

COSMOPOLITANISM, FAITH AND GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP: NEGOTIATING DIFFERENCE, DEVELOPMENT AND JUSTICE

Matt Baillie Smith, Northumbria University

matt.baillie-smith@northumbria.ac.uk

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Introductions

- Biography, positionality and research
- Activist/NGO background ... academic research
- Discourses and practices of 'producing' cosmopolitan/global citizens
 - ▣ 'Development Education'
 - ▣ NGOs, activism and global citizenship
 - ▣ International volunteering
- Working between and across:
 - ▣ Disciplines (development studies, sociology, geography ...)
 - ▣ Cosmopolitanisms (elite, normative, subaltern ...)
 - ▣ Global North and South (social relations of development in the North)

Introductions: aims and ideas

- **Draw on research on ‘Young evangelical Christians volunteering in Latin America’ to:**
 - ▣ go beyond ‘instrumental’ imaginaries of the creation of global/cosmopolitan citizenships (particularly through international volunteering)
 - ▣ explore if and how, in this setting, religion is a ‘potential catalyst for cosmopolitanism’ (Levitt, 2008: 787)
- **To do this, argue that we need to:**
 - ▣ consider processes and dynamics of subjectification relationally
 - ▣ understand global citizenship as multilayered process (e.g. Staehli, 2011)
 - ▣ recognise the significance of language and performance in exploring cosmopolitan citizenship

Introduction: structure and project outline

- Project methodology
- International volunteering, mission and cosmopolitanism
- Global community, development imaginaries and inequality
- Languages and performances of global citizenships

- Youth transitions, international volunteering and religious transformations: the experiences of young evangelical Christians in Latin America
- Web: www.ycla.org.uk
- Researchers: Peter Hopkins and Nina Laurie (Newcastle); Matt Baillie Smith (Northumbria); Betsy Olson (Edinburgh)
- Funding: AHRC/ESRC Religion and Society Programme

Project methodology

Aim: to investigate what happens to the religious identities and spiritual understandings of young evangelical Christians participating in faith-based international volunteering projects in Latin America

Objectives:

- To detail what happens to religious identities and meaning in the lives of young people before, during and after their participation in faith-based international volunteering in Latin America.
 - To explore the ways in which young people's experiences of faith-based volunteering relate to their experiences of being a young person, their transitions to adulthood and what it means to be a religious adult.
 - To understand the role of faith-based volunteering in young people's formulations of citizenship and social justice.
- Stakeholder interviews (10); individual interviews (22) – motivations, expectations and hopes of volunteers; field diaries – completed by young people whilst in the field (*interactions; observations; and moments and meditations*) (14 returned); follow-up interviews (21); focus groups (4)

Project methodology

Case study focus: Latin Link

- 'an international charity with a focus on Latin America. We aim to be a channel whereby people can develop their God-given potential in the service of others'. (web site)
- Non-denominational organisation attracts young people from a variety of UK churches including Anglicans, Church of Scotland, Baptists, Presbyterians and other nonconformist denominations to work with Latin American evangelical churches on a range of projects
- Step Teams – visit Latin America for 4 weeks, 7 weeks or 3 months - work on a variety of projects including building work, youth and community work, music and drama groups etc.
- Short term, relatively limited pre-departure training and support, a contrast to stronger institutionalisation processes (Rovisco, 2009)

International volunteering, mission and cosmopolitanism

- Rovisco (2009): cosmopolitan ideas and values as cultural resources to negotiate difference; religiously motivated volunteering shaping a cosmopolitan imagination?
- Contradictions of locating international volunteers as cosmopolitans: disposition, world view, competence, political project ... (Vertovec and Cohen, 2003); elite and 'subaltern'; cultural and 'political'; 'strategic'
- Delanty: "Cosmopolitanism must be seen as one of the major expressions of the tendency in modernity towards self-problematization." (2006: 35)
- Re-imagining international volunteering – e.g. 'gap years'; short term mission; CSR; state promoted - multiple global citizenships (consumer, employer ...)
(Baillie Smith and Laurie, forthcoming)
- Subjectivity linked to mobilities, ideas of 'community', 'difference', 'responsibility', 'care' ...
- **What are the layers and processes through which volunteers may enact cosmopolitan subjectivities?**

