

## Cosmopolitanism Sits in Places: Consumption and Cosmopolitics in Latin America

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**Abstract.** Renewed interest in cosmopolitanism has spread across the humanities and social sciences in recent decades. However, this growth has also carried many of the values underpinning cosmopolitanism as a Kantian ideal, including a denigration of consumption and material relations in favour of a putatively social core. In this article, however, I argue that cosmopolitanism is lived through the relations and politics of materiality and consumerism. Through an investigation of ethnographies of urban poverty in Latin America, cosmopolitanism emerges as a diverse, locally instantiated ideology and identity which diverges from many of the debates circulating in sites of academia. With an emphasis on marginalised communities, I reconsider cosmopolitanism as a series of material identities and relationships that develop within the context of economic and social inequality in both local and global scales.

**Keywords:** *cosmopolitanism; consumption; material culture; space; Latin America.*

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### Introduction

Cosmopolitanism has experienced a revival of academic interest since the 1990s, in particular becoming an important term of debate within the social sciences. Ethnographic studies have taken up cosmopolitanism as a framework for understanding diverse communities, across different regions and social strata (Besnier, 2004; Kothari, 2007; Lozada, 2006;

Ong, 1998; Tsing, 2005). These studies have had some success in examining cosmopolitan identities within specific histories and social relations across elite and non-elite cultures. In doing so, they have moved away from the abstract pre-cultural individual as the starting point for cosmopolitanism, grounding it within the specific, contingent dynamics of local experiences rather than as a uniform response to a changing

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global environment. The meaning of cosmopolitanism in these studies thereby becomes contingent upon local contexts – to paraphrase Arturo Escobar (2001), cosmopolitanism ‘sits in places’.

Then again, it is not entirely clear whether these places are those of the communities studied or those of the researcher. Academics from the North Atlantic who dominate cosmopolitan theory speak as relative beneficiaries of globalisation. The sociologist Craig Calhoun is particularly critical of scholars seeking ‘rooted’ or ‘actually existing’ cosmopolitanisms, accusing them of failing to account for their own perspectives; given their comparative wealth and social privilege ‘they – we – imagine the world from the vantage point of frequent travellers, easily entering and exiting polities and social relations around the world, armed with visa-friendly passports and credit cards’ (Calhoun, 2002: 89). By doing so, they (we) ignore that these discrepancies place different privileges and restrictions on the mobility of people, turning cosmopolitanism into a mode of social stratification by excluding the non-mobile majority.

Given cosmopolitanism’s home in the universities of the affluent global North, it is unsurprising that studies have perpetuated many of the premises of contemporary cosmopolitan theory. In particular, the emphasis on transnational mobility is reflected in the repeated emphasis on human movement, whether in reference to tourism, refugees or diaspora (Diouf, 2000; Gidwani and Sivaramakrishnan, 2003; Kothari, 2007; Lozada, 2006; Molz, 2007; Parry, 2008; Wardle, 2000). These studies reinforce conceptions of

cosmopolitanism as tied to physical mobility; by contrast, the circulation of commodities has been generally under-examined or dismissed as trivial. Cosmopolitanism has inherited a Kantian view of society as existing autonomously of the material world, considering material relations as superficial expressions of extant social relationships. For instance, the anthropologist Ulf Hannerz (2004) maintains a division between the ethical, or political<sup>1</sup>, and the aesthetic aspects of cosmopolitanism. He sees ethical cosmopolitanism as an endeavour seeking knowledge and understanding of cultural difference and accepting a global civic responsibility. On the other hand, aesthetic cosmopolitanism is ‘cosmopolitanism with a happy face’, which may provide a foundation for a more ‘fully developed’ or ‘thick’ cosmopolitanism, but may also simply reflect a self-centred idea of global connoisseurship (2004: 71).

This dichotomy between ethics and aesthetics dominates academic perspectives toward cosmopolitan consumption. For Cannon and Yaprak (2002), consumption of international commodities always operates on a local scale, maintaining social stratification through distinction within particular societies (see Bourdieu, 1984). Others consider this consumption as elitist expressions of class which denigrate the poor by valorising specific affluent forms of cultural bricolage (Calhoun, 2002; Rojek, 2000). Like Hannerz’s ‘happy face’, Calhoun suggests that cosmopolitan commodities do not constitute or explain any ‘relationship between local solidarity and international civil society’ (2002: 105). These perspectives consider

cosmopolitanism primarily as a project, an esoteric shared humanity made concrete in civil society.

