PERIPHERAL COSMOPOLITANISMS, AN INTRODUCTION.

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This special issue on the topic of Peripheral Cosmopolitanisms emerges from a recent international social anthropology conference co-sponsored through the great generosity of the Wenner Gren Foundation, the AAS, the ASAANZ, and the New Zealand Royal Society. The conference was held in November 2014 at the alpine resort town of Queenstown, New Zealand, and was designed with several aims in mind. These included an interest to engage New Zealand anthropologists in the contemporary anthropological discussions of the concept of cosmopolitanism from which they have been noticeably absent in the international literature; and the desire to continue in the tradition of shared conferences between the AAS and the ASAANZ in order to foster international links between New Zealand and Australian based social anthropologists. Both aims are fulfilled with the publication of this special issue of Sites which places emerging scholars from both sides of the Tasman in conversation with each other. While not all contributors find ethnographic evidence to support the presence of cosmopolitan ideals and experiences within their communities of interest, taken as a whole, the collection furthers the critical cosmopolitan literature by exploring various notions and experiences of peripherality in such an intellectual context. The metaphor of a periphery provided a vehicle through which to consider cosmopolitanism from within a global system still experienced and expressed via the language and histories of nations and empires, but explored with the acuity and survival instincts associated with a peripheral vision.

The peripheral focus in a global sense is certainly appropriate to studies of Australia and New Zealand and the Pacific and the articles within this volume speak to the at times insurmountable tensions between a universal cosmopolitics and the experience of life from within postcolonial nations from the perspectives of Tangata Whenua, Koori and Murri and other aboriginal communities, Pasifika, Pākehā, Anglo, Middle Eastern, Asian, Latino, African, Euro-Australians, Migrants and Refugees.
Peripherality is a concept that can be played across a range of applications and meanings. In a distinctly New Zealand sense, peripherality speaks to a number of historical, political and socio-cultural idiosyncrasies. Although as far from the ‘motherland’ of Britain as it is possible to be, the colony of New Zealand nevertheless attracted peripheral interest for several reasons. It provided an exotic terminus for the vision of a classless society for many British citizens struggling at the bottom end of the class system following industrialisation, urbanisation and the Highland enclosures, as well as for the British vision of a utopian society based on Protestantism – the Wakefield vision of which saw several of New Zealand’s main urban centres established (Christchurch, Dunedin and Wellington). In return New Zealand provided Britain (and the world) with the exoticised Māori ‘noble savage’ concept (Hokowhitu 2008), and natural resources such as timber, seals, whales, and gold, and later wool, agricultural produce, heroes such as the late Sir Edmund Hillary and Sir Ernest Rutherford, actors such as Sam Neill and Anna Pacquin, Māori hakapapa tours, Kiri Te Kanawa, Poi E, and the All Blacks (King 2012).

The distinctive national Kiwi identity is presumed to have developed out of the aftermath of the tragic WWII military campaigns of the ANZACS on the Gallipoli peninsula (King 2012). The tensions between geographical isolation and the desire by New Zealanders’ (and Australians) to distinguish ‘down under’ from its European homeland led to both a cultural ‘cringe’ of Kiwi colloquialism, and a celebration of culturally unique elements in both countries; in New Zealand epitomised by the Wellington Museum Te Papa and popular movies such as Goodbye Pork Pie, Boy and most recently The Hunt for the Wilderpeople. During the 1980s, newreaders’ accents became less BBC English and increasingly and unashamedly New Zealand, while comedic actors and characters such as Fred Dagg, Billy T. James, Jon Gadsby and David McPhail became popular for ‘taking the piss’ out of New Zealand’s favourite and dearest myths about itself.

