

**A cosmopolitan return to nature**

**How combining aesthetization and moralization processes expresses distinction in food consumption**

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# **A cosmopolitan return to nature: how contemporary food trends combine aesthetization and moralization processes**

## **Abstract**

This paper investigates how foodies' adoption of New Nordic Food enables them to combine aesthetic and moral cosmopolitanism ideals. It demonstrates that consumers integrate aesthetic and moral cosmopolitan discourses through two complementary processes: the re-aesthetization of nature and the re-moralization of the exotic. These processes combine in a cosmopolitan interest for one of the last unexplored foreign contexts: nature. The findings of this paper contribute to existing research by showing that moral cosmopolitanism reflects a more individualized and less engaged form of consumption than ethical consumption. They illustrate how urban consumers perform distinction in contexts where nature is the most exotic unexplored context, highlighting further the reterritorialization of global cosmopolitan consumption, where food trends can only be consumed authentically in their context of origin. Finally, this paper shows how moral cosmopolitanism can support consumers who acknowledge the need for ethical consumption yet struggle with its adoption.

## **Keywords**

Cosmopolitanism, Foodies, Nordic, aesthetics, morals, nature

Noma, repeatedly named the ‘Best Restaurant of the World’ by *Restaurant Magazine*, is one of the leading lights of the New Nordic Food trend. According to the website of the New Nordic Food programme (norden.org), the principles underlying this trend focus on local products, seasonality and ecological sustainability. In recent years, Noma’s chef, René Redzepi, has relocated the restaurant for a few months at a time to London, Tokyo and Sydney. Wherever he went, guests lined up to taste products as exotic as deep-fried moss or live ants, some going as far as to offer their house to René Redzepi in exchange for a table (Hunt 2016). Food trends such as the New Nordic one primarily attract foodies, consumers considering food a major component of their identity (Johnston and Baumann 2015). Previous research has identified that foodies like to distinguish themselves through the adoption of novel or eccentric food trends. It has pointed to foodies’ interest for exotic food trends as well as ethical food ones, focused on the well-being and sustainability of local environments and communities (Johnston and Baumann 2015). But when considering that preferences for exotic products and global travel may be in contradiction with a focus on local products and the protection of the environment, the integration of those food trends with each other can seem impossible at first glance. Yet existing research remains silent about how exactly foodies achieve this integration in their consumption behaviour.

In order to shed some light on this question, we address this subject using the theoretical framework of cosmopolitanism, that is, the openness to cultural diversity and the general sense of belonging to a global humanity (Hannerz 1990). This concept proves valuable since it combines an *aesthetic* side - openness and curiosity towards cultural diversity and the exotic, with a *moral* side - the concern for humanity and the world as a whole (Skrbiš, Kendall, and Woodward 2004). While the aesthetic side of food consumption has been connected to cosmopolitanism, its moral side has not followed the same trend, although previous research has indicated that cosmopolitanism correlates positively with

ethical consumption behaviour (Grinstein and Riefler 2015). The question therefore arises to what extent cosmopolitanism is compatible with ethical consumption, consumption practices that take into account (and often seek to alleviate) negative corollary effects of consumption on the environment and other citizens of the world (Pecoraro and Uusitalo 2014). To do so, this paper answers two specific research questions. Firstly, it details how foodies mobilize global food trends to express moral cosmopolitanism rather than ethical consumption ideals. Building on this, it secondly shows how foodies integrate aesthetic and moral cosmopolitanism ideals with each other as well as with the potential contradictions between these ideals. In combination, these insights allow for deeper insights into foodies' adoption of seemingly contradictory food trends in a global world.

This paper answers the research questions through a critical discourse analysis of foodies' discourses about New Nordic Food. It took into consideration the respondents' vocabularies for adopting aesthetic and moral cosmopolitanism ideals and linked these vocabularies with broader socio-cultural discourses. New Nordic Food constitutes an ideal case for this study as it promotes local and ecologically sustainable consumption while remaining exotic to non-Nordic consumers, thereby offering both an aesthetic and a moral side. This study concentrates on foodies, since these consumers are very prone to adopt cosmopolitan and ethical consumption discourses (Johnston and Baumann 2015). Specifically, it investigates non-Nordic foodies' adoption of New Nordic Food to focus this paper on the cosmopolitan adoption of a foreign consumption trend rather than nationalist interests among the Nordic population.

The findings demonstrate that the respondents integrate aesthetic and moral cosmopolitan discourses about New Nordic Food through two complementary processes. The first process, the re-aesthetization of nature, renders the experience of nature exotic using aesthetic culinary presentations. The second process, the re-moralization of the exotic,

connects the consumption of an exotic food trend to global principles for ethical consumption by developing pragmatic moral discourses about Nordic Food. Together, these processes enable consumers to combine aesthetic and moral cosmopolitanism ideals despite authenticity challenges, allowing for the development of a cosmopolitan interest for one of the last unexplored contexts: nature.

These findings contribute to existing research on multiple levels. Firstly, this study shows that moral cosmopolitanism reflects a form of consumption that acknowledges social and ecological sustainability concerns in a more individualized and less engaged way than ethical consumption behaviour does. Secondly, by introducing the concept of nature cosmopolitanism, this paper shows how urban consumers perform distinction in contexts where (local) nature is the most exotic unexplored context. Thirdly, it highlights the reterritorialization of global cosmopolitan consumption, where food trends such as New Nordic Food can only authentically be consumed in their context of origin. Finally, this paper contributes to research about consumers who acknowledge the need for ethical consumption yet whose adoption of it stays limited (de Burgh-Woodman and King 2013; Grauel 2014). The conclusions of the present study indicate that a linkage with nature cosmopolitanism renders ethical consumption easier to adopt.

In the following, this paper firstly presents existing research about food consumption and cosmopolitanism. It then introduces the case of New Nordic Food, before presenting the findings of this study. Finally, the paper discusses these insights in relation to cosmopolitanism research, food studies and ethical consumption research.

### **Aesthetics and morals of cosmopolitan food consumption**

Food plays multiple roles in consumers' identity construction (Marshall 2005), which are exacerbated in a cosmopolitan setting. Although the focus on this paper is on

cosmopolitanism, this literature review therefore first provides an overview of the role of food in consumer identity, before engaging with cosmopolitanism research.

### *Foodies, taste and distinction*

Food consumption has played an important role in consumption studies in general and research about globalization, cultural diversity and cosmopolitanism in particular (Bardhi, Ostberg, and Bengtsson 2010). Developing aesthetic expertise and taste for specific food products over others indicates good taste, which enables affiliation to privileged consumer classes and thereby distinction (Bourdieu 1979; Marshall 2005). As a consequence, each society or subculture develops taste regimes, normative systems that shape aesthetic preferences in a consumption culture (Arsel and Bean 2013). In globalized societies and especially multicultural cities, the taste regimes underlying culinary capital develop along three trends: an increased popularity of ethnic cuisines, a focus on ethical consumption, and, mostly in connection with those two trends, a willingness to purchase specialty and premium ingredients (Johnston and Baumann 2015). Foodies, consumers for whom food is a major element of identity construction, combine these taste regimes to display distinction through food consumption, building culinary capital (Naccarato and Lebesco 2012). However, as the next sections detail, existing research only links one of those trends (ethnically diverse consumption) to cosmopolitanism (Johnston and Baumann 2015). The present paper expands this perspective and argues that both of those trends and their combination can represent cosmopolitan consumption.