The problem with this approach is that it rests upon the general assumption that material culture and consumption simply reflect already existing cultural or social relationships. This perspective divides social and material life by positing the role of goods as ‘making visible and stable the categories of culture’ instead of playing an active role in the actual creation of such categories (Douglas and Isherwood, 1996: 38; Miller, 1987). This view towards consumption and identity, while persisting in cosmopolitan theory, has been repeatedly challenged by critics such as Stuart Hall (2000) and Daniel Miller (1987; 1995; 2001; 2005). Miller, in particular, rejects such a dichotomy as a specifically Western anti-materialism which sees the material as opposed to the social, rather than embedded within it. By understanding consumption as expressing a predetermined set of relationships, cosmopolitan theory inevitably dismisses its role in making ideologies concrete and visible.

The Kantian legacy within cosmopolitan theory reveals an epistemological imposition across times and spaces from a Eurocentric and normative conception of the world. Latin American scholar Walter Mignolo (2010) sees in cosmopolitanism the latest iteration of a long-standing European civilizing mission, one which mirrors the unidirectional flows of its colonial predecessors from a European core to the global periphery, positing specific, Western localities as global identities to be emulated. Although academics have applied

cosmopolitanism across a wide variety of contexts, these scholars – including Mignolo himself – speak from within a Western institutional framework, examining individuals and groups who do not see themselves in such terms (Hannerz, 2004). Given this, how can academics (we), particularly speaking from a place of privilege, hope to capture a cosmopolitanism from below rather than reducing distinctive attitudes towards a global society to minor variations on an abstract universal category?

Mignolo’s call for the recognition of cosmopolitanism’s complicity in projects of Empire goes partway towards dealing with this. However, with his future-oriented project of a de-colonised global civil society, he neglects the possibility of forms of cosmopolitanism that develop within, rather than against, global inequality. Equally, while Calhoun demonstrates the need to recognise the privilege inherent in a Western academic perspective, he also concedes that even such elite experiences are tied to a small number of specific localities made tangible through travel. The world is never directly perceivable (Chernilo, 2006). Given this, cosmopolitanism can only refer to the extrapolation – or conflation – of a global society from the specificities of local experience. While marginal subjects may not experience the transnational mobility of Calhoun’s ‘frequent travellers’, both groups can only access a restricted experience of the world. Furthermore, given that commodities are more mobile than people, capable of travelling across boundaries and penetrating into marginalised communities, they are potentially more important as bearers

of cosmopolitan identities.

The social and material conditions of Latin America offer a distinctive regional context from which to re-think many of these ideas. The influx of consumer goods into Latin America, historically as well as in the contemporary world, has largely been directed by the United States and Europe, following the same colonial routes as discourses of cosmopolitanism itself. As Arnold Bauer (2001) states, this provenance has imbued many commodities in Latin America with a particular cachet that conditions their meanings and uses. In particular, Bauer's historical analysis from pre-Columbian to contemporary Latin America reveals the entrenchment of power relations in which 'power and the reference for fashion are often established by foreigners' (2001: 9). From this domination arises the possibility of cosmopolitanisms which do not conform to any emancipatory project, but rather form part of a profoundly unequal global society which shapes how many communities, mobile or not, make tangible a concept as immaterial as human society. By moving beyond the utopian connotations of the term, 'actually existing' cosmopolitanisms grounded in consumption appear as a challenge to contemporary theory.

In Latin America, many ethnographies of poor or marginal communities have dealt with the politics of consumption and demonstrated the importance of commodities in processes of identity construction (de Castro, 2006; Gregory, 2007; Perlman, 2007; van Bavel and Sell-Trujillo, 2003). These analyses have generally not linked such consumer identities and practices

to cosmopolitanism, utilising other frameworks including local political organisation, racial politics, and consumer citizenship. Nevertheless, they offer considerable insight into cosmopolitanism from the particular historical and economic position of Latin America. The region has a unique history of rapid urbanisation and social transformations, coupled with successive political and economic crises, which have created high rates of urban poverty and inequality (de la Rocha et al., 2004; Hernández and Kellett, 2010; Thorp, 1998). As such, an emphasis on urban poverty specifically in Latin America offers insight into forms of cosmopolitanism embedded in conditions of marginality.

This regional distinctiveness does not imply that cosmopolitanism is a singular experience or identity across Latin America. The ethnographies examined demonstrate some of the heterogeneity of experiences across the area. However, they deal explicitly with the practice and politics of consumption as a global phenomenon, anchored in specific places and times. My intention is to utilise these existing works as a perspective from which to review cosmopolitan theory. This is not a comprehensive analysis of the chosen ethnographies; nevertheless, even this brief exploration brings into relief the contrasts between the dialectics of cosmopolitanism and consumption as a theory and as a lived reality.

### **Consume or be Consumed**

International tourism has often been interpreted as an example of cosmopolitanism (Calhoun, 2002;

Molz, 2006; 2007; Urry, 1995; Hannerz, 1996). Tourism represents an important contestation of space, a process enveloped in the politics of consumption. Not only are marginalised consumers involved in conflicts over what they consume – where and how they consume are also important in contesting spatial divisions and claiming belonging, in both local and global terms. As Steven Gregory highlights in *The Devil Behind the Mirror* (2007), a study of the neighbouring coastal towns of Andrés and Boca Chica in The Dominican Republic, cosmopolitan consumption – by both tourists and locals – offers both a means of contesting an imposed parochial identity, and of redefining marginality within a broader cosmopolitan imaginary.

