# COSMOPOLITANISM

**Orly Levy**
Reader in International Management
School of Finance and Management
SOAS University of London, UK
ol4@soas.ac.uk
(ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8040-5635)


**Hyun-Jung (HJ) Lee**
Associate Professor of Organisational Behaviour & Cross Cultural Management
Department of Management
London School of Economics, UK
h.lee@lse.ac.uk
(ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3386-4959)

**Introduction**

Cosmopolitanism is a complex, multilevel, and multi-layered phenomenon manifested in a variety of social spheres (Lee, 2015; Levy, Peiperl, & Jonsen, 2016; Vertovec & Cohen, 2002). A vast body of literature on cosmopolitanism spans multiple disciplines (e.g., sociology, anthropology, political science, philosophy, management), and can be summarized under three distinct perspectives: *political, moral*, and *cultural* (Levy et al., 2016). Political cosmopolitanism, or cosmopolitics, discusses cosmopolitan democracy and governance that enables world politics to transcend the interests of nation states (e.g., Archibugi, 2004) and confronts global risks such as climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic in a transnationally coordinated manner (Beck, 2002). The moral perspective seeks to formulate universal or cosmopolitan ethics that could guide the world community and promotes a shared moral commitment to all humanity irrespective of race/ethnicity and citizenship/country of origin (Nussbaum, 1994). Finally, the cultural perspective focuses on the interactions between the local and the global often manifested in cultural openness (e.g., Delanty, 2006), consumption of culturally diverse/foreign artifacts and products (e.g., Szerszynski & Urry, 2002), and enjoying and learning from different cultures (e.g., Hannerz, 1990).  Cultural cosmopolitanism also underscores the powerful impact of culturally diverse systems of meaning that can destabilize and change the fabric of nation-state societies and the relations between self, other, and world (Delanty, 2006).


**Cosmopolitanism as an individual-level characteristic**

The growth and proliferation of global systems and transnational cultures have expanded the social bases of cosmopolitanism beyond the global elite (e.g., Kanter, 1995) and highly mobile

professionals (e.g., Colic-Peisker, 2010) to include more "ordinary" cosmopolitans (Lee, 2014; Levy et al., 2016). Thus, cosmopolitanism highlights the increasing diversity of individuals who experience "the global" within their daily life and are keenly aware of the world as a whole (Tomlinson, 1999). Further, it emphasizes that diversity of cosmopolitan individuals is associated with a variety of cosmopolitan dispositions, because the contemporary landscape promotes complex, multi-layered, and diverse enactments of cosmopolitanism (Levy, Lee, Jonsen, & Peiperl, 2019).

Cosmopolitanism has been defined as a *personal ability* to make one's way into other cultures, through listening, looking, intuiting, and reflecting (Hannerz, 1990), a *cultural disposition* involving an intellectual and aesthetic stance of "openness" toward peoples, places, and experiences from different cultures, especially those from different "nations" (Szerszynski & Urry, 2002), an *identity horizons* that transcend the conventional local boundaries of social entities such as nation states or countries of origin (Lee, 2014; Lee, 2015), and an *embodied disposition* characterized by high levels of cultural transcendence and openness that are manifested in and enacted along varied trajectories of cultural embeddedness in one's own culture and cultural engagement with the cultural other (Levy, et al., 2019). Across these definitions, two core characteristics are widely accepted: *openness* to the cultures of others and *transcendence* of conventional cultural boundaries (Levy, et al., 2019).

Many researchers consider *openness* to the cultural other a core attribute of cosmopolitan disposition (Hannerz, 1990; Szerszynski & Urry, 2002). *Transcendence*, on the other hand, captures the individual's tendency to go beyond his or her own cultural habitus and thus reflect on it from a distance (Lee, 2014). While all cosmopolitans are characterized by high levels of openness and transcendence, the ways in which they enact these attributes may vary according to

their level of embeddedness in their own culture (i.e., cultural embeddedness) and level of engagement (i.e., cultural engagement) with other cultures (see Levy et al., 2019 for the different types of cosmopolitans).

A strand of empirical research investigates the *intrapersonal* outcome of experiential cosmopolitanism, predicting that individuals (constantly) define and redefine identity and belonging as a result of dynamic interactions with cultural others and the global (Beck, 2002). Thus, the research question here is to understand individuals' *intrapersonal* learning process that unfolds through encounters with competing systems of meaning and alternative cultural models (Delanty, 2006). For example, Bourgouin (2012) describes the lived experience of South African financial professionals through their cosmopolitanism lifestyle and identities, whereas Colic-Peisker (2010) explores the transnational knowledge workers' identity and belonging through the cosmopolitanism lens. Bühlmann, David, and Mach (2013), on the other hand, show how the international managers of transnational networks could redefine cosmopolitanism as a legitimate capital in Swiss financial sector.

A second strand focuses on *interpersonal* processes and performance implications of high levels of cosmopolitanism in a context characterized by cultural diversity, multiplicity, and complexity. The key finding in this growing field of research is the positive role of cosmopolitanism in interpersonal and intergroup interactions (e.g., Lee & Reade, 2018; Sobre-Denton, 2016; Werbner, 1999). For example, Lee and Reade (2018) show Chinese employees' cosmopolitanism is positively related to the levels of organizational commitment to foreign firms. Others show cosmopolitanism is related to active community building (Sorbre-Denton, 2016) and to creating transnational community (Werbner, 1999).

We should note that cosmopolitanism is related to other individual-level constructs such as global mindset and cultural intelligence, which are commonly viewed as essential in a globalized environment. Cosmopolitanism conceptualized in terms of an orientation towards the external environment and openness is considered a key underlying characteristic of global mindset, a construct that focuses on cognition and information processing in a global context (Levy, Beechler, Taylor, & Boyacigiller, 2007). Cultural intelligence, conceptualized as an individual's capability to adapt successfully to new cultural settings (Earley & Ang, 2003), could potentially facilitate the development of cosmopolitanism.

**Key challenges for cosmopolitanism**

Cosmopolitanism as a humanist ideal and as a social phenomenon currently face significant challenges. In fact, cosmopolitan and anti-cosmopolitan sentiments have a long, intertwined history.

- *Rise of nationalism:* The rise of neo-nationalism engulfed much of the world over the past decade, from Modi's Hindu nationalist party in India, to China's and Turkey's mission to restore their former imperial glory, Trump's adoption of immigration and trade policies in the US, the upsurge of far-right politics and ideology in Europe, and the British, Catalan, and Scottish separatist nationalism. Consequently, cosmopolitanism as a political project of democracy and governance is increasingly viewed as utopian, irrelevant, or unrealistic.

- *Anti-cosmopolitanism:* there is a long tradition of anti-cosmopolitan sentiment dating back to Nazi Germany and Communist Russia propaganda against Jews and Bolsheviks. The current phase of anti-cosmopolitanism has been emphatically ushered by the former

British Prime Minister Theresa May who asserted that "if you believe you are a citizen of the world, you are a citizen of nowhere. You don't understand what citizenship means" (*The Telegraph*, 2016). Further, anti-cosmopolitan attitudes also emerge across multiple locales and in various forms, for example, against immigrants and liberal-progressives.

- *Identity and belonging:* the core cosmopolitan properties of *openness* and *transcendence*, while signalling optimism for new, interesting, and inclusion of differences, also generate psychological costs for individuals due to their generally ambiguous cultural identity. If the societal and global political climate shift to scrutinize individuals' coherent cultural identity and loyalty to their origin culture (or nation), their close affiliation with "others" gets penalized.

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