One of the most pervasive of these myths is the egalitarian and classless society. Ostensibly, the poorest and most peripheral members of New Zealand communities have always known that this was a fallacy; and it has been ‘busted’ as New Zealand grapples with exacerbating social, ethnic, health, educational, and income disparities in a neoliberal political economy. Cynically, McLaughlan (2012) argued that the Kiwi subjectivity is characterised by a curious cultural trait of political apathy and passionlessness, standing for nothing and not caring enough to change anything. No matter, neoliberal policies have led to new cosmopolitanisms as New Zealanders engage with global causes and communities, but also new peripheralities as the most vulnerable
New Zealand citizens are increasingly excluded from education, employment, access to health services, government support and housing. Peripherality is always relative; New Zealand’s nationalist myths about itself as a geographical and cultural periphery obscure the social suffering and the marginalisation of the poor, homeless and the obstinate endurance of institutional racism.

The nationalistic pride that New Zealand takes in its own geographical peripherality is at odds with lived experiences of social, political and cultural forms of peripherality and marginality. It might be that the ‘down under’ geographical positioning of both Australia and New Zealand has fostered a sensitivity to the thin line between political peripheralisation and marginalisation that results in a ‘small but mighty’ perception of ourselves on the world stage (the anti-nuclear stance, vote for women and gay marriage). The ‘big OE’, particularly the draw that Britain has for young Kiwis might suggest that the colonial umbilical cord still exists in a symbolic sense. New Zealanders’ enthusiasm for the OE inspires political and economic panic about ‘brain drain’, and subtly reinforces the cultural and geographical peripherality of New Zealand. New Zealand’s innate geographical peripherality, within which many other experiences of peripherality and marginalisation are nested, and strong Kiwi nationalism, provides a backdrop against which the topic of cosmopolitanism is refracted through increasing socio-cultural diversity that continues to challenge New Zealand’s cultural and political homogeneity and apathy.

To return then to the topic of peripheral cosmopolitanisms as debated within our recent conference, in eurocentric histories, it is frequently noted that cosmopolitanism’s roots extend back to the Enlightenment notion that every human has equal worth and ought to have an allegiance to human kind beyond kinship or country (Cheah 2006, Rapport and Stade 2007). A more global view however, finds cosmopolitan philosophies varying in meaning within their historical context (for example Stade’s deeper reading of the meaning of the word during Diogenes time as experiencing one’s animal nature (Stade 2014). There are also multiple origin points for engagement with cosmopolitan philosophies as Schiller and Irving (2015) note including Mo Tzu, a Chinese scholar living from 470–391 BC who proposed an alternative to Confusionism called Mohism which spoke to the equal valuing of subjects through deeds and actions rather than their position in lineages and social hierarchies. Our conference spectacularly showcased the variety and scope of indigenous responses to cosmopolitan theories and expressions of a cosmopolitan consciousness as part of a wider postcolonial toolkit in an invited panel led by Manuka Henare and Lily George. Tenna Brown Pulu rejected cosmopolitan theories to ask why are 1990s identity tensions making a reappearance in the
Pacific region’s second decade of an Asian, Chinese-driven 21st century of aid donors? As her abstract framed it: ‘Ain’t no islander got time for wearing retro identity labels’. Lily George explored the value of cosmopolitanism to explain global/local impacts on the topic of indigenous people’s incarceration, while Manuka Henare’s paper spoke to a broad vision of Polynesian Cosmopolitans. Margaret Kawharu, in her paper entitled ‘He Mata Mano Māori: Being Cosmopolitan Māori’, explored the sophisticated work required of many contemporary Māori to create positive identity markers within a wider societal experience that involves some degree of marginalisation. As Kawharu noted: ‘For many, being Māori and undertaking tertiary study risks entering and being swallowed up by a western discipline and paradigm that is embedded in the forms of colonisation. On the other hand, successful tertiary study offers the pathway to greater control and self-determination with an increased capability to manage tribal trust estates’. Vincent Malcom-Buchanan’s paper explored cosmopolitanism from a notion of heightened mobility and positive encounters with difference by reflecting on his international travels through Europe and behind the Iron Curtain prior to the 1989 collapse of the Soviet Union as (in his terms) an ‘exotic native’. Sean Mallon considered the links between Samoan traditional tattoo artists, cosmopolitanism and globalisation in a fascinating study of how tufuga tatatau (Samoan tattooists) negotiate the complexities of working with a traditional art form both within but also far beyond their communities. Jilda Andrews used an authoethnographic approach to explain the opportunities for the sharing of cultural and scientific knowledges, the preservation of objects and above all, reconciliation within contemporary museum cultures. Her visual analysis of a foreign museum and its collection of aboriginal artefacts expressed the continued positioning of the indigenous ‘other’ as outside the museum. Finally, Gretchen Stolte explored the complicated protocols and social milieu surrounding two examples of the cultural appropriation of Indigenous headdresses – the Torres Strait Islander Dhari and the Lakota Sioux Waphaha in high fashion shows, drawing on cosmopolitanism in its sense of a global elite. Given the richness of such indigenous engagements with cosmopolitanism and despite the contributions of some internationally ‘heavyweight’ scholars on the topic such Babbha and Chea a southern focus remains stubbornly peripheral to the potted histories of cosmopolitan theory that begin most attempts at intellectual discussion of the topic. The article by Robertson in this collection is thus a further helpful corrective to the inappropriate northern dominance within this literature and examines the cosmopolitanism inherent in the Kanak independence movement in New Caledonia and ways in which the non-Kanak majority are imagined within a future independent nation-state. Robertson offers a highly nuanced account of the history of Kanak responses to colonialism and French nation-
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alism, and the complex politics of identity since the 1970s. Cosmopolitanism is revealed to be rooted within the political history and geography of colonial New Caledonia, as a moral re-centring oriented around the fluid histories and ways of being Kanak in the 21st century. This contribution addresses a concern voiced by Nussbaum (1996); how is it possible to reconcile the moral concept of a shared humanity with highly localised identities?

