in the mediapolis (Silverstone 2007).

Conclusions

The representational politics of cosmopolitanism, as revealed in #LondonIsOpen, mobilised Londoners' shared imagination but also reaffirmed their separated lives in a city, which is both cosmopolitan and divided. The above analysis contests simplistic divides between parochialism and cosmopolitanism drawn along class and age. *The open city*, like its different scholarly and literary articulations suggest, powerfully captures the possibility of recognition of diversity, celebration of difference, and of inclusive imagination. Yet, as suggested in its military definition, *the open city* is also a surrendered city, especially for those who have few resources to enjoy its neoliberal openness. As those embracing vernacular cosmopolitanism repeatedly note, cosmopolitan vision is constantly crashed by the city's inequalities. Thus, the divides of neoliberal and vernacular cosmopolitanism represent more than different narrations of urban imaginaries. Rather, they discursively represent experiences of divided urban lives, which become incorporated in cosmopolitan urbanities. In reading urban

dwellers' competing visions of *the open city*, we read the deep tensions of the unequal *and* cosmopolitan global city. While neoliberal cosmopolitanism sustains a confident, even aggressive, projection of cosmopolitanism's rightfulness, vernacular cosmopolitanism appears reflexive, wounded and increasingly politicized.

Against neoliberal cosmopolitanism's blindness to inequalities, the unease of vernacular responses invites readings of cosmopolitanism as a site of moral and political possibilities. The ethics of hospitality that vernacular cosmopolitanism incorporates is fragile in its conviction, but precisely because of that, is reveals a collective vision and a politics of care, perhaps even a hope for a politics of solidarity: solidarity for those who are increasingly marginalized on the city's material and digital streets. This is an ethics that is defined, offered and denied from the position of internal alterity, from the migrants, the refugees, and the poor – those whose lives have for long been defined through acts of solidarity or their denial. Their unease with celebratory narratives of openness points to a different ethics of hospitality that contests the – paradoxically – universal claim to hospitality of neoliberal cosmopolitanism. This is an ethics *and* a politics that goes beyond identity politics (Benhabib 2006). It is an ethics of shared responsibility and care as it speaks *through* and *to* the experience of inequality; it is also a politics that sees and hears those who experience injustice and who need rights and recognition. As such, the grounded in the urban, messy and contradictory experience of openness, vernacular cosmopolitanism cannot but contest representations of openness that negate justice in the media and beyond.

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[i] Following the Referendum of June 2016, demonstrations in the streets of London, as well as campaigns to separate London, its economy and its migration policy from the rest of the country found expression online and offline (Roberts 2017).