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PLACES OF EVERYDAY COSMOPOLITANISMS:
EAST-EUROPEAN CONSTRUCTION WORKERS IN LONDON

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Abstract: This paper illustrates how cosmopolitanisms among East-European construction workers in London are shaped by the localised spatial contexts in which encounters with difference take place. Their cosmopolitan attitudes and behaviours arise from both survival strategies and from a taste for cultural goods, thus challenging the elite/working-class divide in current cosmopolitanism literature. Through semi-structured interviews and participant photographs of 24 East-European construction workers who have arrived in London since the European Union expansion in May 2004, this paper illustrates how these 'new' European citizens, develop varying degrees and multitudes of cosmopolitanisms in everyday places such as building sites and shared houses. These cosmopolitanisms are shaped by their transnational histories, nationalistic sentiments, and access to social and cultural capital in specific localised contexts. Thus subjective perceptions of gendered, ethnic, and racial notions of 'others' that are carried across national boundaries are reinforced or challenged as their encounters with 'others' produce perceptions of marginalisation or empowerment in these places. This paper finally suggests that cosmopolitanism should be understood not simply through class but rather through access to power and capital in everyday localised contexts.

INTRODUCTION

Cosmopolitanism, in its most fundamental sense implies openness to difference. As the process of enlargement of social, cultural, and personal agendas, and as infinite ways of becoming open to 'others' (Pollock et. al, 2000), cosmopolitanism has recently made a comeback in studies on globalisation and cultural politics. Traditionally, cosmopolitans have been conceptualised as elites (Beck, 2002; Hannerz, 2007) who 'pursue refined consumption, and are open to all forms of otherness' (Hiebert, 2002, p212), but various scholars now suggest that global elites ironically have limited engagement with the 'other', and a 'rather

restricted corridor of physical movement' (Vertovec and Cohen, 2002, p7; also Calhoun, 2002) between global cities. A recent surge of scholarly work on migration focussing on migrants' transnational spatial practices (Kelly and Lusis, 2006; Wilding, 2007), social and political identities (Ehrkamp, 2006; Mohan, 2006; Vertovec, 2001), and relationships with the State (Koser, 2007; Leitner and Ehrkamp, 2006; Morris, 1997; Zierhofer, 2007), suggest that working-class migrants while maintaining 'intense linkages and exchanges with sending and receiving contexts' (Vertovec, 2001, p575) also perform varieties of cosmopolitan behaviours. Scholars now suggest that these 'working-class cosmopolitans' (Werbner, 1999) are open to difference neither as an ethico-political project, nor as conscious choice, but as a practical orientation towards 'getting by' - one that requires a strategic engagement with others through coerced choices in order to survive in new environments.

The division between elite and working-class cosmopolitanisms is under scrutiny in this paper through narratives and experiences of East-European[1] construction workers in London. As newly arrived migrants in the UK after the European Union expansion in May 2004[2], these post-socialist actors now have legal access to labour markets previously inaccessible from socialist national boundaries. In London they encounter 'others' in their everyday experiences of living and working in the city- encounters that make them not just conscious of difference but also reflect upon their subjective positions on gender and race carried across national boundaries. Despite being of 'working-class' their cosmopolitan behaviours and attitudes illustrate an ambiguity between the cultural consumption of 'others' and coerced choices for survival. Through the study of East European migrants in this paper,

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[1] In examining cosmopolitan experiences of all these nationalities under one category is not to homogenise them but to suggest that the new wave of migrants have distinctly specific geographical and socio-political contexts.

[2] The EU expansion in 2004 includes eight States are Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia, whose nationals were given unlimited rights to live and work in the UK. Two others Romania and Bulgaria joined in January 2007 but with reduced rights.

I examine the limits and possibilities of maintaining cosmopolitan thought through class distinctions.

'Working-Class' Cosmopolitanisms?

The traditional elite bias in cosmopolitan conceptualisation was challenged by Werbner's (1999) work on South Asian 'working class cosmopolitans' who gained knowledge and familiarity with other cultures through 'specific kinds of focused networks' (p20). Other scholars (Malcomson, 1998) have provided evidence of actually-existing cosmopolitan attitudes among working-class migrants that 'involve(s) individuals with limited choices deciding to enter into something larger than their immediate cultures'. Their attitudes towards 'others' are shaped by the triviality of conducting everyday practices of living and working, by 'building bridges of cooperation across difference' (Sandercock, 1998). As Cohen (2004) suggests 'such non-elite cosmopolites need to know how to provide services … need to develop foreign language skills, [and] knowledge of migration policies' (p145), which often means a 'mundane cultural interaction' (p148) with other transnational actors. This has been referred to as 'ordinary cosmopolitanism' (Vertovec and Cohen, 2002; Lamont and Aksartova, 2002) - a condition where subjects engage with cultural difference strategically, as a way of making necessary adjustments in particular places.

As Appiah (2006) cautions however, cosmopolitans are not those who are simply engaged with other cultures and practices without approving, let alone adopting them. While Werbner's (1999) working-class cosmopolitans were able to negotiate through difference in different parts of the world by connecting to transnational networks, it was not clear how or whether their actually-existing cosmopolitanisms adopted any aspect of other cultures beyond that required for survival. Moreover, the increasing focus on survival strategies as coerced interaction with 'others' precludes other forms of cosmopolitanism related to consumption or aestheticisation that might exist among working-classes. Indeed, there seems to be a sharp

distinction in current literature between the 'refined taste' of elite cosmopolitans and the 'survival strategies' of working-class cosmopolitans. The question remains- are working-classes able to perform other cosmopolitanisms that are produced not just from a need to survive in an alien environment, but also from a desire to engage with 'others' beyond survival? Indeed, is it really adequate to talk about cosmopolitanisms as primarily class-based?