Cosmopolitanism’s recent resurgence in the global north stems from Kant’s view of the ‘right of a stranger not to be treated with hostility’ (in Cheah 2006) and global integration where nations are obedient to cosmopolitan law (Habermas 2008; Nowicka and Rovisco 2009). This shifts attention away from ‘nation’ or ‘culture’ as units of analysis towards understandings of the local/global nexus (Beck 2002; Kuper 1994). Against the foil of this global order of the cosmopolitan, the categories and concepts of nations and nationalisms emerge as oppositional engagements with difference – approaches that homogenise an imagined community and through which boundaries are invoked and policed against the incursions of ‘others’. Karen Connelly explores cosmopolitanism in this sense in relation to a Facebook page, and her insights present a direct challenge to the internet’s ability to foster cosmopolitan interactions. Connelly’s research on cyber racism on this Australian Facebook page forces us to engage with those critiques of cosmopolitanism that question its tenability and challenge its purported idealism. In line with critics of cosmopolitanism who suggest it may be ‘dead dogma’ (Rapport 2012) in the face of fundamentalisms, terrorism, genocides and more, Connelly demonstrates an experience of Web 2.0 technologies in which Facebook’s capacity to represent cultural identities and imaginaries is reworked through what Coleman (2010) terms the ‘prosaics’ of digital media such as the feeding and shaping of social practice—in this case—towards exclusion and hate. Cosmopolitan ideals of welcome and openness become peripheral to this vernacular culture of nationalist, racist bloggers and Facebookers.

Pauline Herbst’s article in contrast explores a distinctive style of cosmopolitanism as it can unfold online in ways that reaffirm the capacity of digital worlds to create identities and solidarities that are ‘post’ national. Herbst’s research explores a New Zealand based Facebook page for parents of children with a rare metabolic disorder. Her account paints a positive, optimistic picture of how online interactions can facilitate cosmopolitanism through inclusion and commonality emphasised across other differences and via expert and intimate knowledges of this particular shared genetic difference. She argues that parents of children with the disorder known as MCADD engage in mutually hospitable relationships with each other on a Facebook page that exemplifies cosmopoli-
tan ideals through being ‘voluntary, transient, open and accepting’. She argues that a biological cosmopolitanism, specifically, is at play here as group members can move into this space when ‘difference’ keeps them at the periphery of their social circles at large. But they can also move out of this online space into other realms of life so as not to be entirely defined by a bio-identity of illness.

