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Due to the analytical power and purchase of its inclusivist ideal, cosmopolitanism has been the subject of renewed interest in academic debates and discussions of the past three decades. As a 'way of being in the world' (Waldron, 2000: 227), cosmopolitanism is broadly defined as a willingness to engage with the Other. It entails 'an intellectual and aesthetic openness towards divergent cultural experiences, a search for contrasts rather than uniformity' (Hannerz, 1990: 239). The view of cosmopolitanism as a political ideal, however, derives from the Kantian philosophical tradition, itself a much debated and highly complex configuration of ideas, and is aimed at the creation of 'a higher order space, not marked by a world government, but by a world federation of republican states in which citizens from particular countries would all come together in a "condition of lawful association with one another"' (Benhabib, 2004: 39). As a political project that aims at 'a higher order space' and also as a cultural principle that is built on an awareness of *otherness*, cosmopolitanism has emerged from its genesis in the time of the ancient Greeks through nineteenth-century thought to the present as a way of understanding social phenomena that transcend the boundedness of statist and nationalist formations.

Since the 1990s, cosmopolitanism's universalist theoretical foundations have in particular been the subject of extended critique. In this regard, Kant's Enlightenment conception of cosmopolitanism, still a major reference point in modern philosophical thinking on the subject, has been questioned and reframed in the light of the evolving nature of political and economic structures as well as that of social and cultural contexts around the globe. The new and particular circumstances for (re) articulating cosmopolitanism is reflected in the number of revisionary formulations that exist in disciplines as varied as philosophy, sociology, political theory, anthropology, and cultural studies: 'rooted cosmopolitanism' (Cohen, 1992), 'vernacular cosmopolitanism' (Bhabha, 1996), 'working-class cosmopolitanism' (Werbner,

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1999), 'discrepant cosmopolitanism' (Clifford, 1997), 'vernacular cosmopolitanism' (Nava, 2002) and 'banal cosmopolitanism' (Beck, 2002).

While the resurgence in the demands for cosmopolitan (re)thinking in the late twentieth century was largely to ground the concept's normative critique of nationalism in the analyses of contemporary globalization and its effects, in the twenty-first century, cosmopolitanism has been further problematized by new domains of interest emerging in the humanities. For Pheng Cheah, the cosmopolitan visions of the 1990s are now no longer adequate to explain expanding and intensifying global networks and their circuits of power. Indeed, for him and other proponents of the new thinking, the intellectual and philosophical paradigms of cosmopolitanism in relation to nationalism and globalization now point not only to a transcendence of borders and regions but have come together to meet in the alternative terrain of the 'cosmopolitical' (Cheah and Robbins, 1998).

It is exactly in what concerns the reconfiguration of epistemologies attendant on the cosmopolitical that Gayatri Spivak, in her 'Foreword' to this special issue, is careful to remind us that cosmopolitanism is really 'cosmopolitheia', with 'politheia', constitutions, coming to us from Plato. However, she also cautions that cosmopolitanism cannot be read as 'mere constitutionality' but as 'world governance'. For Spivak, therefore, approaches to cosmopolitanism must move beyond discussions of liberal multiculturalism, beyond the anodyne tolerance of the melting pot and celebrations of diversity. Instead, she urges us to position cosmopolitanism within a whole complex of processes involving constellations of power in the new global imaginary, noting in particular the nation-state's complicity with the workings of neo-liberal capitalism.

In proposing the rubric of 'lived cosmopolitanisms' for its theme and title, this collection of essays endeavours to think through and work with these issues in relation to Spivak's call above while also actively seeking a measure of contextual specificity for the concept by moving it into empirical and analytical settings in the global South. It is aimed at calling forth perspectives that give clearer and more satisfactory shape to the nature of social relations, both past and present, in Southeast, South and East Asia and their associated littorals in ways that implicitly highlight the salience of cosmopolitanism as a mode of interpretation of places and histories that have not been central to normative theorizations on the subject.