Boca Chica in particular has grown twentieth century as a tourist resort, spurred by the promotion of tourism by international finance agencies including the World Bank. The economic and social transformations of Boca Chica have constructed a stark spatial and ideological division between the *zona turística* and the *comunidad*, with local residents largely blocked from the formal economic opportunities afforded by tourism. The division is performative, enforced and contested daily through ‘cultural practices, power relations, modes of consumption, and a sense of cultural citizenship that differentiated *dominicanos* from *turistas* and the sociospatial fields they inhabited’ (Gregory, 2007: 52). The areas frequented by tourists, particularly the beaches, are policed by government officials and the local tourist industry organisation, removing unlicensed vendors, sex workers, and often Haitian

migrants. This mode of control firmly establishes the *zona turística* as a sanitised space conforming to familiar images of tropical exoticism. At the same time, the surrounding *comunidad* is stigmatised as a space of disorder threatening the tourist industry, thus justifying and further entrenching its marginality.

While the formal economy builds these divisions, local residents constantly penetrate these barriers to access social and economic mobility. Consumption offers a means for locals to embed themselves in the global economy, positing themselves as cultural translators. This can be seen in the *fisgones*<sup>2</sup> of the town, Dominicans who work informally as economic and social brokers to secure services, from tours to prostitutes, for international tourists. In this role they cross the boundary between the *comunidad* and the *zona turística* and negotiate between endogenous and exogenous perceptions of Boca Chica and the Dominican Republic. U.S. popular music and Rastafarian imagery are used as a means of communicating ‘Dominicanness’ in a commodified language accessible to tourists. For example, Bunny, a *fisgón* in Gregory’s study described as ‘a tall man with shoulder-length dreadlocks who had taken his nickname from the Jamaican reggae great Bunny Wailer’ (2007: 45), carefully cultivated a Rastafarian image to appeal to foreigners. Having learnt German as a migrant in Zurich, he was able to work across languages and cultures. However, equally important was his ability to articulate himself in a common consumer language of reggae and Caribbean tourism, making him a valued commodity in his own right.

Understood as a threat by the tourism industry itself, figures such as Bunny are nevertheless integral to many establishments including restaurants and bars along the beach, attracting clientele and establishing informal relations of patronage with owners.

The perceived threat of these *fisgones* is this act of negotiation. By appropriating elements of ‘overseas’ culture, the *fisgones* disrupt the process of commodifying Boca Chica:

Cultural hybridity (a consequence, in part, of international tourism) is targeted as a threat to the seamless atmosphere of tourism and as a principle of social exclusion. This unruly hybridity risks disrupting the binary oppositions undergirding the industry’s symbolic economy – between ‘guests’ and ‘hosts,’ between subjects and objects of consumption, and between cosmopolitan modernity and the static charm of a fantasized native culture, in this case, that of the ‘fishing village.’ (Gregory, 2007: 55)

It is important to note that this negotiation is also disparaged by some locals; as stated by a gift shop owner, the *fisgones* ‘want to be gangsters, criminals like in the rap videos. They were born here, but they are no longer Dominicans’ (2007:67). From the perspective of the *fisgones* themselves, however, this is a form of productive consumption that gives them access not only into the *zona turística* and its economy but also into the transnational community of tourists, contesting the barriers that separate local from cosmopolitan people and places.

The tensions between the different geographies of the the *zona turística* and the *comunidad* are made evident in Gregory’s account of ‘*la fiesta de tígueres*’<sup>3</sup> – a birthday party in one of the informal entertainment venues in the *comunidad* called *colmados*. In this account, Elwin – the birthday boy – greeted three female German tourists who had ventured outside of the *zona turística* with Bunny after meeting him in a nightclub. Elwin explained that they had now entered the ‘real’ Dominican Republic; however, the party was soon broken up by armed police who, after exclaiming that ‘these tourists do not belong in this area’ (2007: 47), escorted the women back to their hotel. Though the spatial hierarchy of Boca Chica was briefly contested in this informal setting outside of the established connections and networks of tourism, it was ultimately returned to its hegemonic order.