These questions are particularly relevant to East European construction workers in London. They are unlike Calhoun's (2002) 'frequent travellers' with privileged access to social and cultural capital, and unlike refugees whose are bereft of the privileges of national belonging. As legal citizens of a 'new' Europe with full rights to live and work in the UK, East-European construction workers challenge the elite/working-class divide in current conceptualising on cosmopolitanism. Unlike elite cosmopolitans, East European migrants remain firmly embedded within their national spaces, carrying with them a 'ready residue' of sentiments about race and ethnicity - a common feature of nationalism in socialist discourse (Garapich, 2005). At the same time, their marginalisation and representation of the working-class as 'passive and defenceless' (Stenning, 2005) under post-socialism, have shaped a consumerist and social mobility attitude among them in their host countries (Garapich, 2005). In London however, their lack of cultural capital in English language or building skills puts them at a distinct disadvantage in the labour market (Jordan, 2002). These complex circumstances where they are marginalised because of their subjective positions within class and nationality and lack of access to cultural capital, but empowered through their legal status as 'new' Europeans, shape their attitudes and behaviours towards 'others'. In attempting to empower themselves and becoming socially mobile, interactions between East European migrants and 'others' in London are shaped by associations with those perceived in positions of power within the hierarchies of race and ethnicity (Eade et. al, 2006) as well as social and

cultural capital. These interactions produce particular 'trajectories, projects, and scenarios' (Grillo, 2000, p201) of East-European cosmopolitan attitudes and behaviours.

Thus, while literature on cosmopolitanism has privileged a class-based North-South exchange focussing on elites, refugees, and expatriates (Beck 2002; Werbner, 1999; Mohan, 2006; Cohen, 2004; Hannerz, 2007), the multitudes of attitudes and behaviours towards 'others' produced during East-West intra-European exchange, exhibited by the 'new' citizens of Europe have largely been overlooked. As East-European construction workers develop 'practical-evaluative knowledge about the political and economic conditions in the destination countries' (Morawska, 2001, p58), they encounter those who are racially different from them, in ways that often produce internal conflicts and contradictions. Their cosmopolitanism should then be examined on the basis of whether they can exhibit openness and engagement with 'others' despite these conflicts (Kurasawa, 2004). This has been alluded to in two recent reports on East European (Spencer et. al., 2007) and Polish (Eade et. al., 2006) migrants in the UK, which have both indicated that while high levels of exposure to ethnic minorities occur in London, East-Europeans maintain ambiguous relationships with them. This might be an 'uneasy mix of parochial attachments and cosmopolitan ideals' existing alongside varying degrees of cultural insularity, as they 'engage in different combinations of cultural maintenance and assimilation of the mainstream and other cultures' (Entrikin, 1999, p280). In this paper, I suggest that this is shaped by their subjective location within power hierarchies, their nationalistic sentiments, as well as the social or cultural capital that they are able to mobilise under the specific circumstances of the interaction in highly localised everyday contexts.

Situating Everyday Cosmopolitanisms

Cosmopolitanism can be a 'difficult, uneasy, and radically incomplete effort' (Fine and Boon, 2007, p6), a continuous struggle to negotiate the boundaries between self and

otherness through a set of beliefs and practices forged in particular localities. Yet, cosmopolitans have often been conceptualised as citizens of the world, stubbornly refusing to be 'situated'. There is sufficient literature (Anderson, 2004; Binnie and Skeggs, 2004; Entrikin, 1999; Harvey, 2000) in geography however, that indicate a 'spatial turn' in cosmopolitan thinking. As Szerszynski and Urry (2002) note, cosmopolitanism 'has to be filled with specific and often rather different content in differently situated cultural worlds' (p469). This is particularly evident among migrants who make use of the 'interstices of places' (Hiebert 2002, p212), through their everyday practices, where the location of these practices in particular places produces multiple and divergent forms of 'glocalised cosmopolitanisms' (Roudometof, 2005; Robertson, 1995). As Cheah and Robbins (1998) suggest, cosmopolitanisms are located within a domain of contested politics- or 'cosmopolitics' that are produced on a series of scales within and beyond the nation.

Locating cosmopolitanism within geographical scales has occurred at regional, national, or urban levels. Harvey's (2000) notion of 'geographic specificity' proposes to examine the processes that shape and produce cosmopolitan visions of the State. Entrikin (1999) suggests that as nationalism becomes outmoded and undesirable both in academia and cultural politics, a 'cosmopolitan place' can be realised from a collective identity and democratic political community in European Union. On the other hand, there has been increasing discussions of the ways that cities have been conceived and marketed as cosmopolitan spaces that attempt to exclude particular forms of 'otherness' (Binnie and Skeggs, 2004; Young et. al., 2006). While the urban or regional scales are valid sites for examining cosmopolitanism, the actually-existing and everyday cosmopolitanisms of East European migrants in London suggest that national space still remain valid for the cosmopolitan project, but also significant is the specificity of their everyday spheres of experience- an issue that has not been fully examined in current literature.