Anthropologists have also approached cosmopolitanism as an object of study by attempting to identify a social category of cosmopolitans (Rapport and Stade 2007). Hannerz (1990) differentiates between ‘locals’ and cosmopolitans who exhibit openness toward divergent cultural experiences and cultivate skills in navigating foreign terrains. Several articles in this collection encourage a degree of scepticism about the clarity of such social divides. They provide instead detailed studies of the politically charged impermanence of the label cosmopolitan and the varied impacts of geographical distance on experiences of selfhood and identity. For example, the article by Natalie Araujo and Monika Winarnita presents the irony of Chinese Indonesians, who have been the subjects of persecution in Indonesia thus spurring them to flee to Australia; but who, upon arrival in Perth are then celebrated as Indonesian cultural performers. Forced to the social periphery in their own country of birth, these Indo-Chinese dancers exhibit aspects of fraught, cosmopolitan identities. Individually the dancers must overcome the dissonance of being able to celebrate their cosmopatriot identities only after migrating across borders. In a somewhat parallel example, Lara McKenzie gives us another rendition of cosmopolitanism as experienced at the individual level by age-dissimilar couples whose relationships necessarily transcend age, nation, distance and difference. While Araujo and Winarnita explore structurally induced suffering and difference which must be transcended within a single mobile life, McKenzie weaves the under-addressed but central role of transcendence into cosmopolitan ideals for interaction across difference when both romantic partners remain tied to their own locales both within and across nations. Through the stories of four age-dissimilar couples, McKenzie moves discussions of love and transcendence from the periphery to the centre of cosmopolitan experiences and demonstrates the value of distance to ‘produce and foster love’ rather than to thwart it – itself a peripheral position within the wider cosmopolitan relationships literature. While not explored explicitly within these articles, they both raise the question of ‘cosmopolitan consciousness’ – a topic currently receiving attention as social scientists observe that simple bodily co-presence, travel, transnational lifestyles or a high degree of mobility do not necessarily lead either to reflexive, conscious cosmopolitanism (Werbner 2008) or to self transformation (Nowicka and Rovisco 2009).
Following on from these reflections, we also note that anthropologists who have approached cosmopolitanism ethnographically (Falzon 2009; Kennedy 2009; Wardle 2000; Werbner 1999) have frequently found it is less an elite ideology and more a reality for many who are living an ‘actually-existing’ (Robbins 1998) or ‘mundane’ cosmopolitanism (Nowicka and Rovisco 2009). In this view, cosmopolitanism governs everyday interactions within societal landscapes, sculpted by globalization and the erosion of borders separating the life-worlds of common people (Beck and Sznaider 2006; Kahn 2003). Several articles in this collection follow on within these same traditions. Rebecca Williamson, for example, presents us with three different types of cosmopolitanism at play in Campsie, a suburb of Sydney. Campsie itself presents as a site of peripheral cosmopolitanism – peripheral because it is outside Sydney’s central areas more typically thought of, and marketed as, cosmopolitan. Williamson describes cosmopolitanism, as being lived by Campsie’s everyday residents, to be in line with ‘vernacular’, mundane or actually-existing cosmopolitanisms whereby the residents interact across difference in the park, the mall, the market and more. Williamson presents this as a sort of ‘ground up’ cosmopolitanism that predates current commercial and governmental attempts to deliberately create cosmopolitan spaces in the area. These institutionalised, ‘top down’ attempts to foster, or perhaps fabricate, cosmopolitanism, take the form of purpose built shopping centres and a food festival heavily marketed as ‘cosmopolitan’. Williamson explains how these two types of cosmopolitanism present in Campsie can be at odds with each other. Claire Langsford’s article also explores the everyday taken for grantedness of vernacular cosmopolitanisms but in the recreational fantasy activities known as ‘cosplay’ which is superimposed over the already existing palimpsest of urban life in contemporary inner city Adelaide. Langsford immersed herself in online cosplay activity and the in-person cosplay activities in this Australian city for several years. Be it through creating ‘floating worlds’ through photo shoots, or sharing the images on line, Langsford shows us how cosplay emerges as a peripheral, unlikely context for the production of cosmopolitan connections between people and places. Understood from this perspective, cosplay exemplifies Taussig’s ‘mimesis’. New subjectivities emerge out of experimentation with alternative identities through play, in the process, the boundaries between Self and Other can become blurred and fluid, as individuals transcend localised and nationalistic identity to engage in role playing within cross cultural and global narratives.