Gregory’s account of this event is saturated with consumption and commodities as markers of both distinction and unity. The *colmado*, a site for cheap music, food and drink, serves as a counterpoint to the expensive tourist club within the *zona turística* in which Bunny had met the women the night before (Gregory, 2007). Yet Elwin worked to establish its validity and sell its image through the concept of local authenticity as opposed to the resorts. Here the ‘real’ – poverty, informality, blackness and an essentialised Dominican identity – is transformed into a commodity, yet one still made translatable in part through the transnational connections manifest in the *fiesta*, from Elwin and Bunny’s language skills to their emulation of Rastafarian aesthetics. The company of

foreigners also transformed the space for Dominicans as much as the tourists; they found a different sense of value in it, part of a cosmopolitan sphere of consuming similarity and difference. By disrupting the dichotomy between cosmopolitanism and localism in such contexts, consumption serves to contest both internal and external modes of differentiation.

These flows of people, meaning and capital also highlight an important tension between cosmopolitanism as manifest in specific places and in the practice and ideology of movement and mobility. The valorisation of movement as opposed to fixity would suggest, at least to some extent, a diminished attachment to specific localities. In many ways this is borne out in Gregory's study, as well as other ethnographies across the region. For instance, scholars have noted the gradual erosion of attachment to place among poor communities in Santo Domingo (Taylor, 2010), Rio de Janeiro (Perlman, 2004) and Buenos Aires (Auyero, 2000), as the possibility of economic and social mobility in these communities is increasingly restricted. However, cosmopolitan relationships and values are not simply constructed and sustained in mobility but also in localised, essentially fixed spaces such as the *zona turística*.

### **Cosmopolitan Pathologies**

Gregory's ethnography demonstrates that commodities may be used strategically to understand local contexts and gain traction within them. However, it is equally true that consumption and consumerism can be

instantiated as escape or transcendence, as abandoning the conflict and material conditions of the local and moving in idealised, imagined spaces. From this perspective, cosmopolitanism is an act of negation rather than a defence of the local, particularly from the precarious position of urban marginality. Specific commodities offer a means of self-definition that removes subjects from a restrictive local context – even if this is diagnosed by others as deviant, criminal, or pathological. Patricia Márquez's ethnography *The Street is My Home: Youth and Violence in Caracas* (1999) traces the relationships between poor young men and mainstream society as these youths live their lives between shantytowns, downtown Caracas and the state's juvenile institutions and prisons. The study provides an important counterpoint to the struggles of Boca Chica residents to retain a sense of locality. The cosmopolitanism of the Sabana Grande boulevard youths, unlike that of Boca Chica, distances itself from local identities, locating individual potentials and futures in movement and placeless, detached identities and spaces.

As with Boca Chica, poverty in Caracas is bound up in the specific historical, political and social context unique to the city. Brillembourg and Klumpner (2010: 119) estimate that almost 55 per cent of the nearly 6 million residents of Caracas live in informal settlements, which constitute only 33.5 per cent of the city's area. Although Venezuelan society and democracy were buoyed by the price of oil during the 1970s, the final decades of the twentieth century brought increasing impoverishment,

corruption and levels of inequality across the nation (Márquez, 1999). Patricia Márquez's ethnography takes place within this context of economic decline, political corruption and ideologies of insecurity in the city of Caracas. Based on fieldwork beginning in 1993, she tracks the lives of (almost all male) youths as they move between their homes or former homes in the *ranchos*, their lives on the commercial strip of the Sabana Grande boulevard, and state-run juvenile institutions. Their movement between different sites plays an important role in their own sense of identity; they see living on the streets as a deliberate choice. Furthermore, the term 'street children' only refers to former *rancho* youths who become visible by inhabiting middle-class spaces of consumption; those who live in the *ranchos* spend the majority of their time socialising on the streets, yet since they are less visible to the middle-class, they are not subject to the same scrutiny. In this sense, street life is merely the extension of a public social life developed elsewhere, yet one which enters into direct conflict with mainstream society by inhabiting public space.

Unlike Boca Chica, where consumption is exploited to gain mobility and access to the highly structured, segregated *zona turística*, in Caracas street youths represent the inverse; mobility is a means of gaining access to consumer goods. For example, one of Márquez's informants, Felipe, explained that his transition into street life began with the desire for a pair of Nike shoes that his father could not afford. A friend 'started to give me drugs to hide and he gave me 2,000 bolívares a week for doing it.

As soon as I realized that everything was working well, I bought the shoes I wanted and I always had money in my pockets' (1999: 178). Felipe's decision to pursue a life on the streets stems here from a growing frustration over his inability to consume. By escaping the *ranchos* and entering the narcotics trade, he is able to attain a sense of personal development and fulfilment. Importantly, though, it is through commodities and brands with an international cachet such as Nike shoes that he achieves this. Through this distinctive ideology, 'these youngsters on the streets, with their Nintendo dreams and Nike shoes, experience life in the larger context of global and transnational processes' (Márquez, 1999: 220).