The first trend, a cuisine that combines local and global cultural influences, reflects consumers' aesthetic cosmopolitanism ideals (Fonseca 2005; Germann Molz 2011). Most of those cuisines rely on exoticism, a focus on non-White foreign cultures (Johnston and Baumann 2015; Fonseca 2005), which suggests a form of 'cultural colonialism' (Heldke 2003, xv). This colonialist heritage of cosmopolitanism (Thompson and Tambyah 1999)

often coexists with a genuine willingness to discover novel food, a form of cultural cosmopolitanism (Johnston and Baumann 2015). Following up on previous research, this paper separates cultural colonialism from cultural cosmopolitanism by studying foodies' adoption of a 'white' food trend such as New Nordic Food (Andreassen 2015), understudied when it comes to the consumption of cultural diversity (Goldstein-Gidoni 2005).

The second trend, commonly called ethical consumption, builds on the adoption of socially and ecologically sustainable consumption (Naccarato and Lebesco 2012). It reflects the emergence of a citizen-consumer hybrid (Johnston 2008), where consumption serves as tool for political influence and change (Naccarato and Lebesco 2012). Previous research has extensively studied the role of those ethical consumption practices in individuals' identity projects and their potential for moderating humanity's negative impact on the environment (Connolly and Prothero 2003; de Burgh-Woodman and King 2013). Yet it has often overlooked that ethical consumption behaviour may represent a form of (global) ecological cosmopolitanism (Stevenson 2002). The paper expands on this point and shows how ethical consumption becomes part of a cosmopolitan outlook that integrates global moral discourses.

For this purpose, it is necessary to distinguish the concepts of ethics and morals. Although these concepts are commonly used as synonyms, ethics can be defined as an individual interpretation of what constitutes a good action or life, while morals refers to conformity to social norms that define how a person ought to behave, in other words, what represents right action or life (Ricoeur 1990). The morality of consumption has a long history of societal debate, where specific consumption choices have been alternatively framed as moral or immoral (Luedicke, Thompson, and Giesler 2010; Hilton 2004). By pretending to moral superiority, consumers assert distinction over others (Luedicke, Thompson, and Giesler 2010). But when it comes to food consumption, consumers struggle to conform to societally defined expectations about the right consumption in their everyday life (Connolly and

Prothero 2008). Such a struggle often emerges from a lack of individual identification with norms relative to socially and ecologically sustainable consumption (Grauel 2014). In other words, consumers' personal ethics do not match the moral norms they are supposed to adopt. In this light, we argue that instead of considering ethical consumption practices in terms of ethics alone, it is useful to study how global food trends enable consumers to express moral (cosmopolitanism) rather than ethical consumption ideals.

### *Cosmopolitanism*

Cosmopolitanism refers to individuals' interest for cultural diversity and their desire to integrate elements of those cultures in their life (Hannerz 1990). Dating back to world citizenship ideals from the times of Ancient Greece and Enlightenment (Delanty 2006), the concept has been used throughout the ages to describe individuals whose outlook on the world goes beyond local contexts and lifestyles (Merton 1968). This expansion of individuals' horizons takes two forms, discussed in the following sections: aesthetic and moral cosmopolitanism (Bookman 2013).

#### *Aesthetic cosmopolitanism*

One of the most commonly accepted definitions of the concept refers to cosmopolitanism as 'an intellectual and aesthetic openness toward divergent cultural experiences, a search for contrasts rather than uniformity' (Hannerz 1996, 103). The focus of aesthetic cosmopolitanism lies on individuals' interest for culturally diverse consumption experiences that serve as a resource in their identity projects (Germann Molz 2011). This focus has been extensively studied in relation to consumption behaviour, for instance considering cosmopolitanism as an ideology underlying migrants' consumption preferences (Thompson and Tambyah 1999). The concept also provides valuable insights into the relation between cultural capital and cosmopolitan orientations. While cosmopolitanism is accessible to individuals of all walks of life and educational levels, researchers often focus on



individuals of high cultural capital (Skrbiš, Kendall, and Woodward 2004). These consumers are seen as especially prone to spearhead the adoption of new and creative food, continuously in search for exotic ingredients or cooking practices that satisfy their need to travel without moving (Hannerz 1990; Holt 1998).

Cosmopolitanism as an orientation is particularly prevalent in urban settings (Yeoh 2005). Large cities constitute spaces where the search for exotic products is the norm, since Asian, Italian and Mexican cuisines for instance have become a standard component of American food culture, and are not considered exotic anymore (Johnston and Baumann 2015). In search for novelty, urban consumers are therefore particularly prone to experiment with foreign cultural components (Rojas Gaviria and Emontspool 2015), which renders urban settings ideal for the study of new forms of cosmopolitanism in a world of changing global food trends.

#### *Moral cosmopolitanism*

Going beyond aesthetic perspectives, cosmopolitanism increasingly integrates moral considerations. Cosmopolitanism possesses both a political and cultural side, where the cultural side matches aesthetic cosmopolitanism, while the political side of cosmopolitanism concentrates on global human rights and citizenship (Germann Molz 2011). Dating back to Kant (1784), moral cosmopolitanism supports the idea of political consciousness transcending the borders of nation-states, where all humans share the moral commitment to support humanity through equality and solidarity (Nowicka and Rovisco 2009). Cosmopolitanism therefore involves a universalized feeling of responsibility for all inhabitants of this world (Appiah 2007).

In a globalized world, this moral responsibility goes towards a larger awareness of humanity's role on the planet and its ecosystems. Expected to individually and collectively arrive at morally correct judgements of their behaviour (Shweder and Menon 2014),

individuals are increasingly aware of the negative consequences of a globally connected world in moral cosmopolitanism reflections. While the political consequences of moral cosmopolitanism have led to the emergence of cosmopolitan communities of climate risk (Beck et al. 2013), the consumption consequences of moral cosmopolitanism have been less studied. Recent studies have therefore started to argue for environmental sustainability concerns as part of a cosmopolitan orientation (Dobson 2005; Hulme 2010; Stevenson 2002; Grinstein and Riefler 2015). Yet these studies remain silent about how exactly the integration of moral concerns with aesthetical cosmopolitanism ones is articulated.

The present paper addresses specifically the question of how global food trends enables consumers to express moral cosmopolitanism rather than ethical consumption ideals. As explained earlier, a recurrent problematic in research about ethical consumption is the gap that remains between ethical ideals and everyday practices, consumers acknowledging the need to adopt these ideals, but not acting upon them (Connolly and Prothero 2003, 2008). This issue is particularly controversial in the case of high cultural capital consumers, since their belonging to the winners' side of globalization is assumed to render them less concerned about globalization's negative consequences (Cheah 2006). At the same time, the emergence of a 'eco-habitus' promoting ethical consumption behaviour (Carfagna et al. 2014) indicates that ethical consumption behaviour may be used as a distinction practice among high cultural capital consumers (Naderi and Strutton 2013). A clear differentiation between moral cosmopolitanism and ethical consumption behaviour is therefore timely in order to better assess the moral motivations reflected in the consumption of socially and ecologically sustainable products.