The ways in which cosmopolitanism is shaped in everyday places, was partly addressed by Anderson's (2004) 'folk ethnography' in Reading Market in Philadelphia. Anderson's cosmopolitans however, were open to diversity in ways that allowed them to interact often positively with 'others'- perhaps because of his focus on 'neutral territories' of the marketplace rather than more personal places. Attitudes towards other cultures are not always one of 'appreciation'; indeed often contradictory versions prevail (Hiebert, 2002), which suggest that cosmopolitan attitudes are always imbued with 'partiality and vulnerability' (Ley, 2004, p162) that are also shaped by the nature of physical proximity and interactions. Thus as places become more private and intimate, different kinds of subjectivities, and social and cultural capital are mobilised while interacting with others- a phenomenon that has significant impact on cosmopolitan attitudes and behaviours. Examining how such attitudes and behaviours among East-European construction workers are shaped by interactions in particular places will help in understanding the social and cultural geography of cosmopolitanism as well as its limitations and possibilities.

In this paper, I extend the multitudes of literature on cosmopolitanism as class-based, to an understanding of cosmopolitanism as situated. This allows us to explore cosmopolitanism as connected to a notion of 'habitus' (Bourdieu, 2002), where everyday practices in places such as the home or workplace, give value and meanings to different forms of (social or cultural) capital, subjective positions, and access to power. The habitus can be understood as working through different social and spatial boundaries, making it both part of subjectivities and physical locations (Kelly and Lusis, 2006). These subjective locations become critical to the shaping of practices and hence attitudes towards and interactions with others in everyday places. Rethinking cosmopolitanism through a notion of habitus thus makes it possible to reconceptualise cosmopolitanism as spatial- where forms

and degrees of openness to others are shaped by localised spatial contexts where encounters with 'others' take place.

In this paper, cosmopolitanism is scrutinised in the broad sense of openness towards other people, cultures, and ways of life in particular localities. The various conceptions of cosmopolitanism discussed above are used as tools that will lead the interpretation of the narratives and spatial contexts of East European migrants. In doing so, I interrogate cosmopolitanism as a spatial concept. I question the limits of class-based binaries of elite/working-class cosmopolitanisms, and suggest instead that varieties of cosmopolitanisms are produced in a variety of localised contexts, each of which provide different access to power and capital, and produce different attitudes and behaviours towards others.

RESEARCHING EVERYDAY COSMOPOLITANISMS

The methodology consisted of a qualitative inquiry and analysis. Participants were recruited for a two stage interview during October 2006-May 2007. In the first instance, a semi-structured interview was conducted where participants were asked to discuss their experiences of migration and of living and working in London. At the end of this interview, they were provided with a disposable camera. They were instructed to take pictures of places which they would like to discuss or show as part of their life in London. The questions in the second interview were initiated through their pictures, which provided non-textual narratives of participants' experiences. This approach to a 'participatory' visual methodology provided a means to discuss participants' spaces in their own terms. This also meant that we could include into the conversation, places that had not been part of the first interview.

In total, 24 participants (one Bulgarian, two Romanians, one Ukrainian, one Latvian, and the rest Polish) were interviewed. Most of them had arrived in London by coach across Europe and very few had arrived by air. Many participants had arrived before May 2004 as tourists or students and had stayed on illegally. The inclusion of their countries within the

European Union in May 2004 had legally empowered them, although the Romanian and Bulgarian participants remained illegal. The interviews were conducted in English and Polish. For some of the Polish participants who opted for a Polish interview, I made use of an onsite translator and the interviews were later translated and transcribed to English. The use of a Polish translator meant that the participants could express themselves comfortably in their own language although speaking in English was understood by them as a sign of their social mobility. This became clear when one participant was offended when I requested him to speak in Polish because of his poor English. While my presence as an Asian researcher generated curiosity and sometimes embarrassment among participants while recounting racist encounters, the presence of a Polish translator generated parallel interviews- when participants interviewed the translator on her migrant status. The transcriptions in English were done by the same translator. This helped produce transcripts which better reflected the dynamics of the interview situation through detailed subtexts about the cultural or linguistic meanings of certain words used in the conversation. The translator was also asked to produce reports about her perceptions of her relationship with each participant, which helped to understand the dynamics of the interview and interpret the conversations in this context.

In the following sections, I discuss the economic and political contexts in which there has been a large inflow of East European migrants entering low-skilled work in the construction sector in London and living in shared houses in the rental market. In the second part, I use personal accounts of some of these construction workers to suggest how openness to 'others' in the everyday places of building sites and houses are shaped by different forms of interaction, physical proximity, and subjective positions of power. In the conclusions, I reflect on the importance of examining localised contexts in understanding cosmopolitanisms.

EAST EUROPEAN CONSTRUCTION WORKERS IN LONDON

London is of particular importance in understanding everyday cosmopolitanisms amongst East European migrants. The impact of an increasingly flexible global labour market in London in recent years has seen a rise in migrants from across the world working here in different sectors. This has made London one of the most diverse cities in United Kingdom. In the 2001 Census, London showed evidence of its intense history of migration from all parts of the world with ethnic minority groups making up 29% of its population (CRE, 2007). This figure increased to 40% when White ethnic minorities, such as Turks and the Irish were taken into account.