In foregrounding the politics of place and of location, lived cosmopolitanisms as a concerted project of revisioning is also part of the ongoing struggle around the (re)constitution of space and the subjectivities – ethnic, cultural, and national – produced by the movements, activities, experiences and modes of affiliation, entitlement, and belonging of mobile, diasporic and also largely 'rooted' or non-diasporic people, as represented in their discursive or cultural practices and textual productions, under various moments and phases of globalization. What this conception of cosmopolitanism brings to light, as the essays in the volume implicitly demonstrate, is the notion of 'nation-ness' as the locus of struggles over meanings and competing desires as well as of connectedness and shared identification.

In our effort to explore how articulations of cosmopolitanism from the South can contribute to understandings of cosmopolitanism in a global context, we brought together a disciplinary mix of scholars from varied locales whose work collectively engages history, anthropology, literary and cultural studies and sociology. A major value of this set

of interdisciplinary conversations is that the essays all pay attention to forms of social relations and the practice of politics that both emerge in and are constitutive of national, spatial, cultural and temporal contexts in the global South. Although the articles that follow use various approaches to engage with, reflect on and unpack the notion and significance of lived cosmopolitanisms, and the concerns of these approaches may also differ, underlying this variety of concerns and approaches are a number of common framing perspectives. These not only give coherence to the collection but also have important implications in terms of the conceptual work they do in the context of studies of Asian cosmopolitanisms as a field of critical inquiry.

The organic intellectual from the post-colony

One of the vital contributions made by this issue is to offer ways of elucidating the salience of cosmopolitanism as a grounded concept in academic, particularly humanities and social science, productions. In this endeavour to interrogate, reorientate and unpack received theorizations of cosmopolitanism to reflect the empirical realities of the global South, we are aided by Spivak's reminder to us of Gramsci's notion of the organic intellectual. For Gramsci, intellectuals are not independent but rather products of the class of which they are a part. The argument here is that intellectuals as agents or producers of knowledge should practise a self-reflexive critique focussed on the implications of their positioning within the specific political and cultural settings from which they write. This ultimately is related to the not insignificant issue of 'not only what is being theorized but also who is theorizing and from where' (Slater, 1998: 648).

In this respect, although the critical approaches to cosmopolitanism of scholars of Southeast Asian origins, for instance, Pheng Cheah (who is incidentally also of Malaysian origins), constitute necessary and valid theoretical interventions, their location in metropolitan academic contexts does implicate them in a different set of intellectual concerns, emphases and priorities. We would therefore point to the role of the researcher working and writing from 'the post-colony', as J. Devika does in her essay in this volume. Drawing from Tejaswini Niranjana (1992), Devika argues that the scholar is not only a 'postcolonial' one, in terms of theoretical positioning, but one who is also cognizant of his or her own critical positionality as an intellectual writing from the political space of the post-colony.

The researcher's embeddedness in the geopolitical and cultural location of the post-colony invariably enables a critique of both Eurocentric globalisms and entrenched localisms from the specificities, as in Devika's case, of her own locatedness in the post-colony of Kerala State, India. The political as well as cultural lineaments of this positioning allow her to interrogate the universalist tendencies inherent not only in first-world academic productions on Kerala but also in the developmentalist social science paradigm that has long dominated the state's constructions of Kerala's history. Although Devika may be more explicit than the other contributors in making reference to the reflexivity of her project to 'reimagine the local' (p. 129) in the context of the global, all the essays enlisted in this special issue in their various ways come together to form a nucleus of thinking that expresses epistemic self-reflexivity in the approach to cosmopolitanism.

Connected histories

A key concept running through this collection and one that offers a fresh interpretation of lived cosmopolitanisms is that of 'connected histories'. Conceived by Sanjay Subrahmanyam (1997) to highlight historical processes and relationships that exceed the limits of territorial boundaries and connect seemingly separate regions, the concept offers at the same time an implicit critique of area-studies models and the Eurocentrism of the paradigms that have long dictated the imagining of Asia and its histories and geographies. An important aspect of this critical project of reorganizing place and pastness is a questioning of the lines of political and cultural demarcation that conventional historiography, strategically held up as authoritative by the hegemonic nation-state and other entrenched localisms, has accepted and left unproblematicized.