Global community, development and inequality

Global community rooted in faith? Cosmopolitanism very much from somewhere:

- Kirsten: *“I mean I believe as a Christian that everybody is equal and that everybody should have equal rights”* (Pre-departure)
- Are there things you would like to achieve for the local people?
Zara: *“It’s hard because I don’t know much about what we will be doing, just to share... we are building a church so to make a really good job of that and for them to see that people from different places are the same as them.”* (Pre-departure)
- Karen: *“... between Christians it will be quite nice because it means you have something in common and you can be friends but I think it will be nice to share the western Christianity with them without trying to overrule their ways”* (Pre-departure)

Global community, development and inequality

- Common humanity, 'sharing', community as key theme
- Parallel: New Evangelization “appropriated and disseminated cosmopolitan ideas such as self-reflexivity the idea of an essential humanity, and openness to the reality of other people and cultures” (Rovisco, 2009: 271)
- Particular expression of faith as element of foundation for a notion of community lacking in critiques of global citizenship?
- Offers a way of performing a particular mode of cosmopolitanism, but one which doesn't resolve tensions around difference

- **Selective** emphasis on community and commonality appears to:
 - ▣ Excise considerations of justice by young volunteers
 - ▣ Remove need for reflexivity in context of common ground
 - ▣ Flatten out histories, contexts and inequalities

Global community, development and inequality

- 'Banal cosmopolitanism' (Beck) in which difference is flattened out for diverse forms of 'consumption' of 'difference'/'development' or as 'background'
- *I was aware of poverty before I went and I am still aware of it. I saw a bit more when I was out there, but I am not going to claim to understand why it's there and all about it, cause I don't. And it's not like I helped change it all when I was out there, because that wasn't part of the trip the [purpose] of the trip was to witness my faith and help guide the church out there and yeah. I learned some stuff about myself at the same time but, that wasn't the be all and end all. (Lucy - post-return)*

Global community, development and inequality

- Disjuncture: inequality as premise for geography of 'mission', BUT 'role' centred on 'sharing' and listening
- Confusion around 'mission' and development and charity
- Key = relationality: narrow faith rooted cosmopolitanism articulates with popular development imaginaries, personal transformations, etc. to create confusing and contradictory positions
 - Popular development imaginaries appear to be drawn upon to 'make sense' of inequality and relationship to it
 - E.g. Re-imagining short term mission as 'volunteering'
 - UK context critical: e.g. commercialisation of the 'gap year' (Simpson 2004); state sponsorship of IV to promote interfaith dialogue and inclusion (Platform2); profile of UK NGOs; state promotion of 'development awareness'

Global community, development and inequality

- *They won't have the same materialistic things as we would do here in England, like they would be, they will be in mud houses built with bricks kind of thing ...The streets will be very dusty and hardly any greenery, it is a poor area, so if there is any greenery it will be kind of dry kind of thing ...(Cara – pre departure)*
- *It's hard to be specific because they tend to be disorganised about what they want doing but I hope we will be doing some kind of construction project and provide some sort of building that may be useful to them and help improve their lives and to show them some love and show we care about them our brothers and sisters in Christ (Bob – pre-departure).*
- *And yeah I don't feel that I like I loved the time out there but I don't feel that South America is somewhere I feel particularly cool to go back to. I feel like I more want to be in India or in Africa or somewhere like that somewhere with a bit more extreme poverty if I'm going to like do that sort of thing again I think (Rachel – post return)*

Global community, development and inequality

- Existing subjectivities and imaginaries brought into play in tandem with/resisting/reinforcing faith
- Staehli: “specific sites of citizenship formation are connected with and are inseparable from other sites, discourses, and values.” (2011: 4)
- Public performance of faith subjectivities through and against overlapping, reinforcing and contradictory imaginaries
 - E.g. around ‘charity’, ‘service’, ‘help’
- Relative power of different elements shapes degree to which IV is simply an opportunity to enact existing subjectivities
- Manifestation of how contradictions are worked through is critical to understanding global/cosmopolitan citizenship