The youths living on the Sabana Grande boulevard are not a single community, but rather are divided according to age, consumption and 'style'. Márquez identifies four distinctive groups; the *chupapegas*<sup>4</sup>, boys aged from eight to around fifteen, who sniff glue; *monos*, or *jordans* – referring to Nike Jordan shoes – who are generally in their late teens and emulate US basketball fashion; *woperós*, of the same age as the *monos*, who emulate a northern European 'style', with black boots and electro music; and finally *malandros* such as Felipe, who share a similar 'style' to the *monos*, yet are older and thus stigmatised to a greater extent. Each group stakes a claim on the boulevard to particular areas, dividing themselves based on their consumer affiliations despite the fact that they rarely purchase anything. Instead, theft, mugging and murder are more commonplace routes to material accumulation.

Central to the ways in which these youths understand themselves is the concept of ‘style’ as articulated through foreign commodities. Márquez, like Wardle (2000), rejects the idea of culture as emerging entirely out of opposition or resistance; instead, the distinctions of style are ‘a demonstration of the extent to which transnational cultures are embodied and lived’ (1999: 179). For all these groups of street youths, consumer cultures offer a means of rejecting or transcending local circumstances, including their own material poverty: ‘The young mono may live in a rancho in the barrios, but if he has a gun and Nike shoes, he does not consider himself working class, poor, or marginal – he has a style’ (1999: 214). Living on the Sabana Grande boulevard, which was designed for a globally mobile local and international elite, allows the urban poor youth a space in which to enact such a style.

The informal economy of the Sabana Grande boulevard, punctuated with violence, becomes pathological to wider society in Caracas, acting as evidence of the dark power of the *hampa* – which literally means ‘underground’, but in Venezuela also carries particular connotations of foreignness. However, this stigmatisation is not absolute, and there are stark differences between perceptions of the different groups. The distinction between the *monos* and *woperós* is particularly notable, since these essentially arbitrary assemblages of commodities constitute opposed identities and images in local terms. The *monos*, oriented towards a more African-American style, are faced with far more police prosecution and harassment, and have become iconic

symbols of the endemic violence of Caracas supposedly emanating from the *ranchos*. The *woperós*, whose style is seen as more middle-class and European, by contrast, are ridiculed within mainstream culture and media, but are largely dismissed by police as merely eccentric. Despite emulating a wealthier and more Eurocentric image through their style, the *woperós* are often from the same communities and move through the same spaces as their counterparts, the *monos*. Yet they are considered, and consider themselves, as more benign consumers. Upon entering adulthood these youths generally return to the *ranchos* in the hillsides or become caught within the prison system. As Márquez explains, the young residents of shantytowns ‘come to the streets searching for what they believe [*sic*] is a better life – living through their imaginations’ (1999: 219). Yet this identity is a transient one; both society and the youths themselves expect to eventually return to a static life in prison or the shantytowns.

Where Gregory demonstrated a cosmopolitanism that was bound up in the defense and control of space, Márquez identifies a rejection and abandonment of the stasis of local identities. This ideology is still grounded in the particular social dynamics of Caracas and of Venezuelan society. After all, the *monos*, *woperós*, *chupapegas* and *malandros* of the Sabana Grande boulevard do not perform identities that are easily recognisable from the outside as part of a single global culture. However, their ability to re-route the discriminating networks of formal capitalism does allow for a sense of transcendence and a rejection of local marginality.

Their self-conscious appropriation and construction of global identities highlights a cosmopolitanism that cannot be understood as entirely local or 'rooted', but rather one that deliberately claims the visibility denied to subjects by the structural violence committed against them across local and global scales.

### **Cosmopolitanism and Imagined Community/ies**

Since 'the global distribution of commodities and information makes it possible for core and peripheral countries to come closer' (García Canclini, 2001: 25) through shared experiences, goods can constitute the basis for widening forms of identification. Given this, cosmopolitan consumption can approach an imagined community (see Anderson, 2006) that reaches beyond established local identities, one tied not to territory and sovereignty but to material goods. Yet Kant's cosmopolitan ideal was based on the observation that 'the growing prevalence of a (narrower or wider) community among the peoples of the earth has now reached a point at which the violation of right at any *one* place on earth is felt in *all* places' (Kant, 2006 [1795]). By contrast, consumer communities are fragmented, often stratified, making global claims from particular places and rendering universal ideas partial and limited. Hip hop exemplifies such a community tied together by experiences of universal oppression and struggle, instantiated through music and other commodified modes of expression. As a consumer phenomenon studied

across different contexts of poverty and wealth throughout Latin America, it demonstrates the fragmented, unequal and fluid nature of global communities centred around practices of consumption. Even as hip hop moves largely through the hegemonic networks of global capitalism, this assemblage of commodities constitutes a dynamically articulated yet diffuse discourse of resistance, oppression, race and consumption.