The idea of linked histories is salient to the trajectory of thinking of this special issue as, in striving to move away from the limits of area-centred and Eurocentric geopolitical imaginings, it engenders the possibility of constructing, conceptualizing, and (re)locating Asia as the producer of knowledge in cosmopolitanism studies, rather than as the passive receiver of theories from the West. From the perspective of this methodological reworking of place and history, littoral Asia is reconfigured from a bounded and reified construct comprising separate 'areas' – the dominant model that informs traditional frameworks for the writing and conceiving of history and geography – into an expansive, complex and interactive geo-historical nexus of plurality and simultaneity.

As a new spatial and epistemological paradigm, littoral Asia provides an alternative and dynamic context for understanding place and temporality, bringing to light suppressed histories and cultural geographies. The imposition of nationalist frames on these historically and spatially interconnected formations, as several of the essays in the collection demonstrate, has functioned to obscure the multi-scalar cultural genealogies of those formations.

Spivak's pointing out to us of the case of Saint-Louis-du-Sénégal, now a provincial city on the mouth of the Senegal River but once a powerful trading emporium in the Atlantic, should be situated within this trajectory of concerns. She asserts that the history of Saint-Louis, rather than being seen as merely coming out of and shaping the Atlantic (colonial) world, must be viewed as belonging to much older connected histories of ancient Sahelian and trans-Saharan exchange that also include encounters with Europe or at least the Iberian Peninsula and parts of the Mediterranean (see Diouf, 2001).

In situating the history of South, Southeast, and East Asia within the context of linked histories, the essays that follow contest dominant ways of conceptualizing Asia that obscure, if they do not simplify or erase altogether, its complex historical processes and cultural productions. The essays in this volume adopt modes of analysis of the past and of place that give us insights into the shifting resonance of the historical experience of space and of patterns of identity construction and belonging. These narratives are contextualized against a set of reference points and paradigm of imaginings lying outside the nationalist framing of events.

Frost points to the contradictions of a nationalism that went 'beyond the limits of nation and geography' (p. 143) to embrace the political ideal 'of peace and brotherhood' (p. 143). This 'internationalist' worldview, as Frost seeks to demonstrate, was a

'pan-Asian' perspective freed from the nationalist prejudices of place, ushering in a distinct cosmopolitan turn in nationalism across Britain's colonies in Asia. The significance of his reflexive approach 'from the colonial periphery' (p.144) is that Frost displaces the use of the Wilsonian paradigm (named after US President Woodrow Wilson), and its hitherto uninterrogated Eurocentrism, to explain the beginnings of this new internationalist outlook in nationalist discourse in colonial Asia. By eschewing this framework, and the Eurocentrism associated with it, Frost is able to retrieve the occluded Asian origins and rationale behind the cosmopolitan appropriations made by local literati and nationalist leaders in the early years of the twentieth century. These ideological manoeuvres, traced to a much earlier period than the 'Wilsonian moment', were necessary, Frost asserts, to advance notions of imperial citizenship and belonging within visions of a reconstructed British Empire in Asia.

Lakshmi Subramanian shows the interconnectedness of people's life stories and institutional processes against a new and larger imaginative geography constituted around older maritime networks of commercial exchange, communication and religion that traversed the 'boundaries of nation, continent or sea' (p. 163). Read as a signifier of the connected history of peninsular India, Singapore and Malaya in the nineteenth century, Tamil migration from South to Southeast Asia is used as the site for the exploration of complex trans-social human processes of negotiation, accommodation and resistance as well as of experiences of space.

In much the same vein, the reclaiming of connected histories and geographies displaces the stable conception of the past lodged in the 'Kerala model' of developmentalism that invariably effaces the processes of historical plurality and simultaneity in Kerala state's narratives of migration and transnationalism. Contesting the dominant paradigm of closure and containment, Devika shows the dynamic and shifting nature of a Malayalee modernity that ranged across and developed connectedly in Kerala, colonial Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), colonial Burma and Malaya.