While migration to the UK and especially London during the 20th century has been dominated by those from the Commonwealth, there is also a history of migration from East-European countries since the Second World War (McDowell, 2005; Sword, 1996). The most significant impact on the migration from Eastern Europe into the UK however, has been the recent accession of eight East-European States (called A8 states) to the European Union (EU) in May 2004, where nationals from these countries were given full rights to live in and enter into any form of employment in the UK. In comparison to the A8 nationals, Bulgarian and Romanian citizens, whose countries joined the EU in January 2007 were given limited rights to work only in seasonal agricultural labour and in the food processing industry. This means that those who work in the building trades continue to do so illegally.

In February 2004, the UK government introduced the Worker's Registration Scheme (WRS) which required all A8 nationals entering to work in the UK to register with the Home Office. From May 2004 to March 2007, 630,000[3] individuals have registered with the WRS (Home Office, 2007). Nearly two thirds (65%) of those registered are from Poland, followed

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[3] DEFRA (2005) found that the number of eligible workers who had not enrolled was close to 15%. As a result, the WRS records underestimate the numbers of A8 nationals.

by Lithuania 10% and Slovakia 10%. These workers are male (58%), young (82% between 18-34 years) and without dependents (93%) in the UK (Home Office, 2007). London now has the second largest concentration (15%) of WRS registered workers in the UK (Home Office, 2007).

There are particular features of the London construction sector (HSE, 2005) that has made it particularly attractive as an entry-door for newly arrived low-skilled A8 nationals. Firstly, the construction industry is currently experiencing a 'boom' as a major driver of the UK economy, with London contributing an output of £8 billion (5% of the UK economy) each year (HPSC, 2005). Approximately 230,000 people (roughly 5% of London's workforce) work in the construction sector, and construction workers are now paid above the national average. These workers are predominantly male (90%), only 13% of workers are from black or minority ethnic groups, and only 20% are non-UK born (HPSC, 2005).

Secondly, the construction sector often employs informal working practices- paying workers cash-in-hand and not recording them in the accounts. Finally, there are very low levels of training and accreditation required for entry into the construction sector. Combined with the fact that at the moment, the construction sector is also facing a huge skills shortage[4] (CIOB, 2006), it is easier for East European migrants to find low-skilled (and often low paid) work within the construction sector, with little or no construction or language skills, and completely invisible to the authorities. Figure 1, shows the increasing numbers of East-European, particularly Polish migrants entering the industry in the past five years.

Figure 1: Composition of non-UK construction workers (Compiled by author from Labour Force Survey, 2006)

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[4] It is expected that London will need 12,880 new workers a year, including 1,670 for wood trades and interior fit-outs and 1,390 for electrical trades and installation (CSN, 2006).

Their employment in the construction sector however, has a direct impact on their housing location. The distribution of building sites across the city and the temporal nature of building work means that their decision to live in particular areas of London is influenced by the location of their workplaces. Spencer et. al. (2007) note in their study that 30% of their East European respondents cite employment as a reason for moving accommodation. Participants in this research too are highly mobile in their housing context- they have made between one and seven house moves since 2004. They often choose to sub-let rooms in apartments or houses in order to reduce their rents- a trade-off that is acceptable in the context of their mobility (Spencer et. al., 2007). Thus shared houses, often with complete strangers take on a new meaning in their lives. Sharing a flat or a house with others provides an affordable way to live in the city- close to work, public transport, and other amenities. It is also in these places that they are often 'forced' to interact with those different from them.

COSMOPOLITANISM IN A GLOBAL CITY

Recently, the connections between cosmopolitanism and transnational mobility have been under increased scrutiny. Participants in this study embody a range of mobility patterns, their movement through, and relationship with these places shaped by wider social, cultural, and political contexts. Many had lived in or travelled to other countries before arriving to the UK- United States, Australia, France, Sweden, Germany, and so on- as tourists, construction workers, or as low-skilled workers. While none identify themselves explicitly as cosmopolitans, those participants who had travelled globally illustrate a variety of attitudes towards others that incorporate elements of 'openness and conviviality' (Appiah, 2006). These participants are similar to those who are labelled as 'searchers' (Eade et. al., 2006, p11) - who are intentionally unpredictable in their future plans and like Calhoun's (2002) cosmopolitans, argue for their place as one open to the world.

This is evident in the case of Krystian, a 47 year old Polish handyman. Krystian had worked as an army officer in Krakow and had never thought that communism would collapse or that he would ever leave the 'socialist camp'. After the collapse of socialism however, Krystian left Krakow, and has been on the move since then.

> Now, when I look at my life, I am a traveller. And, when I count it all now, before it used to be approximately five - seven years, now it has become like the border of three years, two years, I need to change the place. … but, I do not know, for now, it is difficult for me to, as I said, I am on like a- crossroads. I do not know, I do not know yet which, which road I will choose- this, or the other, I have so many. (Krystian, Translated from Polish)

Krystian's desire to identify himself as a traveller shows a certain 'rootless cosmopolitanism' (Hannerz, 2006) that despite connections to different places refuses to tie oneself to a specific place. His journeys across the world however, were shaped by his 'parochial' networks. Krystian moved to the United States when he found a job as a breakfast chef through his aunt who lived in New Jersey. His plan had been to bring his wife over but as she refused to join him, he returned to Krakow after three years. On return, their marriage broke down, and Krystian left Krakow again to come to London where his nephew lived. Krystian's mobility is thus a process of negotiation, a process of improving his circumstances through transnational familial connections existing beyond national spaces.