Jennifer Roth-Gordon's (2007; 2009) ethnographic work on consumption, music and class in Praia do Cristo, a *favela* of Rio de Janeiro, demonstrates the importance of hip hop as a material and political discourse. While the *favela* is a diverse community, most consumers of hip hop are young, black and male. As Roth-Gordon describes them, these subjects are aware of their immobility and lack of communication with other black communities across the Americas and the world, with whom they identify. In search of connectedness, they exploit the material signifiers of a global consumer community; in particular, they 'symbolically display black hairstyles, wear NY-inspired shirts and baseball caps, and infuse English words into their speech' (2007: 250). It is important to note that while Brazil has developed its own commercial and underground hip hop industries, this locally-produced music is constantly reinforced through consumer symbols, such as Nike and Coca-Cola, in lyrics and video clips which reinforce the link between the artist and an imagined global community (Ramos, 2006). These commodities also saturate Praia do Cristo, marking out the group of *favelados* that perform this relationship.

In her ethnography, Roth-Gordon outlines the history of the word *playboy* in Brazilian discourse (2007), demonstrating a concomitant integration with global imaginaries and fragmentation of local experience. *Playboy* is an Anglicism which refers to the young male as a conspicuous consumer; for *favelados*, the term also invokes connotations of whiteness. The following quote from Mano Brown (a Brazilian rap artist) during a concert, exemplifies how this concept is embodied in fashion:

We are all a revolution, the revolution of attitude, you know what I'm saying? I take a lot of pride okay, in wearing a cap, wearing a jacket, okay brother, in cutting my hair like this, because this is my life, you know what I'm saying. I don't need to have a wavy forelock of hair to imitate a *playboy*. (Roth-Gordon, 2007: 252)

Here the 'revolution of attitude' is as much political as aesthetic, where 'wearing a cap, wearing a jacket' is constitutive of a distinctive racial and class consciousness. These commodities are markers of 'pride' and a rejection of white Brazilian society as normative.

As Roth-Gordon explains, this confluence of aesthetics and ideologies through both consumption and language represents a form of scale jumping, using globally circulating discourses and ideologies to deal with local race and class dynamics. The importation of a racial dichotomy 'maps the terrain of racial subjectivity onto Brazilian youth subculture', opposing the Brazilian founding myth of racial democracy

(Roth-Gordon, 2007: 250-251). As such, this global ideology, linking local experience with an imagined global one of black and marginalised subjects, constitutes a rejection of Brazilian nationalism. By refusing the myth of racial democracy, hip hop consumers also attack the contemporary discourse that denies the particularity of their experience. Racial identity is seen by both dominant society and *favelados* as conflicting with national identity; thus, while white, middle-class respondents took offense to Roth-Gordon's survey question of what race they considered themselves, stating that their Brazilian identity overruled any other, *favelados* consciously disaffiliated themselves with the putatively national society and embraced blackness (Roth-Gordon, 2007). This ideology is then brought to bear on particular local spaces and social relations. Youths bring the term *playboy* into daily conversation to police the *favela's* borders, calling out and harassing middle-class youths who enter the community as a way of repealing the greater local mobility of the wealthy. Furthermore, the term is also used as an insult, a means of castigating those young *favelados* who buy into a white Brazilian middle-class aesthetic, bringing insults such as 'He looks like a little *playboy*' (2007: 255).

When compared to Roth-Gordon's study, Peter Wade's ethnography of an unnamed shantytown in Cali, Colombia (1999) demonstrates the extent to which the commodities and styles associated with hip hop are in fact arbitrarily defined. Wade follows the endeavours of a rap group as they attempt to spread hip hop in the community and obtain commercial success. Wade, like Roth-Gordon, argues that "local culture"

is a global product produced on a global stage right from the start' and that his subjects – also marginalised black youth – consume music 'with a view to their possible circulation in wider (potentially global) circuits of exchange' (1999: 454, emphasis in the original). However, for residents of this shantytown, mainly rural migrants and their children, *negritud* (blackness) is an exogenous racial category which is only fully encountered upon migration to the city. Political and social movements in urban Colombia, informed particularly by the civil rights and black power movements in the United States, have politicised racial identity and *negritud*. As a result, migration to the city implies a transformation in identity from *libres*<sup>5</sup> to *negros* or *afrocolombianos* and the incorporation of the narratives of slavery and emancipation into this identity.

Hip hop is also a migrant to Cali, brought in from the nearby port of Buenaventura. It became popular because rap music is a low-tech cultural practice that offers the opportunity for youths to become their own cultural creators, collapsing distinctions and distance between consumer and producer. As one resident described it, the initial encounter with hip hop music and video clips was a revelation:

to see a black person telling others to respect him; and to see that it was a well-off black, not just well-dressed but well-off! That was what one needed to see. The musical part, the rhythm, was important, but more so what one saw. (Wade, 1997: 457)

Yet the visual markers of success found value in the community because they were easily emulated. Wade estimates that approximately twenty musical and dance groups of young people emerged in the early 1990s in the one shantytown, focussing particularly on rap. Like Rio de Janeiro, they would intentionally emulate not only the musical styles but also clothing and hair of their North American influences. As these groups began to produce and consume music on a local scale, the musical and material languages of oppression became a democratic means of expression, as opposed to the higher production values of rock and pop.