The recuperating of connected histories and social processes through life stories is again evinced in the essay by Sumit Mandal. While Subramanian's exploration of migrant narratives and their cross-cutting linkages across the Bay of Bengal marks an attempt to write these movements and cross-cutting intersections into the larger story of the imagined geography of 'Greater India' (while also holding this idea up to scrutiny), Mandal's reading of biographies provides us access to the lived interactions and everyday exchanges constitutive of the social and political worlds of the Malay world of Southeast Asia. By piecing together the biographical fragments of nineteenth-century creole Hadramis, and vignettes from their own textual productions, Mandal assembles a compelling collage of the cosmopolitan milieu of which they were a prominent part. Assimilated in some measure to the 'local' culture and customs, hence the prefix 'creoles', the Hadramis, originally from the Hadramaut region of Yemen, were generally associated with elite groups; they were mostly traders, diplomats and scholars. The Hadramis were not the only creole communities in the Malay world of the nineteenth century; Mandal alludes to the co-presence of creole Tamils, Chinese, as well as Europeans. The term 'creole Hadrami' itself becomes a signifier of the connected histories of the Arabian peninsula and Southeast Asia, engendering complex questions of identity and belonging for the now-truncated contemporary nation-states of what was once the fluid and borderless Malay world.

What is significant is that a picture emerges of its flexible cultural geographies of belonging that suggests quite compellingly that the Malay world of the early nineteenth century was the 'site of interaction' (Harper and Amrith, 2012) between the transregional and the local. The pivotal uncovering of such connected histories and geographies exemplifies the vicissitudes of colonial policies and nationalist ideologies in the Malay archipelago whose rich temporalities and multilayered pluralities had once brought together today's 'dis-connected' nation-states of Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore and Thailand. It also allows us to reimagine that these now-separate and separated states were once in historical and cultural affinity, and even intimacy, with what is present-day Colombo in Sri Lanka and Cape Town in South Africa.

The use of lived or biographical trajectories of cosmopolitanism in this way unravels not only the presumed homogeneity of the Malay world, and the nationalist certitudes attendant upon that homogeneity, but also the fixity of the notion of 'Malayness' as a cultural or ethnic identity. Although proponents of the concept of connected histories are motivated in their inquiries by constructing historical objects that lie outside the frame of the nation-state, there is no denying that the spatial and epistemological insights gleaned from such a reworking of history can play a crucial critical role in contesting dominant nationalist ideologies. This is especially pertinent in countries such as Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia where the nation-state and its institutions exercise considerable hegemonic power over what constitutes 'inside' and 'outside', 'indigene' and 'foreigner'.

The principle of cosmopolitanism integral to the idea of connected histories is explored in the narratives of Amitav Ghosh through the notion of boundary crossings. These outward movements, argues Meg Samuelson, gesture to the older geographies and imaginaries of place and belonging that existed prior to the division of the world into separate nation-states. Thus, in *In an Antique Land*, metaphors of fluidity and flexibility abound, connecting – both across time and space – the Mediterranean, the Middle East and South Asia. Indeed, traversing and blurring the disciplinary boundaries between fiction, ethnography, history and travel-writing, the text, in form and substance, illustrates the dynamics that sustain Ghosh's entire oeuvre – the rejection of the exclusionary logic in the construction of otherness and of geopolitical boundaries. This key dynamic of cosmopolitanism – the openness to otherness – is also a central aspect of *The Hungry Tide*, a novel that sets up yet another complex cartography of cross-cutting movements and affiliations. Connecting India and the United States, the novel shows how a new cosmopolitanism is forged and given shape by the South but is not limited to it; it is a cosmopolitanism that acknowledges the co-constitution and complicity of North and South. In her analysis, Samuelson charts how the Indian Ocean world of the first work and the Sundarbans of the second, an entangled ecosystem of plant, human and animal life that comes together in ties of solidarity that exceed geopolitical boundaries and 'species borders' (p. 190), are a vast and permeable canvas of connectivities that has existed for centuries. This allows us to argue that the recuperation of lost or 'dead' connected histories under the sign of cosmopolitanism is not to be dismissed as a mere romanticization of the past, a criticism that has been frequently levelled at Ghosh's narrativization of history.