Furthermore, this paper studies which processes and challenges underlie the integration of aesthetic and moral cosmopolitanism ideals with each other in consumption discourses, in a world of globalized food trends. Examples such as Slow Food and similar local/ethical food

movements indicate that ideals of taste, aesthetics and ethics are not incompatible (Sassatelli and Davolio 2010). Aesthetic and moral cosmopolitanism ideals co-exist for instance in coffee consumption, where consumers display as much connoisseurship and taste for cultural difference as awareness of global sustainability questions (Bookman 2013). Existing research however predominantly considers this combination of aesthetic and moral cosmopolitanism ideals in relation to global brands such as Starbucks or Whole Foods Market. In those cases, customers mainly evaluate their own and the companies' ethical behaviour from a critical perspective (Johnston and Szabo 2011; Bookman 2013). Such a perspective may be specific to global brands that are regularly perceived to greenwash their marketing strategy (Johnston and Szabo 2011). Further research is proposed here that allows for a dissociation of moral cosmopolitanism from companies' branding. It thereby provides a clearer understanding of how moral cosmopolitanism is expressed through consumption and how aesthetic and moral cosmopolitanism are integrated with each other.

### **New Nordic Food**

In 2004, Rene Redzepi and Claus Meyer, the founders of *Noma*, organised a symposium about New Nordic Cuisine, promoting what was named '*The New Nordic Cuisine Manifesto*'. The manifesto established the principles of a cuisine that is pure, simple and fresh, reflecting the seasons of the Nordic region. This manifesto resulted in the emergence of a food trend combining global and local cultural elements, which then extended into an institutionalization of New Nordic Food and its principles.

### ***A glocal yet nationalist trend***

Like other food trends (Fonseca 2005), New Nordic Food is glocal in its origins. Nordic restaurants and food producers highlight the locality of their products, branding them as locally embedded (Larsen and Österlund-Pötzsch 2015). Specifically, they insist on the importance of 'terroir', the French word referring to soil, locality and the earth in which a

product is grown (Trubek 2008). Representing a competitive advantage, terroir draws a link between a product's origin and its intrinsic characteristics, especially taste (Trubek 2008). The globalized adoption of a concept such as terroir renders this trend glocal (Hermansen 2012). Its use in Nordic Food reflects a desire of achieving locality and authenticity by strengthening the links between the taste of food and the imagined Nordic community (Hermansen 2012; Anderson 1983). New Nordic Food is thereby an expression of local identity that emerged in 'reaction to the modern world of globalization, migration and electronic mediation' (Hermansen 2012). From its start in Nordic countries, the trend has further globalized through Nordic restaurants expanding to cities such as London, New York and Hong Kong.

While being linked to a specific geographic origin, New Nordic Food is also a hybrid between Northern and Southern European influences. Historically, Northern and Southern European ways of understanding food quality have been quite different (Bergflødt, Amilien, and Skuland 2012). The globally recognized Southern European food cultures such as the French or Italian one rely on a long history of integrating food with 'culture, origin, taste, and typicity' (Bergflødt, Amilien, and Skuland 2012). Conversely, Northern food cultures have concentrated on 'technique, health, animal welfare, nutrition, and hygiene' (Bergflødt, Amilien, and Skuland 2012). Given the long cold seasons in the North and periods of food shortages in the past, Nordic food cultures have created a very pragmatic bond between nature and culture (Bergflødt, Amilien, and Skuland 2012). Nordic food culture was therefore seen as lacking sophistication and cultural identification (Bech-Larsen, Mørk, and Kolle 2016), remaining associated with naturalness and wilderness rather than culture (Hermansen 2012). Building on these associations but rendering them more sophisticated, New Nordic Food now integrates Nordic 'people, landscapes, products, climate, and food production'

with Southern European references to taste, terroir and culture (Bergflødt, Amilien, and Skuland 2012).

### *The institutionalization of New Nordic Food*

From a professional project developed by Nordic chefs, New Nordic Food rapidly developed into a political project supported by the Nordic Council of Ministers (Byrkjeflot, Pedersen, and Svejenova 2013). One of the first goals of this project was the strengthening of Nordic identity (Hermansen 2012). This fast pace of institutionalization built on three mechanisms: (1) the use of the ‘Nordic’ label with its positive associations to Nordic design and welfare, (2) a strong financial, political and scholarly support, and (3) organized and efficient advertising through media and political actors (Byrkjeflot, Pedersen, and Svejenova 2013). From the political project emerged a political agenda, chefs, politicians and other stakeholders hoping for a trickle-down effect into the whole Nordic population, similarly to the Slow Food movement (Larsen 2010). As a result, initiatives have seen the light of day in 2007 to transform New Nordic Food into a population diet, improving public health in Nordic countries (Byrkjeflot, Pedersen, and Svejenova 2013; Micheelsen, Holm, and O’Doherty Jensen 2013).

Despite this, New Nordic Food remains a niche trend, popular among global foodies rather than being a Nordic every-day practice (Bech-Larsen, Mørk, and Kolle 2016). Although Danish consumers welcome initiatives aimed at addressing global issues such as environmental protection and health, their perception of New Nordic Food is negative (Micheelsen, Holm, and O’Doherty Jensen 2013). Their main points of criticism are that it is elitist, nationalist and not practical (Micheelsen, Holm, and O’Doherty Jensen 2013). Firstly, products such as game and free-range meat are perceived as only fitting for cultural elites living in bigger cities (Micheelsen, Holm, and O’Doherty Jensen 2013). Secondly, the promotion of national food cultures is not a source of pride in Nordic countries, but is

frowned upon (Hermansen 2012). Thirdly, many of the New Nordic recipes are perceived as time-consuming, complex or unsatisfying in terms of quantity (Micheelsen, Holm, and O’Doherty Jensen 2013). Additionally, Nordic Food generates a problematic image of Nordic environments by focusing on a white, pre-immigration image of the North that excludes its increasingly multicultural reality and the former colonized population of Greenland (Andreassen 2015). It is therefore most relevant to study this trend from its global perspective, with a focus on the foodies adopting it, rather than considering it as a nationalistic trend.

## **Method**

In order to investigate foodies’ discourses about the New Nordic Food trend, and to study whether and how these discourses represent cosmopolitan consumption, we relied on a qualitative, interpretive approach, generating an understanding of consumers’ subjective meanings of this trend (Saunders, Thornhill, and Lewis 2009). We collected two types of data: textual data from in-depth interviews and photographic data of the respondents’ consumption preferences. The in-depth interviews permitted the identification of “vocabularies of motive” (Grauel 2014; Mills 1940), an ‘institutionalized form of how to [...]defend one’s inner moral commitment’ (Grauel 2014, 6). The interview format encourages interviewees to reflect on their identity while engaging in a performance of impression management as they would adopt in other social situations (Goffman 1959). This approach specifically led to studying how consumers integrate moral and aesthetic cosmopolitanism ideals in their discourses about food. The (consumer-provided) photographic data served as interview cues, in order to generate rich data (Kvale 1996).

As explained in the previous section, foodies represent the most common customer group eager to adopt innovative food trends, and possess the cultural as well as economic capital to engage in this type of consumption (Johnston and Baumann 2015; Holt 1998). The

focus therefore lay on urban customers of high cultural capital with a particular interest in food. Furthermore, we decided to concentrate on non-Nordic origin, in order to avoid nationalist considerations in the adoption of New Nordic Food (Bech-Larsen, Mørk, and Kolle 2016). We selected the respondents through purposeful and snowball sampling (Tracy 2013) following the previously defined criteria. Given that foodies often use social media to share their passion with others (Naccarato and Lebesco 2012), we searched for potential participants on the social media platforms Instagram and Facebook, using the keywords *New Nordic Food*, *New Nordic*, *New Nordic Cuisine*, *Nordic Food*. We narrowed down the more than five thousand search results to respondents of non-Nordic origins. Foodies living in Nordic countries and other parts of the world were interviewed in order to assess whether knowledge of the Nordic context influenced discourses about New Nordic Food.