Despite his 'rootless' identity, Krystian observes how people live in other places- an experience that has changed him profoundly. His travels were been intended to become a 'citizen of the world' but to negotiate and access global labour markets and capital, often under very difficult circumstances. This nevertheless, has made him deeply aware of and critique nationalistic sentiments within Poland that has shaped the cosmopolitan trajectories of thousands of Poles who grew up during socialism and arrived in England recently. His

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cosmopolitanism is shaped not by claims to universalism through 'independent means, expensive tastes, or a globe-trotting lifestyle' (Robbins, 1998), but by an inward reflexivity of his national history, and hence of his own identity- one which is deeply rooted and at the same time inherently global.

> Maybe it [racism] also stemmed from the fact that before that we had not gone anywhere, but we were locked the whole time. Yes, in the eighties, I went to Hungary, or to Bulgaria, or to Romania, or to Berlin, I went, I saw. But these were short trips, and I perceived it differently. Because, because what there was, that we were fed this propaganda- in television, books- they were all lies. And that is why now, looking at- do not translate that- but when you look at all the people that come here and cry out 'Poland for Poles' or this or that. That is the way we are, because we were brought up like that for so many years, we were taught that. We were not taught tolerance towards other nations, all of that. It now comes out as our penance, and it is still inside us. (Krystian, Translated from Polish)

Krystian's encounters with diversity in London deeply challenged his beliefs and value systems brought across from a national space, where very different attitudes towards 'others' have been shaped. Further, Krystian's request not to translate this part of the conversation also illustrates his embarrassment at recounting this aspect of Polish identity to an Asian researcher. He hastens to add that coming to London has made him see difference in a 'completely different way'- one that is a 'normal' part of everyday life. Thus Krystian's cosmopolitanism is a universal respect for difference and for human beings. His obligation to others stretches beyond spatial boundaries- one that is distanciated, yet at the same time situated through reference to localised contexts.

Drawing upon national spaces while reflecting upon difference, is also common among younger and less-travelled participants. Jan, a 23 year-old labourer (training as a

decorator) arrived in London with his father three weeks before the interview from Lublin, a small town in Poland. Like Krystian, Jan too found employment through his sister who already lived and worked in the city. Unlike Krystian, Jan, who grew up in post-socialist Poland did not adopt a reflexive critique of the socialist state. Instead, he commented on the actually existing attitudes towards 'others' in contemporary Polish society, one where his Church non-attendance had generated gossip for many days.

> And the fact that so many nationalities live here, Chinese, Japanese, black, fair ones…It would not work in Poland though, because if the priest would see the covered one- holy water and *blessing for the way* [5]; and here people live with one another, they do not care if someone walks down the street, some black person or something. There is something different there, I do not know how they did that, so many nationalities live together and function somehow. (Jan, translated from Polish)

Like Featherstone's (1990) cosmopolitans, Jan reflected an 'aesthetic stance to divergent cultural experiences' (p9). Part of this was evident in his openness towards cultural goods. 'I went to some Chinese restaurant -very tasty. *I am trying a lot of new things* [with emphasis], because in Poland, like especially in Lublin, there was not a wide choice' Jan explained. Thus when Jan talked about other cultures, other cuisines, and other people, he stressed that he was still 'discovering' new things, a 'cosmopolitan curiosity' (Appiah, 2006) that has been flagged as the realm of global elites (see Robbins', 1988 critique of Hannerz). This curiosity extended to the way Jan observed 'other' women.

> Well, obviously with the Polish ones, the differences are visible with different nationalities, rather than with English. But for example, the biggest differences are with black ones, Japanese, you know, or Indian ones, … I really like Japanese girls' eyes, again Indian ones, the darker complexion and figure, they are really nice in

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[5] An expression in Polish when someone wants to get rid of a problem easily and quickly.

terms of figure; and black ones the lips, also different breasts and bum, you know.

(Jan, translated from Polish)

Although Jan's attitude towards difference derives from an awareness of the bodies of racial and coloured 'other' women; he adds that if he could speak English he would date them. Personal alliances with Japanese or Indian women did not present contradictions for Jan. The nature of his openness towards Indian and Japanese women shows that this is not just a curiosity but also a desire to engage very personally with 'others'- restricted only by a lack of cultural capital. He adds that he likes the 'forwardness' of the English girls who attempt to speak to him in clubs which he visits with his Polish friends- a quality uncommon amongst Polish girls back in his hometown because as he explained 'Poland is more of a backwater in comparison to what I see here'. Jan's openness towards possible alliances with 'other' women can be understood as a form of cosmopolitanism that is limited by a lack of access to cultural capital, but one that attempts to adopt difference in one's personal life.

The experiences of Krystian and Jan illustrate how different forms of openness towards 'others' are developed and operationalised under different spatial circumstances. While both participants have developed degrees of 'cosmopolitan' attitudes towards others through their encounters with diversity and critiques of nationalistic sentiments, these attitudes can only be mobilised as 'cosmopolitan' performances through specific forms of cultural capital- in this case English language. This becomes significant in the case of Jan whose 'cosmopolitanism' is limited to the consumption of cultural goods. Thus while their cosmopolitan attitudes develop from their transnational histories, subjective perceptions of nationality, race, ethnicity, and gender, the degree and nature of their cosmopolitan engagement are limited by their access to specific forms of cultural capital.