Elite and subaltern cosmopolitanisms

It is often held that a primary difference between the transoceanic circulations of earlier centuries and the more recent transnational movements is that the latter mainly comprises non-elite movements of the kind described as subaltern cosmopolitanisms. Such non-elite forms or manifestations of cosmopolitanism are not only limited to the status or positions of individuals; whole countries or nation-states can also be seen to be in a position of subalternity in relation to global hegemonies. The essays that follow take issue with several of such normative assumptions about cosmopolitanism vis-à-vis its privileged and subaltern formations.

The notion of subaltern cosmopolitanisms triggered from above is a primary thematic concern in Ghosh's texts. Interrogating the dominant assumption that the early transoceanic migrations comprised elite travellers who encountered others on their own terms, Ghosh's narrative of the twelfth-century Tunisian-born Jewish trader, Abraham Ben Yiju, and his South Asian-born slave, Bomma, in *In an Antique Land* resuscitates from 'social death', as Samuelson terms it, the histories of the migration of ordinary people engendered by Indian Ocean trade and labour.

Neither is cosmopolitanism only limited to our affiliations with other people. Ghosh's more recent work, *The Hungry Tide*, constructs a 'new cosmopolitanism' of the global South comprising human and non-human solidarities with the environment. Samuelson further demonstrates how Ghosh complicates this picture of cosmopolitan solidarity by drawing attention to the complex interplay between subalternity, the environment, the state and transnational institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. In both works, Ghosh – a writer who is himself aware that he writes from a present determined by the neo-liberal global condition – brings marginalized forms of subaltern identity and agency to the forefront.

Furthermore, manifestations of cosmopolitanism are not the sole preserve of the white Euro-American mobile elite – 'those who have the resources necessary to absorb other cultures' (Vertovec and Cohen, 2002: 5). As importantly, through the critical lens offered by lived cosmopolitanisms, these elite or privileged forms of cosmopolitanism are not abstract or 'culture-free' phenomenon but have their 'own material and social conditions' (Calhoun, 2003: 544). Thus, the movements, interactions, thinking and practices of Asian intellectuals, explored principally through the figure of Rabindranath Tagore, but also other elites – Frost's objects of analysis in this collection – are rooted in a particular matrix of politics, culture and history constitutive of the social imaginary of that period.

Mandal similarly contextualizes the complex mobile histories of the nineteenth-century creole Hadrami writers Abdullah bin Muhammad al-Misri and Abdullah bin Abdul Kadir (better known as Abdullah Munshi), who were closely identified with the colonial elite. He traces their, as well as their characters', cosmopolitan trajectories in life and experiences of place through their connectedness to the local ways and traditions, rather than through a transcending of them as recommended by much of the conventional, metropolitan-based theorizations of cosmopolitanism (see, for instance, Nussbaum, 1994). Through the tracing of these individuals' own sense of connectedness to their world, we are given glimpses into those critical moments when the fluid geopolitical and cultural structures of the Malay world created and sustained by such connectedness

– as engendered by trade, diplomatic circuits and oceanic circulations – began to be caught in an emerging colonial system. The interventions of the latter, through its apparatuses of control and containment, regulated and eventually suppressed these rich pre-colonial zones of contact and encounter (Hefner, 2001).

Moreover, and importantly, not all cosmopolitan subjectivities and practices are produced by elite movements beyond geographical limits or boundaries. In Mukdawijitra's essay, littoral Asia works to dislocate an association of cosmopolitanism with solely the activities of mobile groups. Mukdawijitra's ethnographic account of the 'sedentary' or 'rooted' cosmopolitanism of the indigenous Tai of the highlands of Vietnam deploys the concept of the lived cosmopolitanism of objects. Here, the Tai script and writing system and its circulatory networks since pre-colonial times to the present and the vast space they covered, from South Asia to mainland Vietnam, are used as a way to think through an actual practice of cosmopolitanism.