Unsurprisingly, respondents who were less familiar with the Nordic context relied more on stereotypes about Scandinavia than those who had close connections to the context. However, this insight is not included in the findings since it did not result in differences in their discourses about New Nordic Food or their adoption of the trend.

We conducted twelve interviews between May and July 2014 using Skype and similar online communication platforms given the geographical dispersal of the respondents. The in-depth interviews relied on a semi-structured interview guide, pre-tested in order to resolve potential issues of cross-cultural (mis-)understanding. Open-ended questions structured the interview, while probing questions provided additional insights (McCracken 1988). The interview guide addressed the following subjects: the respondents' background; their food consumption and cooking habits; their preferences in terms of food types and origins as well as their awareness about New Nordic Food and their perception and experience of this trend. Consent was obtained previously to the interviews and confidential treatment of data ensured, all personal details blurred. The interviews were entirely recorded and transcribed verbatim.

The respondents mostly come from Western countries (five respondents from the USA; two respondents from the UK; two respondents from Australia; one respondent from The Netherlands), two respondents from non-Western countries (Brazil and China) being included for theoretical diversity. They live in large cities such as Hong Kong, New York, London or Perth. The respondents' profiles and interests reflect those of cosmopolitan consumers (Holt 1998). Possessing high educational levels, the respondents work as entrepreneurs and business owners (three respondents), architects (one respondent), attorneys (two respondents), as high-level employees (two respondents) or in creative and academic jobs (three respondents). One respondent is currently an au-pair in Denmark. All of the respondents had experienced New Nordic Food, either in Nordic or other countries. Nine of the respondents have travelled to Nordic countries, three of them currently living or having lived in Denmark. They like to experiment, trying out new recipes, novel ingredients or unusual combinations. They published pictures of New Nordic Food on their Instagram accounts and saved Nordic recipes to try in the future.

We analysed textual and photographic data through thematic analysis, to discover, interpret and present patterns in consumers' cosmopolitan and general food interests, as well as their perceptions of New Nordic Food (Ritchie et al. 2013). The coding of data was based on a combination of pre-set codes and open coding. Pre-set codes were sourced from the definitions in the New Nordic Food Manifesto, and include codes for *simplicity*, *locality*, *purity*, *ethics*, *climate*, *health*, *tradition*, *quality* and *seasonality*. Open coding followed by axial coding (Charmaz 2009) allowed for the emergence of categories such as *morals*, *exoticism*, or *aesthetics*, which were then linked to *cosmopolitanism* through recurrent cyclical returns between existing theory and analysis (Thompson 1997). Furthermore, special attention was given to the respondents' discourse as text, to be interpreted in light of larger socio-cultural discourses concerning for instance *globalization*, *cultural diversity*, *ethical*



*consumption, or healthy lifestyle* (Thompson 1997). New Nordic Food is part of a larger foodie discourse that ‘involves a communicative public-sphere dimension specifying what foods and food trends are interesting, relevant, and high status for foodies’ (Johnston and Baumann 2015, 38). This study therefore involved the three stages of critical discourse analysis, namely the study of a text’s intra-textual (the text itself), extra-textual (the respondents’ self-referential projections [Thompson 1997]) and broader socio-cultural elements influencing discourse (Fairclough 1995). In line with previous studies about consumption discourses (de Burgh-Woodman and King 2013), the findings of this paper concentrate on the first and second stage of analysis, while the larger socio-cultural implications of such an analysis are the subject of the discussion.

## **Findings**

By adopting novel food trends and framing them in cosmopolitanism terms, urban consumers of high cultural capital express distinction in environments where cultural diversity is the norm. Previous research has linked taste and morals in foodie consumption (Johnston and Baumann 2015), demonstrating that foodies embrace novel food trends out of cosmopolitan interest for exotic products (Heldke 2003) or because of political considerations that encourage them to adopt a range of ethical consumption options (Carfagna et al. 2014). The findings of this study conversely demonstrate that instead of constituting separate motivations for the adoption of novel food trends, consumers’ interest for exotic and ethical consumption respectively reflects aesthetic and moral cosmopolitanism ideals.

On the one hand, New Nordic Food is attractive in terms of aesthetic cosmopolitanism because it involves the discovery of a culture unknown until then. This food trend interests consumers eager to discover new cultures and ways of consuming by responding to consumers’ aesthetic desire for the exotic. The concept of exotic food has traditionally referred to foreign cultures, yet this study shows that it also relates to other ‘unconventional

or unusual culinary combinations’ (Johnston and Baumann 2015, 24). Exotic food mainly requires a form of social distance and of norm-breaking (Johnston and Baumann 2015). The larger the distance and the breakage, the more exotic and thus interesting for cosmopolitanism the food product becomes. This new consumption trend is hence not only novel for the respondents because it comes from a culture different from their own. By discovering practices unfamiliar to them, such as foraging for food, relying on seasonal products, or collecting wild herbs, consumers explore nature in the same way as they would learn for instance to eat with chopsticks, if this is not part of their cultural heritage (‘*We are going mushroom picking, and then we are going to cook it tonight for dinner*’, *that’s kind of cool to me*; Erica). More importantly for an aesthetic viewpoint, exoticizing and cultivating the consumption of nature renders it more sophisticated and thereby distinctive. The findings of this study therefore add to previous research about aesthetic cosmopolitanism by showing that consumers extend aesthetic cosmopolitanism discourses to the discovery of an unfamiliar nature.

*A lot of times, New York is about, talking about different types of things that you have been doing. [...] If you have Italian food over and over again, or Japanese food, or pizza or whatever, it’s nice to try something very different. Something like New Nordic Cuisine was exciting to try. (Vincent)*

On the other hand, the findings of this study show that New Nordic Food enables consumers to express moral cosmopolitanism, answering the question of how foodies mobilize global food trends to express moral cosmopolitanism rather than ethical consumption ideals. The respondents underline the return to seasonal, local, and organic products, ‘*as nature intended*’, echoing the founding moral principles of the New Nordic Food Manifesto:

*You think of very simple minimal dishes, and ingredients foraged from nearby. And everything local and seasonal, possibly organic, and you think just real earthy flavours, like really natural, nothing synthetic, nothing unrecognizable, everything is fresh, and local and seasonal, and organic as nature intended, that’s what I think of [New Nordic Food]. (Ellen)*

The difference between moral cosmopolitanism and ethical consumption lies in the previously defined difference between morals and ethics (Ricoeur 1990). Consumption discourses about the environment (*'food doesn't have to be organic, it's a good thing, but not a requirement'*; Dave), healthy food (*'I pay attention at healthy food, but I cheat on weekends, I'm not hard-core about it'*; Ellen), and attention to local seasons (*'I follow the seasons, but it is not a thing I think of'*; Claire) are part of these consumers' moral compass, because they are *'the kind of thing to do'* (Andreas). The accent hence lies here on societal expectations about good behaviour rather than personal interpretations of good and bad behaviour. The respondents reinfuse consumption of the exotic with three to four types of moral discourses (seasonality, local production, healthiness, organic production, or fair trade), but do not get particularly involved in one particular ideal. Similarly to research about consumers displaying moderate levels of engagement in ethical consumption (Grauel 2014), the respondents are not strongly involved with these environmental, social or other moral concerns. As a consequence, we advocate for referring to this type of consumption behaviour as moral cosmopolitanism rather than ethical consumption, since the respondents' adoption of moral consumption discourses resembles picking and choosing between a number of exotic trends rather than a full immersion in any of them, a behaviour which has been identified previously when it comes to aesthetic cosmopolitanism (Hannerz 1990).