The Building Site and beyond

The building site was significant as a workplace where specific types of social and cultural capital acquired paramount importance. These in turn shaped specific forms of interactions between participants, and their colleagues, supervisors, and clients. As mentioned previously, building sites in the UK remain primarily white male spaces. Yet, participants encountered differences in their ethnic and national positions. Entry into building work for most of the participants depended upon the mobilisation of social capital - relatives, friends, and acquaintances who recommended them to employers. In that sense, most participants remained embedded within 'parochial associations' (Hiebert, 2002) a notion that has often been suggested as opposed to cosmopolitanism. In the lack of English language and most often any building skills, participants were recruited at the lowest unskilled labourer level. Their supervisors and employers (who were usually small-time contractors or skilled tradesmen) were those had been in the industry for much longer and therefore were mostly English.

Working in these building sites and any chance of progression in their professions meant the acquisition of a specific set of cultural capital- English language and building skills, and another set of social capital- networks which their employers had access to. Progression in this profession also meant getting 'noticed' by their employers. Once noticed and trusted with more responsibility, participants would then gain experience in and take on positions as foremen or supervisors, or specialise as decorators, bricklayers, carpenters, and electricians. Participants therefore understood the need to acquire new forms of social and cultural capital in order to progress in this hierarchy of the building site as well as the wider construction industry. Their English colleagues and supervisors who embodied these qualities therefore became important social networks to tap into.

The building site however, with all its health and safety regulations, hourly paid work, and intense work environment did not provide the environment for cultivating these networks. Being a highly controlled and hierarchical environment, workers were usually spatially and temporally segregated in the site according to the nature of their work. Thus it did not provide the physical conditions of socialising. The desire to understand the 'English way of life' meant that after work, most participants accompanied their English colleagues and supervisors to the pub for drinks. These pubs became the extension of social interactions begun at the building site where participants engaged in conversations with them, as Tomasz highlighted.

> I prefer English pubs and I prefer go to the pub with English people 'cause it's like lesson for me. I can learn English, sometime you can pick up one, two words, and it really helps you. So I prefer to go with English people.

Tomasz, a 33 year old Polish foreman worked for an English subcontractor, supervising turnkey residential refurbishments in central London. He was also the only Polish-English translator on a site where a large number of other Polish labourers were employed. Tomasz had risen to the level of foreman because he was able to translate his employer's requirements to the Polish workmen accurately. He therefore recognised the importance of English in shaping his power over other workers on the building site. Socialising with the English was both a way to associate oneself with those perceived as more powerful, and also of staking claims to the power hierarchies on site. Tomasz's 'openness' towards 'English ways' therefore, was also a strategy towards ensuring his future in the building industry.

Figure 2: Tomasz's picture of his daughter's birthday party.

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Participants like Tomasz however, were conscious that these interactions were limited. They were strategic and non-personal in ways that did not develop into 'friendships'. There could be no doubt in Tomasz's mind that inviting English colleagues to their houses or friendships between their children were not possible. This became clear when on his daughter's birthday he invited her friends from her school and the only friend who came was an Afro-Caribbean girl, who also happened to be her best-friend.

> This is my daughter. She had a party and we invited like 10 of her friends from classmates and nobody turned up … Just one friend of her – the best friend of her turned up and that was it, so we called the mum of her friend and we ask her to let her stay in our house for the night and they had fun, actually.

> Thus Tomasz's 'openness' is shaped not just through his own motivations for surviving in a competitive labour market in London but also through the experiences of his family. This is particularly relevant in the case of many East-European men who arrive in London with their families, who encounter difference not just through their own but also through the experiences of their children. Although Tomasz prefers to interact with the English for reasons discussed above, he realises that adopting their 'way of life' can only happen in certain places under specific conditions. His (and his family's) 'openness' therefore had to extend towards other races when it came to more personal friendships- a case illustrated through his daughter's birthday party.

As mentioned, most participants were engaged in residential refurbishment work, involving mainly small-scale work such as bathroom or kitchen fitting, painting, tiling and so on. This meant that often specific rooms in the house- such as the kitchen or bathroom became building sites whereas other rooms would continue to be inhabited by the owners. Thus participants would spend extended amounts of time in their clients' houses, trying to complete the work on time and with minimal disturbance to their clients' everyday lives. In

return, clients would often extend their hospitality to the builders. This is how Benedykt, a 38 year old Polish kitchen fitter, was introduced to 'Indian culture'. Benedykt came to London as a tourist in 2000 from Chelmza, a small city in northern Poland. When he arrived, he found employment illegally as a labourer with a Ukrainian contractor. Within a year, his wife had an affair with his employer and divorced him. Over time, Benedykt trained himself as a kitchen fitter. He tasted Indian food for the first time when he was fitting a kitchen for an Indian family, who sometimes cooked for him during the job. As a married man, he had never cooked but now, he developed a new hobby. As he explained, 'I'm interest [sic], yeah culture. Actually, Indian- Indian culture, because I, I very like Indian food and Indian culture … I'm reading many books about Indian culture'.