Finally, we turn to the manner in which anthropologists have engaged with cosmopolitanism as a research method that recognises fellow global citizens in ‘the Other’ (Rapport and Stade 2007; Robbins 1998). On this topic, we include two articles that argue with equal passion and excellent evidence for (in
Lewis’s case) the futility and redundancy of cosmopolitanism as anthropological method; and (in George’s case) its value and ethical appropriateness. To begin with Lewis, her work challenges cosmopolitanism’s utopian imagery by engaging with critiques of cosmopolitanisms that readily point out that people’s lives are still invariably, strongly shaped and impacted by social inequalities and power differentials (in this case, gender). Here again, cosmopolitanism is shoved to the edges or the periphery when considering how women live in a world still very much shaped by misogyny and patriarchy. Using the group practices of ‘international PickUp Artists’ to illustrate, Lewis argues that cosmopolitanism, with its total oversight of women’s lives amidst this sort of misogyny, does not even present a viable aspiration for social equality and co-existence. Cosmopolitanism as method she argues, far less than presenting new ways to engage ethnographically within the complex trajectories marking social life in the twenty-first century, is a continuation of twentieth century masculine domination of ethnographic authorship in which women literally can find no subject position from which to speak. Her article is a stingingly successful indictment of women’s continuing peripheral position in academia in general and anthropology in particular. Molly George’s article, in contrast argues that a cosmopolitan approach to fieldwork may be particularly well suited to anthropological fieldwork in urban areas. Her discussion unfolds in the context of Aotearoa New Zealand, where identities are complex and nuanced and the act of demographic categorizations for research in this post-colonial, bicultural society run the risk of potentially violent ethnographic misrepresentations. Sitting at the periphery of an ‘anthropological gaze’ where categories, such as ethnicity, persist, George argues instead that urban anthropologists are peripheral strangers among other urban strangers, that contact is often fleeting and that a cosmopolitan approach to anthropological fieldwork, in this kind of setting, works to avoid unethical, inappropriate and hasty ascription of labels.

We close our introduction then with an invitation to our readers to exercise that acuity of peripheral vision which first drew us, as conference organisers, to this topic; and to explore these various engagements with the cosmopolitan. It is also an appropriate moment for us to acknowledge the labour of the many academics, technical and support staff particularly our lay-out editor and general editor, Sites board members and copy editors, reviewers, contributors, students and funders upon whose generosity, dedication and skill the success of every special issue depends. In a time of constricted funding for anthropology, cultural studies and the humanities in general in southern New Zealand and also in some locations in Eastern Australia, there is a bittersweet relevance to our efforts to critically explore the opportunities but also the
limits of cosmopolitan visions of the universal.

NOTES

1 Molly George is a PhD candidate in the Social Anthropology programme at the University of Otago in Dunedin, New Zealand. She submitted her thesis, ‘Ageing in an Increasingly Diverse Aotearoa New Zealand’, in mid-2016 and it is currently undergoing review. This doctoral research situated relatively stationary older New Zealanders in the contemporary settings of global movement and difference that have developed around them and presented these older folk as unlikely cosmopolitans in their micro interactions with those now sharing their shops, churches and more. Her research interests include the life course, ageing, cosmopolitanism, multiculturalism, migration and concepts of home. She has worked as a Teaching Fellow for methods and medical anthropology papers in Otago’s Department of Anthropology and Archaeology. She has also worked as a Research Fellow in Otago’s School of Medicine while conducting ethnographic research with children about playground behaviour and risk.
   
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