Consumers' aesthetic and moral cosmopolitanism discourses, previously described as separate, combine here in a cosmopolitan return to nature. This combination is articulated through two complementary processes: the re-aesthetization of nature and the re-moralization of the exotic. These re-aesthetization and re-moralization processes enable consumers to combine aesthetic and moral cosmopolitanism ideals in their food consumption, respecting both their personal taste preferences and moral expectations of sustainable behaviour. The next two sections respectively detail each process. A third section shows that while

consumers manage to integrate aesthetic and moral cosmopolitanism ideals, they struggle with the perceived authenticity of New Nordic Food when it comes to respecting both its original ingredients and its local sourcing requirements. Together, these sections answer the question: how do foodies integrate aesthetic and moral cosmopolitanism ideals with each other as well as with the potential contradictions between these ideals?

### ***The re-aesthetization of nature***

The findings show that the consumers reframe nature as an aesthetic artefact (*'it is just better looking than what I make myself'*; Jack), reflecting the 'an aesthetization of everyday life' (Fonseca 2005, 118) pointed out in previous studies. In contrast to previous studies, it is nature in itself that becomes subject of aesthetic attention instead of an aesthetization of *cultural* artefacts. The natural environment is re-aesthetized for instance in the plating by presenting the food in shape of a bird's nest with eggs, as it would be found in the natural environment, a process which revives ancient links with nature.

*There was one type of food that was arranged in a birds nest, with some hay, some type of grass, twigs, and then you had little eggs inside, that were not eggs, they were something else, but they looked like eggs. (Vincent)*

Three types of discourses illustrate the re-aesthetization of nature in the respondents' answers: (1) searching for novelty, (2) transforming oneself and (3) breaking norms. In combination, these discourses show how the re-aesthetization of nature enables consumers to distinguish themselves by adopting a revived, cultivated form of consuming nature.

#### *Searching for novelty through new preparation techniques*

A first discourse reflects the re-aesthetization of nature by rendering nature more aesthetically pleasing through novel preparations and presentation. Natural materials replace the plates that would normally be used in a restaurant, reminding of its closeness to nature:

*'Of course there is an old piece of wood, not a plate anymore, of course it's some super novel way in displaying food, that would be another thing with new Nordic, super novel displaying*

*of foods.*' (Garrett). The way in which the products are presented, whether in terms of the plating or the organization of the restaurant support this experience. By concentrating on small scale and attention to both the food and the customers, New Nordic restaurants follow in the steps of other food trends by providing an experience that differs from traditional fine dining environments (Lane 2013).

The explicit use of the word 'New' in New Nordic food trend similarly exists in other food trends, and creates associations in the consumers' minds about the refashioning of a cuisine considered boring and outdated. Personalization further underlines the re-aesthetization of the experience (*'he just came out and he said, do you mind if I cook you something that isn't on the menu, and I'm not going to tell you what it is [...] something that he hadn't served to anyone else'*, Ellen). Previously de-valorised types of cuisine are refashioned and thereby revive the interest of foodies.

*I think of New American and New Nordic as similar, because you typically take French techniques and modern techniques, and you take what was probably classic, boring dishes, and make them exciting, new, you know, but still having a cultural identity to them, and I think that's unique. (Dave)*

The '*redcoration*' (Claire) of nature in novel ways renders consuming natural products attractive for the respondents. While this focus on novelty in food trends is not particular to this study, it is relevant to point out in the case of nature cosmopolitanism because it illustrates that nature becomes perceived as something novel from an aesthetic perspective, which justifies a cosmopolitan interest in it.

#### *Transforming oneself through localized yet exceptional experiences*

The experience of New Nordic Food is secondly associated with the transformative side of cosmopolitanism, similarly to young men's formative trips through Europe in seventeenth and eighteenth century (Thompson and Tambyah 1999). Historically, cosmopolitanism related to the discovery of exotic environments through travel, which led to personal growth (Thompson and Tambyah 1999). In line with this heritage, the respondents classify the

experience of New Nordic Food as life-changing (*Noma in 2005, to me, it kind of changed my life. It was so incredibly different; Andreas*). They relate it to the courage to go beyond traditional cooking and to push boundaries, similarly to explorers who expanded everybody's worldview through their discoveries. But contrary to the global aspirations of international travel described previously, the consumers here also embrace the transformative power of surviving in the local setting '*when the months are darker*', a statement that suggests images of hominess in harsh Nordic winters rather than stimulating Southern travels:

*I think we should look forward to these seasons and when the months are darker and the only vegetables that are available are perhaps beetroots, parsnip and carrots, but that's okay, you just buy beetroots, carrots and parsnips and that's what you use (Andreas)*

This experience is refashioned aesthetically through a focus on the extreme character of the experience, using the superlative 'hyper' (*New Nordic Food comprises hyper seasonality, hyper fresh, hyper curated, hyper everything*', Garrett). Several respondents describe New Nordic Food as experimental, which refers to the unconventional character of cosmopolitan consumption. Trying it is an enjoyable experiment that may not become a lasting part of her consumption habits: *'I really enjoyed it, but don't know if I would eat there again, because I felt like, it was more of an experimental case of food'* (Claire). Infusing the Nordic food trend with an exceptional character consequently dissociates it from the routine, allowing for distinction in food consumption (Cronin, McCarthy, and Collins 2014).

#### *Breaking aesthetic norms to exoticize Western cuisine*

The third type of discourse focuses on the norm-breaking side of cosmopolitan exploration, several respondents praising New Nordic Food as entirely out of the ordinary, '*weird food*' (Vincent). Aesthetic presentations of food for instance combining '*foam*' and '*moss*' (Erika) reflect the idea that by breaking norms, nature becomes an aesthetic cosmopolitan experience. While the idea of 'foam' is passé for many food experts, the respondent's use of the word and her hesitation in describing the ingredients illustrate the

perceived weirdness of the trend, where ‘*things you wouldn’t think to eat*’ are presented in a different aesthetic format:

*The first thing that comes to my mind is foam, like flavoured scum. In my Danish class, I had to write a letter, so I made up a fake New Nordic restaurant with various things of foam. You can get like, liver foam with drops of, I don’t know, brown whatever, just like plants, but anything you could think of, like in foam form. That’s what I think of, like really small plates, with little drops of weird things that you wouldn’t think to eat, like moss, and lots of foam. (Erica)*

The respondents’ ability to determine whether something is edible is diminished in New Nordic Food, which leads them to pay closer attention at the experience. The aesthetics of such a focus on norm-breaking specifically emerge from the material characteristics of the dishes (‘*it had five bits of tuna on a stick, with oil*’, Garrett), such as plating or texture (‘*food that was, like, kind of smoking*’, Jack). Consuming nature in a novel aesthetic form thereby becomes a cosmopolitan experience of discovering a foreign environment for which the consumers lack orientation points:

*You don’t have capacity to judge if something is eatable or not [...] I had the personal experience that it disorientated my flavours, and my sense of judgement. At one point, I couldn’t even judge if I should eat stuff, like plants that were standing in the restaurant. So it was very difficult, and that was a very weird experience. (Edward)*

The respondents hence feel like explorers. Their statements highlight the exotic character of the food, the impression that the experience is equivalent to discovering an entirely foreign, disorienting culture, with unknown rites and expectations. This view is reminiscent of the colonial and neo-colonial side of cosmopolitanism (Thompson and Tambyah 1999), where travellers learn to navigate unknown cultural systems (Hannerz 1990). As shown previously, ‘the cooking process obscures the ingredients and makes the informants insecure about what they eat’ (Bardhi, Ostberg, and Bengtsson 2010, 146), an experience usually characteristic of travels to geographically distant locales. But while foodies usual prefer moderately exotic food that involves social distance but no norm-breaking (Johnston and Baumann 2015; Heldke 2003), New Nordic Food reflects norm-breaking in a Westernized culture where unrecognizable ingredients constitute the attraction.