Languages and performances of citizenship

- Public performance key part of both expressing faith as part of short term group mission, as well as of charity and development
- Personal diaries reveal more subtle negotiations between public imaginaries of development, encounters with inequality, public performance of faith, private spiritualities, personal transformations
- *Martin (Bolivia): This morning was a pretty surreal and emotional experience. Surreal in the sense that although I was telling myself that those people actually lived under a bridge and out on the streets – it felt that when I would go home so would they – it was hard and is hard to imagine that as I sit in a house, warm and comforted, those guys are outside with nothing. It's easy to imagine how they get involved in activities such as stealing. You sort of get the sense they have nothing to lose. – mainly I suppose because they don't. We could see them sniffing glue and a couple completely drunk – it was only midday. It's so sad that that is what they do to I suppose numb themselves to their situation.*

Languages and performances of citizenship

- *Lynn (Ecuador): I feel challenged in my faith. I think in western society it is easier to soften the edges of Christianity to fit in with how we want to live, to justify our own wrongdoings and bad attitudes because 1 Christians are a minority therefore are full integrated into every aspect of society and 2 we have little culture! – very few long standing traditions (apart from drinking). In Ecuador much of the bible is taken very literally, I believe rightly so, for generations and generations Christians here have not gone to discos etc – s'pose our equivalent of going clubbing. They are much stricter with gambling and alcohol and dance ... Although some may find their strictness stupid or unnecessary I think it's both bold and pro-active. God does not want us getting drunk so they don't drink – at all.*

Languages and performances of citizenship

Two Diary quotes from Allan in Argentina:

- *Found out we were using too much water. Argentines have small community reservoirs which are replenished in the wet season. We've been told the reservoir's running low. It's amazing how adaptable we are though no real complaints we just used less water.*
- *Corruption is a way of life for Argentineans it seems. If you have money you can get what you want. But is that so different in the west?*
- How we 'read' these comments critical to understanding relationship between IV and global citizenship, and between faith and cosmopolitanism
- Imaginaries of global and cosmopolitan citizenship shaped by (often neoliberal) modes of 'activism', commodified forms of charity and care

Languages and performances of citizenship

- Rethinking citizenship as process changes how we can read personal reflections:
- Staehli: “the relationships, practices, and acts that construct, regulate, and contest citizenship are at least as important as the status assigned to individuals. In this way, citizenship is always in formation, is never static, settled, or complete, and identities or subjectivities as citizen are similarly unstable” (2011: 6)
- Can we see private reflections and negotiations as part of a cosmopolitan subjectivity?
- Does meditative practice of faith provide foundation for cosmopolitan subjectivity?

Languages and performances of citizenship

- In tandem, we need attention to language and modes of performance
- Less training/institutionalisation than Portuguese volunteers (Rovisco, 2009: 281), and contrasting visions of mission – Portuguese volunteers make public claims for openness not matching personal accounts – our volunteers make no public claim for reflexivity, but privately, offer limited degrees of reflexivity and openness
- Faith ‘and’ or faith ‘in’ development? “development is what adherents to a religion do because of who they are and what they believe in” (Deneulin and Bano, 2009:5)
- Thinking around ‘drink’, ‘corruption’, ‘glue sniffing’, negotiated with and through ideas of faith, community and difference, as engagement with justice and development

Languages and performances of citizenship

- cosmopolitan citizenship performed in different ways, through diverse languages and through negotiation of multiple layers of personal experiences and transformations, spiritualities, imaginations, political subjectivities
- given temporality of cosmopolitan subjectivities (e.g. Baillie Smith and Jenkins, forthcoming), key is not about saying if this equates to cosmopolitan global citizenship
- short term nature of programme, and lack of avenues through which to pursue such negotiations (other than predictable acts and frames of charity) mean no direct translation to ‘activism’ But still need to be understood as part of ‘citizenship’

Concluding thoughts

- publicly performed and selective cosmopolitanism of 'common humanity' can hinder engagement with justice and development
- relationship between faith and cosmopolitanism needs to be socially situated and understood relationally
- to explore IV and cosmopolitanism demands attention to language and performance
- to develop a politically active and effective cosmopolitan citizenship demands critical and reflexive engagement with inequality

Concluding thoughts

- Valentine: “Encounters never take place in a space free from history, material conditions, and power. The danger is that contemporary discourses about cosmopolitanism and new urban citizenship, by celebrating the potential of everyday encounters to produce social transformations, potentially allow the knotty issue of inequalities to slip out of the debate.” (2008: 333)