Benedykt moved to Ilford in North London because there were many Indian restaurants and grocery shops in that area. He now cooks different cuisines- Indian, Chinese, and Mexican, since the ingredients for these are readily available there. Benedykt's cosmopolitanism however, is an aestheticisation of taste- one that has often been argued as the realm of the elites (Hiebert, 2002; Kurasawa, 2004; Robbins, 1988; Werbner, 1999) and limited in its engagement. He is not forced to open up to Indian culture as a necessary condition of survival, as has been suggested in the case of working-class cosmopolitans (Cohen, 2004; Werbner, 1999), but has adopted only some material aspects of Indian culture. Thus while he takes an interest in some of the practices of 'Indian culture' and makes them significant in his life, his interaction with Indian clients as a builder, has produced very different attitudes towards 'Indian people'.

> This was not huge money, I did not make huge money, but the experience that I gained there, as a cook, you know… is OK for me, I have good memories from that. No, no, I do not have good memories from the financial point of view… Because, ninety percent of Indian people are not willing to pay.

In May 2004, when Poland joined the EU, Benedykt realised he did not need to work illegally and remain vulnerable to non-paying clients. One day, he met an Iranian acquaintance in a building store he used to buy his supplies from, and found out that he was now the owner of the store. They got talking and decided to work together doing turnkey refurbishment projects. Since then, Benedykt and his Iranian colleague have increased the size of their business- his colleague sourcing and supplying building materials as well as liaising with clients, and Benedykt fitting the products in clients' houses. They now employ other young East-European men as tilers, painters, and labourers to work for them. Unlike Tomasz, Benedykt and his Iranian business partner are also friends- regularly visiting each other in their houses, helping each other with personal problems, and never falling-out at work.

Figure 3: Benedykts's picture of his 'building site'

Benedykt's approach towards 'others' raises questions about the distinction currently made between elite and working-class cosmopolitanism. His story suggests that it is possible for working-classes to also develop approaches towards 'others' in ways that are detached and distanciated from any real engagement with the lives of 'others'. Benedykt's attitudes towards Indians was shaped by his experiences as a kitchen fitter in an Indian home, but his openness towards 'others' was clearly not limited because of this experience. In another place and at another time, his collaboration with an Iranian man and subsequent friendship with him suggests that he was also open to engagement with 'others' developed under more positive and productive circumstances. Benedykt's attitudes and behaviours cannot always be described as 'cosmopolitan'; indeed they are ambivalent towards 'others' that simultaneously display limited and engaged versions of cosmopolitanism. His 'openness' is 'socially and geographically situated; hence both limited and empowered' (Cheah and Robbins, 1998, p2).

Significant however, is how this has led to more productive ways of interacting with others through business, which suggests that there are multitudes of cosmopolitanisms, each of which is shaped under localised spatial contexts, and not always under conditions of class belonging.

'Cosmopolitanism' in the Shared Kitchen

When they first arrived in London, participants would live with friends, relatives, or neighbours from their country of origin; but as they engaged in building work, they usually became increasingly mobile, renting their own accommodation, often sharing with complete strangers. These would usually be terraced houses or flats with a living room, kitchen, bathroom, and two or more bedrooms. With pressures on affordability, participants would rent rooms in these houses with other nationalities, while sharing bedrooms with friends, family, or work colleagues from their countries. Thus participants might be sharing their domestic space both with 'parochial networks' as well as with more global 'others'. In the initial stages of their life in London, participants also reported having rented rooms in council flats- a practice that is illegal. Their landlords were often described as 'Gypsies' or 'Pakistanis' who exercised tremendous control over them by charging money for receiving mail, for overnight guests, and even asking them to vacate the property during regular council checks. Their awareness that in London, some minorities occupied specific positions of power under specific contexts often reinforced pre-existing notions of race, ethnicity, and skin colour brought across from national spaces.

This was illustrated in the case of Constantin, a 45 year-old electrician from Romania. Constantin used to be a foreman on building sites in Romania, but since he arrived in London in 2000, he took exams and qualified as an electrician. As a Romanian working illegally in the building industry, his documents however were under a false name. Thus he perceived himself as extremely vulnerable, relying on a large support network of Romanian friends,

colleagues, and church-goers in order to find accommodation, access employment, and other services. Constantin recounted stories of how his Pakistani landlord in his last accommodation continuously asked for money to buy household items. In addition, he recounted how the differences in their cooking and eating practices created tensions between them.

> For the start, it was four people, three Romanian and South America. But when he [Pakistani] come, when he bring, one evening it was six in a room, six people. They eat [on] ground like gypsy and … no, no problem, but starting with dirty, everywhere dirty, in the kitchen and bathroom, everywhere … It smells. Smells smoke. In the kitchen, they burn the onion or something smell only if you burn, and onion is very toxic for health, you know. I told them. Unbelievable! I said, well I cannot stay, living [with] this and all the smoke from the kitchen.

Since this experience, Constantin had moved out to live with other Romanian work colleagues. He said this was because 'at that time I wasn't sure of my English and I thought that Romanians we are the same. We cooking same, and not like last year'. While his decision to live with fellow Romanians can be understood as a move towards cultural maintenance, this did not exclude possibilities of interaction at a distance with 'others'. Since he stayed in the same neighbourhood, Constantin often encountered his ex-landlord on the streets and always stopped to chat with him. His said his move had been prompted by the friction of physical proximity, his health concerns, and the landlord-tenant power relationship. However, his narrative suggests that this concern reinforced deeper convictions about 'gypsies' and people of colour that were carried across national spaces.