This heightened interest for norm-breaking food products is rendered possible by the Nordic origin of this cuisine. Contrary to most experiences of the exotic, which focus on orientalized, colonized or otherwise culturally dominated contexts (Goldstein-Gidoni 2005), Nordic Food emerges from a fully industrialized and globalized Western culture. This contrasts with the usual romantic ideas of discovering native tribes in remote areas of the world (Canniford and Karababa 2013). While food trends such as Nuevo Latino ‘reproduce colonial desire by aesthetizing and commodifying traditional meals’ (Fonseca 2005, 95), here, the exotization of a food trend perceived as ‘white’ (Andreassen 2015) removes the colonial element from cosmopolitan Nordic Food consumption. This breaking of norms takes place in a comparatively safe environment, highly rated Nordic restaurants. An illustration of this are recurrent rumours claiming that Noma’s slow rise in the classical Michelin star restaurant ranking can be explained by the absence of tablecloth and luxurious utensils in the restaurant (Christensen and Pedersen 2014). Norm-breaking thereby becomes sanitized and transforms into a normalized practice when consuming New Nordic Food. While this may seem ironic, such behaviour is not uncommon since escaping mainstream society through the adoption of seemingly revolutionary practices can signal distinction within a social group (Cronin, McCarthy, and Collins 2014).

### ***The re-moralization of the exotic***

As indicated previously, moral cosmopolitanism in consumption implies that consumers following the most recent trends, ‘*the current food theory*’ (Garrett) without fully engaging in any. They adopt ‘vocabularies of motives’ (Mills 1940) to convince their audience about the authenticity of their moral commitment, using institutionalized societal discourses about consumption without becoming strong advocates for them (Grauel 2014). Three types of moral discourses support the re-moralization of the exotic: (1) the purity of



relations with the foreign other, (2) the humility of respecting a past that consumers are not in touch with and (3) the pragmatic adoption of moral health discourses.

*Embracing the equality from the exotic North*

New Nordic Food constitutes an entrance door to unknown global food cultures from the North. While global food trends such as New Nordic Food and Slow Food have in common that they promote and support moral ideals such as attention to the local environment or to ecological sustainability, the Nordic countries are comparatively new on the global food scene and constitute a more exotic setting than Italian cuisine. In contrast to Nordic cuisine, the Slow Food movement indeed emerged in Italy, globally recognized as traditional country of origin of fine dining and food lovers (Cappellini and Parsons 2014). This relative exoticism of Nordic Food renders it more attractive to cosmopolitan consumers while permeating consumption with moral ideals, reflecting a re-moralization of the exotic.

Of particular interest is consumers' interpretation of New Nordic Food as focused on equality, which infuses the exotic with morality. The respondents associate this food trend with a move away from human control over nature. While previous research has identified the increasingly blurred character of distinctions between nature and culture (Descola 2005; Giddens 1994), the findings here point to consumers' adoption of discourses towards nature in terms of a relationship between equals. In this relationship, humans and the nature surrounding them deserve an equal say in product choice and preparation. This equality emerges in expressions such as: *'allowing the seasons to dictate to you what is good and available'* (Andreas) or *'collaborating [...] going into a relationship with nature'* (Edward).

Such a perspective requires the consumers to reframe their perception and to allow for the agency of the ingredients, like a cow tongue defining the ingredients it would like to be served with: *'you have a cow tongue and what do you do with cow tongue and what does the cow tongue like, what does it dislike? It doesn't like snails, it likes grass, so what do you*

*make of it?*' (Edward). By entering in a dialogue with (normally mute) ingredients, the respondents respect moral ideals of equality between all beings in the world, taking *'the perspective of the ingredient on the world'* (Edward). Additionally, the promotion of equality implies a reformulation of the relationship between ingredients. This moral ideal is expressed in terms of humility by the respondents (*'it's a very humble kind of food'*, Jacqueline). It praises this cuisine for not only reviving unknown products, but rendering them equal to food products such as lobster, which are usually presented as the main ingredient:

*'[René Redzepi] has elevated the humble carrot, and other lesser vegetables like leeks and various herbs, and made those centre stage and as important or beautiful as a very expensive piece of fish or some langoustine or perhaps some lobster (Andreas)*

This moral focus on equality between human and nature, as well as between ingredients, can be interpreted in light of the image of Nordic countries as focussed on equality (Graubard 1986). When describing Nordic countries, the respondents put forward cohesiveness, equality, collaboration between people, as well as financial and gender equality (*'People tend to dress very similar, eat similar things, you know, have a similar way of life [...] it's also very kind of cohesive, people work well together, lot of equality'*, Erica). While New Nordic Food is thus not explicitly linked to the Nordic system for managing social equality, its ideals permeate into the consumers' discourses about the food trend, and reflect the re-moralization of exotic food.

#### *Returning to a pure but unfamiliar past*

When it comes to food preparation, New Nordic Food advocates for a return to tradition (*'it is sort of refined rustic food'*, Dave; *'honestly made and based on old routines and craftsmanship'*, Ellen). This return to tradition in Nordic Food consumption takes up a moral character comparable to the Slow Food movement, integrating aesthetic considerations of food consumption with politics in trying to counter globalization and McDonaldization of food cultures (Sassatelli and Davolio 2010). Similarly, the concept of terroir takes up

particular importance in respondents' discourses, pointing to the combination of traditional and local production methods. But differently from the return to traditional farming as exists for instance in community supported agriculture (Thompson and Coskuner-Balli 2007), the respondents here put forward the importance of returning to pre-agricultural techniques, insisting for instance on the concept of foraging:

*If you have to eat certain things at certain times, you collect them, you forage, you grow them on a small plate of land, stuff like that. [...] So you had some plate there with the ingredients that were foraged or locally gathered. (Vincent)*

Furthermore, consumers of New Nordic Food prefer the minimization of food processing through cooking, a contrast with existing studies about Slow Food (Sassatelli and Davolio 2010). The goal of consuming New Nordic Food is to engage with an unfamiliar past that builds on what the respondents consider clean, pure food. The accent lies here on reducing the extent to which ingredients are processed from a raw to a cooked stage. Differentiations between edible and inedible, raw and cooked constitute a crucial tool for cultural differentiation (Lévi-Strauss 1964), implying that nature is 'tamed by the cooking process so that when dishes are presented before us they are in a culturally acceptable format that we can all decipher' (Bardhi, Ostberg, and Bengtsson 2010, 146). During global contact between cultures, this differentiation serves to assess resemblances and differences between what is considered domestic food and what is foreign (Bardhi, Ostberg, and Bengtsson 2010). Yet here, the respondents put forward the thrill of being served '*a cupcake that has blood inside*' (Vincent), illustrating that the goal of tasting New Nordic Food is to maintain the relationship with nature as pure and untamed as possible. By confronting the consumers with an unknown raw nature, consuming New Nordic Food becomes further akin to romantic idealizations of primitive cultures (Canniford and Karababa 2013).