Devika also shows that a subaltern cosmopolitanism in Kerala did exist, although its history still remains largely unwritten as it is inevitably overshadowed by the Hindu casteist perspective lurking just beneath the surface of the Kerala state's narrative of developmentalism and its official construction of Kerala's past and place in the Indian Ocean world.

Chih-ming Wang does likewise for the biographical trajectories of East Asian adoptees within complex, connected and bloody histories of subalternization and state power, involving Japan, Korea and the United States, in a world system where imperial powers and multinational military alliances operate. In his analysis of the sleazy underworld of cosmopolitanism, Wang reveals horrifying worlds of subalternization where African-American military criss-cross the path of forced migrant colonial labourers from Korea on Japanese soil. The displaced characters he examines in Don Lee's *Country of Origin* are entangled in a long history of the logic of domination, oppression, and exploitation that is obscured by the state's rhetoric of modernity. On their mixed-race bodies are inscribed the contradictions and complexities of their histories of subalternity as well as privilege. This lived or 'embodied' conception of cosmopolitanism (Molz, 2005) challenges normative accounts of cosmopolitanism as an abstract, detached, and painless ideal. By contesting universalist conceptions of cosmopolitanism, and uncovering the traumatized spaces and subjectivities produced by unequal global power flows, lived cosmopolitanisms can open up possibilities for, as Pollock et al. (2000) contend, political theory and action.

State and society tensions

The essays that follow also implicitly address a significant problematic in contemporary scholarship on cosmopolitanism – the role of the nation-state in an era of accelerated globalization. The concept of the nation-state itself with its rational, bounded and universalist underpinnings has its origins in Western social scientific thought (Chatterjee, 1986). It is therefore worth asking, in what ways is the theoretical value of cosmopolitanism, itself also of Western provenance, applicable in social contexts in the South where nationalist doctrines of homogeneity are put to the service of the state to impose exclusion and closure? Indeed, the essays that follow uncover instances of the tensions and

struggles involved in settings where the empirical realities of cosmopolitanism on the ground conflict with the hegemonic practices and institutional procedures of the nation-state.

The retrieving of the connected histories of the early nineteenth-century Malay world, when colonial ideologies of othering were as yet not fully consolidated, and the alternative narratives of the nation associated with it are, in Mandal's essay, implicitly juxtaposed against the regulation of difference and coercive assimilation tacitly present in prevailing hegemonic discourses about Malaysianness as a national and cultural identity. These dominant discourses assert particular understandings of Malaysia's past through narrativizations of the Malay world that work to suppress the linked histories and geographies of that world.

Ghosh's *In an Antique Land* invokes metaphors of fluidity and travel to interrogate the notions of rigidity and impermeability built into colonial processes of boundary-making and the exclusions that accompanied those divisions. Indeed, *The Hungry Tide*, as Samuelson cogently argues, highlights the trauma of people discarded by the nation-state under global processes that operate by perpetuating the marginalizing tendencies of colonialist and nationalist ideologies.

Mukdawijitra explores how indigenous farming communities in upland Vietnam, removed from the great port-city trading littorals, tried to mobilize themselves in order to ascertain their participation in decision-making processes and guarantee the survival of their culture and language. They did so by resisting the supplanting of their Tai Mai Chau alphabet by the official standardized alphabet endorsed by the postcolonial state. This successful resistance to the state deployed structures of pre-colonial origin, in this case both a system of kinship and a script, but now in a new global context. Mukdawijitra's essay delineates the particular power structures as well as historical, political, economic and cultural contexts that Pollock et al. (2000), referring to another context, suggest are constitutive of the conditions through which subaltern cosmopolitanisms emerge.