This ability for a global consumer culture to be taken up by local actors is related to a strong preference within hip hop for a sense of authenticity, as expressed in the constantly repeated emphasis in lyrics of 'the real'<sup>6</sup> (Wade, 1999; Tickner, 2008). As Tickner argues, the 'real' grounds political expression in the experiences and practices of everyday life, accentuating rather than subsuming local experiences within a global community. Hip hop establishes a framework for understanding 'real' life with a fairly determined set of universal references of oppression, consumption and capitalist accumulation (Tickner, 2008). Mirroring claims about the 'real' Dominican Republic within the *fiesta de tigueros*, this framework allows claims for authenticity while making these differences translatable. However, for the marginal sectors of Latin American cities, this framework provides 'a tool for mapping daily experience and for constructing locally based selves and communities based

on shared feelings of what it means to be disenfranchised' (Tickner, 2008: 127).

What is notable about this shared philosophy of the real is how closely it mirrors theoretical ideas about cosmopolitanism. Hannerz (1996) and Calhoun (2002) in particular criticise the posturing of self-appointed detached flâneurs purveying and consuming parochial Others. Indeed, much of the 'new cosmopolitanism' is dedicated to rejecting this notion of the free-floating cosmopolitan. Instead, the 'real' points much more to a significantly 'rooted' (Kothari, 2007) or 'vernacular' (Werbner, 2006) cosmopolitanism which grounds universal values in the specificities of local experience. The experiences of the poor are therefore not subsumed into a placeless or homogenous consumer culture, instead finding relevance, validity and commonality in the circulation of a common subjectivity.

While the studies of Cali and Rio de Janeiro show some evidence of this shared consumer subjectivity as a pan-African experience, understanding hip hop in rigid ethnic terms ignores the importance of hip hop, and even the idea of blackness, for indigenous and *mestizo* communities<sup>7</sup>. Shanti Pillai (1999) highlights this in her study of hip hop culture among the poor *mestizo* youths of Guayaquil, Ecuador. Focussing particularly on spaces of consumption, she highlights that hip hop is a public phenomenon, enacted in the city's parks, shopping malls and clubs. Importantly, as in Cali, only certain commodities reach Guayaquil; the music is typically either locally produced or commercially successful American music, while the clothing

is either Nautica and Hilfiger fakes produced in Ecuador and Colombia or the uniforms of local football teams used as a substitute for American NBA fashion. With these goods, youths take up the rhetoric of *negritud* as a political rather than racial category. *Negritud* in this sense is a strategic global category inhabited by anyone, including the poor, to find a common ground, such that 'the influence of global black culture goes beyond any essentialised notion of a 'community' articulated exclusively in ethnic terms'<sup>8</sup> (Pillai, 1999: 495).

These universal claims are still constructed around a gender hierarchy. Pillai notes that hip hop is circulated, heard and particularly danced almost exclusively by poor *mestizo* men. However, there also exists a distinctive opportunity within this framework for women to reject their feminised, domestic roles by emulating the imported masculine posturing of the 'homeboy cosmopolitans' of New York (see Diawara, 1998). There are many women within this consumer culture who deliberately dress in baggy clothes and sports jerseys, directly opposing the style of dress strongly expected of young women, who generally wear tight clothes as 'a prerequisite for the obligatory realisation of their femininity'<sup>9</sup> (1999: 494). In practical terms the public performance of a global style is ill-fitting, not only because of Guayaquil's conservative population but also, in material terms, given its tropical climate. However, the embodiment of a global consumer culture is crucial to claiming a sense of belonging to it, fusing the material and the ideological as a cosmopolitan imagined community shared across

geographical, ethnic and gendered boundaries.

Benedict Anderson's original conception of the imagined community was, within the scope of the nation, one 'conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship' between members separated across time and space, yet nonetheless see 'the image of their communion' (2006: 6). This sense of community is reflected to a certain extent in hip hop, perhaps more radically imagined (see Redfield, 1999) than the nation given its geographical dispersal, lack of sovereignty and lesser investment in discrete, cogent territories. Practices of consumption, while grounded in local contexts and ideologies of the real, are self-consciously shared across localities. However, there are two significant challenges to this relationship. The first is the problematic extent to which the comradeship across borders is actually conceived as 'horizontal'. While the hip hop consumers of Rio de Janeiro, Cali and Guayaquil all see their own consumption – and production – as part of a broader, global struggle against racism and marginality, they specifically draw on shared experiences with African-Americans. The means of cultural production and consumption is relatively decentralised across Latin America and the world, yet the 'homeboy cosmopolitans' of the United States are still ultimately the common point of reference (Diawara, 1998). This does not contradict the sense of a shared struggle, nor of occupying global categories to comprehend and influence local conflicts. Yet, unlike the nation, the extent of this particular community is perhaps deliberately vague and ill-defined, conditioned by

the persistent barriers of language and the hegemonic position of the United States, and New York in particular, as the ideological centre.