As a result, consumers engage in purifying practices aimed at maintaining nature in its untarnished state, fulfilling romantic moral ideals (Canniford and Shankar 2013). The

respondents reinstate the clean, fresh side of the products, which enables them to experience the ‘real’ taste of ingredients (*‘It is nice to have good clean flavours’*, Erica). While taste has often been associated with aesthetic cosmopolitanism in previous research, the respondents’ emphasis on the return to original taste of ingredients reflects ideas of purity: *‘I really liked it, because they focused a lot on the ingredients rather than the like style of cooking. They keep it simple, you can taste the freshness, and you can really taste the ingredients’* (Zoey). They therefore have to be rediscovered by returning to the purity of nature: *‘we walked around or through woodland, and along the side of small streams and uphill’s and it’s amazing how much you will pass daily and we are not aware of the food that we are walking past’* (Andreas). In this light, the re-moralization of exotic consumption involves the purification of exotic nature from its cultural influences, moving away from processing and cooking.

#### *Adopting global health discourses yet remaining moderate*

Finally, the respondents connect Nordic Food with global health tropes. New Nordic Food enables the respondents to return to a healthier cuisine than the non-updated versions of Nordic cuisine: *‘We are trying to eat healthy food. Some of the dishes I eat Denmark, would not be what I would consider as healthy as I would like, so I can see the reason to update those dishes.’* (Caroline). This linkage with health integrates New Nordic Food into the global ideoscape of moral health discourses, discussed in previous research (Kristensen et al. 2010; Kristensen, Boye, and Askegaard 2011; Cairns and Johnston 2015). Influenced by this increased concern with the healthiness of food products, the respondents see this trend as a solution for combining cosmopolitanism and health concerns. New Nordic Food enables consumers to re-moralize their participation in global food trends. Consistently with research pointing to the increased individual responsabilization of the consumer (Giesler and Veresiu 2014), the respondents are encouraged to take responsibility for their own health instead of relying on governmental structures:

*We belong to an HMO, which is a health main organisation for our health insurance, and because they know that people eating fresh food are healthier, they subsidise our membership in the CSA, so they pay half of the costs of that. (Caroline)*

But instead of fully adopting these ethical principles of healthy consumption, the respondents strive to find a balance between the efforts and benefits necessary to live a healthy life (*'I like it to be very, not organic, but, not caged or no hormones and all that types of stuff'*; Jack; *'I'm a conscious eater. It doesn't necessarily mean that I eat healthy, but I am very much aware of what the state of nutrition of food is'*, Edward). They adopt rather pragmatic approaches to healthy consumption, focused on diversity (*'if your plate is bright and colourful, then it's probably going to be healthier'*, Jacqueline). This idea of balance is supported through a form of moral accountancy, where healthy consumption during certain periods allows respondents to 'cheat' at other times: *'In the week, I'm probably more conscious of my meals being healthy and nutritious and then on the weekend, I allow myself to cheat a bit'* (Ellen).

As a result, the respondents re-moralize their cosmopolitan consumption by adhering to global moral trends, but they do so only in a limited way, without losing too much of their aesthetic preferences. These findings complement those of previous research, which indicates that the moral ideal of reasonableness leads consumers to balance ethical and unethical consumption behaviour in order to avoid excesses (Pecoraro and Uusitalo 2014). By creating the link between aesthetic and moral cosmopolitanism ideals through re-aesthetization and re-moralization processes in a food trend such as New Nordic Food, the consumers thus resolve the tensions they experience when integrating different societal ideals.

### ***Authenticity challenges emerging from differential interpretations of New Nordic Food***

Combining re-aesthetization and re-moralization processes enables consumers to live up to both aesthetic and moral cosmopolitanism ideals, yet it is also challenging in relation to the authenticity of cosmopolitan consumption practices. Authenticity is a subjectively

varying evaluation of ‘what is genuine, real, and/or true’ (Beverland and Farrelly 2010, 839). Acting in a way that they perceive to be authentic, consumers display distinction and highlight their individuality (Arnould and Price 2000). But in the present study, the respondents find authentically cosmopolitan consumption challenging, requiring them to relinquish either aesthetic or moral cosmopolitanism ideals. In particular what is called internal morality, individuals’ self-reflected considerations about the morality of their actions (Grauel 2014), leads the respondents to be concerned about the authenticity of their behaviour. These findings thereby answer the question of how foodies integrate the potential contradictions between aesthetic and moral cosmopolitanism ideals with each other.

The main consequence arising from these attempts at maintaining authenticity in this integration is a territorial fixation of New Nordic Food in consumers’ perceptions, where only the consumption of New Nordic Food in Nordic countries lives up to their authenticity expectations. Authenticity in food implies that it ‘has geographic specificity, is “simple”, has a personal connection, can be linked to a historical tradition, or has “ethnic” connections’ (Johnston and Baumann 2015, 61). From such a perspective, Nordic Food is expected to maintain a focus on local origins and avoidance of imported products, an impossible task to fulfil authentically according to the respondents: *‘you can’t really experience that kind of food properly anywhere else than in Scandinavia’* (Jacqueline, Australian, Perth, Australia). This situation is exacerbated by the fact that the consumption of New Nordic Food is linked to restaurant consumption instead of home cooking. The respondents visit New Nordic restaurants to vicariously experience nature through the aestheticized yet morally defensible plating of foraged food in fashionable restaurants. The globalization of New Nordic restaurants has made such a way of consuming globally accessible, yet raises questions of authenticity, where respondents debate whether New Nordic Restaurants outside of Nordic countries constitute *‘rip-offs’* (Andreas).

Three types of challenges co-exist in consumers' evaluation of New Nordic authenticity and fixate it in the Nordic context: (1) a lack of competences to authentically replicate this cuisine, (2) the availability of authentic ingredients from the Nordic region, and (3) practical concerns such as health or climate differences. The first interpretation of authenticity in New Nordic consumption relates to taste. Trying to replicate recipes at home, consumers struggle with the taste of their preparations: *'If I have no idea what it's supposed to taste like, I can't really make it. I need to know what to expect'* (Zoey). The respondents perceive this way of cooking to go beyond their competences, using especially use the word *'complicated'* (Zoey, Caroline) to describe New Nordic Food. Unfamiliarity with the cooking techniques or the local differences in ingredients further complicates this matter: *'I'm about to give on it. I made many batches, I think there is difference between American and Danish Mustard, and I just can't get it to work right'* (Caroline). Restaurants therefore offer a safe environment for tasting exotic food, given the experience of staff with *'proper training'* (Vincent).

Secondly, authentic New Nordic Food is defined similarly to other exotic food trends, by trying to replicate recipes of this origin using the original ingredients of the Nordic context. This leads to frustration, since not all ingredients are globally available. As the respondents simultaneously want to adhere to New Nordic Food principles of consuming local products, they see cooking New Nordic Food as impossible:

*The ingredients that are used are typically Scandinavian and you can't find them here (in Australia) very easily, because it's too hot. One of my friends gave me a recipe for lingonberries muffin, and I could not find lingonberries anywhere, they don't exist here, [...] It's important to be eating the stuff that's on your door step, so nothing is imported, necessarily. I know these things are, but I think the essence of it and the main idea of the New Nordic Food is that whole foraging concept, where you go out and you find the stuff that is local to your area and then cook that on, prepare that. (Jacqueline)*

At the same time, ingredients that are not part of authentic New Nordic Food in Nordic countries due to their local unavailability become characterised as locally available (and thus appropriate according to the New Nordic Food manifesto) in other contexts. Caroline mentions that some products are much easier to obtain year-round, and thus render finding

alternatives or adapting to seasonality muted: *'I remember reading something about New Nordic Cuisine, where someone was saying, 'well okay you can't eat any lemons'. And everybody was saying - wait a moment, we have lemons [in the USA]'* (Caroline). The ingredients used for New Nordic Food thereby become a point of contestation, the respondents engaging in debates with themselves about the level of authenticity of trying to prepare this food.