Frost highlights a cosmopolitanism that displays Kantian political ideals – the idea of the League of Nations, for instance, and even a world culture or civilization. It is also striking that the individuals who put forth those ideas felt they were living in an era that was moving beyond territorial and local barriers towards a much more globalized world. It is now difficult to envisage that these cosmopolitan processes and possibilities were present back then, in the nascent phase of nationalism in the early years of the twentieth century. One of the reasons for this is that the apparatuses of the colonial and later post-colonial state, in the case of Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), Singapore, Malaysia and India, had worked to destroy that vision through sheer violence and repression.

Conclusion

It is indeed of no small significance that the resurgence in debates on cosmopolitanism in recent decades has paralleled global developments set in motion by the increased transnational flows of people, capital, cultural goods and ideas. While we need to heed the call that the language of cosmopolitanism runs the danger of being co-opted by or imbricated with the workings of neo-liberal hegemonic institutions, including the nation-state, it is equally important that we salvage the cultural and political purchase of

cosmopolitanism in the light of the murderous retreat into various nativist and entrenched localisms that mark our present age. Furthermore, it is the concept of the state rather than the nation that needs to be rehabilitated; in vast areas of Asia, the idea of the nation and the rallying power of nationalism still serves as a powerful unifying ideal (Smith, 2000: 1). Partha Chatterjee also urges us to look ‘within the nation rather than beyond it’; his contention is that considerations of post- or transnational structures ‘do not necessarily rule out rethinking the internal forms of the nation-state’ (1998: 57). The argument we wish to make here is that theorizations of cosmopolitanism need not exist in an oppositional relationship with the idea of the nation or with nationalism.

The task therefore is to seek new analytical directions that would allow us to grapple with both the problems and possibilities associated with cosmopolitanism. The challenge that initially arose from this need to ground our theoretical and empirical perspectives in particular times and in particular places was to ask how social science and humanities research and intellectual trends in non-Western, specifically Asian, contexts could be distinguished from scholarship on cosmopolitanism framed or dictated by, consciously or not, Eurocentric perspectives. While still interrogating the ideological underpinnings of theories rooted in Western cultural and political models vis-à-vis their applicability in non-Western settings, lived cosmopolitanisms reminds us that our ‘local’ is already enmeshed with *other* spaces and that it is these spaces of encounter, conflict, overlap and entanglement that can offer possibilities for engaging critically with our present conjuncture. Aware, therefore, of littoral Asia’s break from traditional area-studies models and the exclusions, silences and absences produced by their constitutive inside and outside, we use terms such as ‘Asian’ or ‘Asian cosmopolitanisms’ and ‘West’ or ‘Western’, advisedly.

Indeed, the daily confrontation with our other within us is an integral part of that cosmopolitan praxis. Devika, for instance, concludes that only by ‘pursuing such connections that make up the givens of our everyday life and lived traditions’ can we ‘loosen essentialized constructions of the [sub]nation’ (p. 138). This is eloquently affirmed by Wang in his own conclusion, ‘Asia is not a geo-cultural locus of primordial and uncontested identity and belonging, but a significant point of departure from which worldly relations [...] have been inscribed in our own becoming’ (p. 240).

The real challenge, then, is to devise historically situated and self-reflexive modes and avenues of thinking attentive to the connected, mutually constitutive, simultaneous, and yet also discrepant conditions in which ‘Asia’, whether as an epistemological object or the subject of theorizing, is deeply embedded. In short, it is to fracture and to pluralize cosmopolitanism into *cosmopolitanisms* – subaltern, privileged, amiable, bloody, coerced, port-city, upland, rooted and mobile. These fragments represent the non-totalizing spaces and subjectivities produced in, by and through specific conditions under different historical moments of the local–global encounter. Littoral Asia thus emerges in this collection not as a singular and reified point of reference but as a chronotopic space of conjunctural movements. In thinking the cosmopolitical through lived cosmopolitanisms, then, this special issue offers significant new insights by intimating to us a sense of the range of possibilities, both for local knowledge construction and transformative social change, engendered by ongoing struggles against dominant mappings, orderings and conceptualizations of Asia and its littorals.

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