The second difficulty with equating hip hop with a cosmopolitan imagined community is the question of whether, like the nation, such a community could be envisioned as limited. While '[n]o nation imagines itself as coterminous with mankind' (Anderson, 2006: 7), cosmopolitanism was explicitly conceived by Kant as an emergent, all-encompassing 'community among the peoples of the earth' (Kant 2006 [1795]: 84). Hip hop does not have such an inclusive reach, and as a counter-hegemonic discourse it draws meaning from its peripheral status. However, any 'actually existing' cosmopolitanism is inherently limited and exclusionary to some extent, from Calhoun's 'frequent travellers' to Latin American 'homeboy cosmopolitans'. This does not negate the cosmopolitanism within either of these identities; rather, it reveals the concept itself as heterogeneous, a common thread underlying divergent subjectivities rather than a point of present or future conversion.

It is misleading to lift cosmopolitan values out of their contexts, treating them as idiosyncratic iterations of a single global archetype. However, using cosmopolitanism to understand distinctive practices and ideologies across disparate contexts does not necessarily signify reducing these to particular instantiations of a largely Eurocentric model of identification. The anthropologist Huon Wardle argues that the idea of being 'in it together' is now fairly uncontentious; the task of social science is now to uncover

the ‘competing definitions of ‘we’, ‘it’ and ‘together’” (2009: 23). However, in order to do this it is also crucial to analyse cosmopolitanism in terms of both competing values and the tangible processes – such as consumption – that enable such attitudes and make them a concrete reality.

The circulation of commodities constitutes a form of interconnectedness – real or imagined – that fosters cosmopolitanism in terms of a cultural openness, as well as a claim to global validity and visibility. This does not erase the importance of physical mobility; in fact, questions of individual movement re-emerge at a local level, revolving around the politics of access to and uses of spaces of consumption, from beaches to commercial strips. Cosmopolitanism has local reference points, from the *colmado* to the Sabana Grande boulevard. If the world is made a tangible idea in specific commodities, so too is it manifest in the spaces of their consumption. The idea that consumption represents a ‘happy’ or ‘easy’ face of cosmopolitanism, as argued by Hannerz (2004) and Calhoun (2002), does not correspond to cosmopolitanism as an existing phenomenon. Such a conception denies the material conditions that constitute cosmopolitanism not as a metaphysical ideology, but as a tangible identity.

This is hardly the utopian or emancipatory project conceived by Kant. Kant’s conception of cosmopolitanism was centred around his idea of hospitality and the ‘*right of a guest*’ – not the right to become a part of any society but rather for the individual to present themselves, and be received without hostility, by any other group (2006: 82, emphasis

in the original). From a conceptual standpoint, this perspective fails to problematise the notion of territory and ownership, seeing places and territories as relatively fixed entities tied to discrete groups (Harvey, 2009). If cosmopolitanism sits in places, it is also inextricable from the politics and conflicts that arise out of the creation of space itself. The exclusion faced by the *comunidad* of Boca Chica and the *monos* and *woperós* of the Sabana Grande boulevard may be challenged by alternative cosmopolitanisms, but it is equally entrenched from the outside, reproducing places where *who* is cosmopolitan is contested, but not *where*. As a result, for marginalised communities cosmopolitanism often exists through identifying the world as existing in the very places from which these subjects are excluded. To inhabit these places is a transgressive practice caught between local conflicts and a global cosmopolitics.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> For extensive criticism of the conflation of ethics and politics by cosmopolitan theorists, see Calhoun (2008).

<sup>2</sup> The word literally means ‘snoopers’.

<sup>3</sup> The phrase is a joking reference by Gregory to the Dominican figure of the *tiguere* (hustler).

<sup>4</sup> The term literally means ‘glue-suckers’.

<sup>5</sup> While the term *libre*, meaning free, survives from colonial systems of race classification, Wade maintains that there is no historical consciousness of slavery within the rural community.

<sup>6</sup> Or their Spanish counterpart, *lo real* (Tickner, 2008).

<sup>7</sup> This is not to deny the influence or importance of pan-African sentiment,

particularly within recent Afro-Latin social and political movements (Johnson III 2007; Wade 1997).

<sup>8</sup> 'la influencia de la cultura global negra va más allá de cualquier noción esencializada de una 'comunidad' articulada bajo

conceptos étnicos exclusivamente' – my translation.

<sup>9</sup> 'un requisito para la realización obligatoria de su feminidad' – my translation.

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