Constantin was not a 'cosmopolitan' as Appiah (2006) would see it. He did not take an interest in the practices or beliefs of others, nor did he approve of them. Although he spoke some English, he did not socialise with his employers as Tomasz did. His illegal

position meant that he had limited choices in becoming open to others- remaining deeply

embedded and hidden within his Romanian social networks. Constantin's openness to

'others' was thus limited, selective, and spatial- enacted more easily on the street than in the

kitchen.

Figure 4: Krystian's picture of his kitchen

The kitchen in the shared house, as the site of intense (and coerced) physical

proximity between transnational migrants in London is the pre-condition and medium for

shaping the nature of interaction and subsequently the nature of openness towards 'others'.

This is also illustrated in Krystian's case who shared a three bedroom flat with his Japanese

housemate and Spanish landlord. Since his divorce, Krystian now cooked Polish food

everyday. Unlike, Constantin, Krystian's housemates did not cook much. The interest his

food generated among his housemates made him happy, often encouraging him to share his

food and subsequently socialising with them.

> [I am socialising] … just now, with the Japanese a little bit, we started together…He
>
> used to come at a similar time so he peeped at my cooking, he did what I did, and
>
> like…I sort of made friends with him. He is always curious of everything, so I had to
>
> let him taste what I cooked, he saw and, 'oh, let me taste' [imitating the sound] 'Oh,
>
> umm, mmm'. (Krystian, translated from Polish)

Krystian had limited English language skills but this did not restrict him in developing

his openness to 'others' in a variety of ways that included sharing food. Food worked as a

wider cultural lever (albeit limited in its possibilities) towards a more cosmopolitan

interaction with difference- one that led to more personal friendships in a shared personal

space. Thus, sharing his food mobilised for Krystian various material symbols of globalness

which he was reflecting upon and experiencing since he came to London (as discussed earlier

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in this paper). Krystian's cosmopolitanism was limited not because of a stubborn cultural maintenance but because of the lack of cultural capital that would open up other more varied possibilities of engagement with 'others'.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

This paper thus questions the limits of examining cosmopolitanisms through socio-economic divides of class, and proposes instead that varieties of cosmopolitanisms are shaped by individual biographies, access to forms of capital, and the localised spatial contexts in which specific attitudes and behaviours towards others are practised. This paper illustrates that working-class cosmopolitanism is not a homogenous attitude to 'others' developed only under conditions of coerced interaction for survival. There are multiple versions of cosmopolitans that are exhibited by East European male construction workers that are connected to specific spatial conditions. Not all of them start as cosmopolitans in London, and not all of them become one. Their cosmopolitanisms are produced from their transnational histories, nationalistic notions of gender, race, and ethnicity, and subjective positions of power that are operationalised in and through the everyday places in a global city. In different places, East European construction workers can be both distanciated and engaged with 'others', both cultural and political in their attitudes and behaviours towards 'others', and can be cosmopolitan, not only from the need to survive but also from an attitude towards opening up and engaging with 'others.

This paper thus notes the significance of spatially located social and cultural capital in producing varieties of everyday situated cosmopolitanisms. It suggests that different spatial contexts require the mobilisation of different kinds of social and cultural capital that shape the nature of interaction with 'others'. One might have a cosmopolitan attitude but enacting this in a particular place might be impossible without a specific cultural capital. Thus it challenges the current parochial/cosmopolitan divide by illustrating that mobilisation of

'parochial' social networks to access employment and accommodation does not necessarily limit 'cosmopolitanism'.

Distinctions between the 'cultural refinement' of elite cosmopolitans and the 'survival strategies' of working-class cosmopolitans are ambiguous in the case of East-European construction workers. Particular forms of openness exist towards 'others' that incorporate both elitist and working-class stances. While many engage with 'others' in order to negotiate through labour and housing markets in London, they also simultaneously engage in cultural consumption in ways that reflect an aesthetic attitude towards 'others'. This suggests that for East-European migrants, cosmopolitanism is neither a cultural project, nor just a survival strategy but a complex mixture of cultural, ordinary, banal, coerced, and glocalised cosmopolitanisms that are enacted under different spatial circumstances of interaction, subjective positioning, and physical proximity.

Examining how a variety of cosmopolitanisms are shaped indicates that the nature of openness towards 'others' is deeply embedded in and produced from everyday practices in localised contexts. As they negotiate their place in a 'new' Europe, East-European construction workers' interaction with 'others' and subsequent openness towards them, are shaped by their location within various structures of power existing in these contexts. In the everyday places such as building sites, pubs, and shared houses, difference is experienced, understood, and negotiated by them and their families; and in these places 'others' are assimilated into one's life in different ways. The often personal nature of their physical proximity with 'others' in these places allows East-European migrants to reflect upon their own transnational trajectories, their ethno-national histories, and what it means to be a minority in their home-countries and in the UK. These reflections reach across local, national, and global spaces to develop/reject notions of cosmopolitanism. Thus, cosmopolitanism for East-European construction workers develops through their respective national identities,

subjective positions of power, and attitudes towards 'others' carried across national spaces, which are then reinforced/challenged in the physical proximity of everyday places. Understanding the varieties of these situated cosmopolitanisms raises questions about whether cosmopolitanism should continue to be seen as part of class-specific contexts.

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