Thirdly, authenticity is perceived in terms of adherence to the New Nordic Food manifesto. Respondents concentrating on the purchase of local and seasonal products struggle with practical challenges. The environments in which they live make the search for local and seasonal difficult, if not impossible. Lack of experience in foraging renders it unsafe due to potential health risks, hindering the adoption of Nordic Food ideals: *'It's difficult for us to go sort of foraging, because so many things in Australia are poisoned'* (Jacqueline). It is therefore only the experience of chefs who are able to distinguish safe from unsafe products that renders this way of consuming possible in some contexts. As case in point, Noma chef René Redzepi successfully completed a 10-week stint in Sydney in April 2016, where he devised recipes based on the Australian context. Also, seasonal consumption can be problematic health-wise, local consumption carrying the risk of being deprived of fresh products, especially fruits and vegetables. Consumers therefore need to make a trade-off between these ideals: *'We can't follow the seasons in Wisconsin; we would have no fresh vegetables and no fresh fruits for 5 months of the year'* (Caroline). These challenges indicate that the respondents embrace the idea of local consumption but doubt its applicability. As a consequence, they redefine their moral behaviour, balancing locality and health.

These three challenges to authentic New Nordic consumption highlight the difficulty of integrating aesthetic and moral cosmopolitanism ideals given the multiplication of criteria on which authenticity of consumption is evaluated. Combining aesthetic and moral



cosmopolitanism becomes a balancing act, which confronts cosmopolitan consumers with the territorial limits of their consumption ideals, a novel experience for otherwise globally mobile consumers.

## **Discussion**

The previous sections illustrate that re-aesthetization and re-moralization processes in food consumption enable consumers to combine aesthetic and moral cosmopolitanism ideals, yet pose challenges in terms of the perceived authenticity of adopting the Nordic Food trend. Such insights shed new light on the multitude of trade-offs consumers face in their choices when trying to integrate aesthetic and moral ideals. Doing so, this paper offers three theoretical contributions, detailed in the following sections. The findings firstly allow for defining moral cosmopolitan consumption and to distinguish it from ethical consumption. Secondly, the mutual influence of re-aesthetization and re-moralization processes points to a new form of cosmopolitan consumption: nature cosmopolitanism. Thirdly, the findings of this paper point to a returning relevance of territoriality questions when it comes to cosmopolitanism, in a global world often perceived as deterritorialized. Furthermore, this paper offers a practical contribution, indicating how ethical consumption can be encouraged among consumers who struggle to adopt this types of consumption behaviour in their everyday life.

### ***Contrasting moral cosmopolitan consumption and ethical consumption***

This paper contributes to research about moral cosmopolitan consumption by providing a more specific understanding of how this behaviour differs from ethical consumption behaviour. It thereby answers the first research question: how foodies mobilize global food trends to express moral cosmopolitanism rather than ethical consumption ideals. Specifically, this study finds that moral cosmopolitan consumption involves the integration of multiple moral discourses co-existing on a global level, such as upholding the purity of nature, valuing

tradition, and engaging with global health discourses. Previous research related consumers' moral cosmopolitanism to their global awareness and their recognition of individual responsibility for global concerns, but also showed that consumers mostly exercise moral cosmopolitanism by critically viewing companies' attempts at displaying global corporate responsibility (Bookman 2013). Going beyond this, we show that moral cosmopolitan consumption integrates a larger variety of moral ideals than the ones usually counted among global ethical discourses (Connolly and Prothero 2003). In addition to ethical concerns such as fair trade, environmental protection or sustainability, moral cosmopolitanism thus includes moral discourses about healthy lifestyles and equality. Furthermore, moral cosmopolitanism differs from ethical consumption concerning two aspects usually related to the latter type of consumption: a superficial commitment with ethical discourses and a lack of community affiliation.

Firstly, the respondents are less committed to moral cosmopolitanism ideals than consumers who actively promote and support ethical consumption. The consumers' moral consumption discourses are part of a larger cosmopolitan discourse, where the discovery of exotic products becomes moralized. The consumers' adoption of moral discourses is presented as balanced and pragmatic rather than a full engagement in them, resulting in understated distinction discourses about the adopted foods. Moral cosmopolitanism does not aim for absolute fulfilment of ethical consumption principles. Instead, the respondents' main goal is social distinction through the adoption of discourses that correspond to aesthetic and moral globally popularized for instance through global media (Appadurai 1990). Their attempts at replicating New Nordic recipes by focussing on Nordic ingredients instead of the ethical principles underlying this tend support this idea. They illustrate that these consumers place more accent on the consumption of an exotic food trend rather than on its ethical principles.

Secondly, the respondents lack a sense of community affiliation. Ideas of community are absent from the respondents' discourse, in contrast to the findings from previous research (Press and Arnould 2011; Thompson and Coskuner-Balli 2007). Moral cosmopolitanism becomes a possibility for cosmopolitan consumers to display their membership in a global humanity by addressing global moral concerns. Yet these consumers do not fully engage in these concerns. They display conformity to a societal expectation but without fully believing in it, adopting the moral practice 'du jour'. The premium pricing of New Nordic restaurants supports this view. Luxury consumption recurrently becomes a morally acceptable way of fulfilling societal expectations (Hilton 2004). It does not result from deeply held moral beliefs, but from the desire to distinguish oneself. This perspective on moral cosmopolitan consumption reflects today's marketplace, characterized by a 'discernible trend to re-moralize the market through issues of ethical consumerism and globalization' (Hilton 2004, 119). To summarize, moral cosmopolitanism represents a globalised yet superficial adoption of ethical consumption behaviours, which extends beyond individual ethics and towards broader moral performances.

### ***Integrating universalist cosmopolitanism with individualist romanticism***

Having established that in addition to aesthetic cosmopolitan ideals, consumers adopt discourses about moral cosmopolitan consumption, this paper shows that aesthetic and moral cosmopolitanism ideals become linked, resulting in nature cosmopolitanism. It thus answers the second research question: how do foodies integrate aesthetic and moral cosmopolitanism ideals with each other? Nature cosmopolitanism reflects the cosmopolitan discovery of a culture unknown to global urban consumers, which takes place through the processes of re-aestheticizing nature and re-moralizing the exotic. The idea of an interest in diversity beyond national cultures has been discussed in early conceptualizations of cosmopolitanism. Previous studies for instance define as cosmopolitanism an employee's commitment to professional

groups beyond attachment to their organization (Gouldner 1957) or a consumer's consideration of the functional qualities of products and services (Cannon and Yaprak 2002). In the present paper, the cultural side of cosmopolitanism remains, but relates more particularly to food cultures and cooking styles, which instead of building on a different national culture emerge from a natural lifestyle foreign to the respondents.

This form of cosmopolitanism is specific to urbanites, for whom aesthetic cosmopolitan consumption alone is not distinctive anymore due to the large cultural diversity in food and restaurant options in global cities (Barbas 2003). Life in an urban environment, along with high cultural capital, largely dissociates global urban consumers from employment in and interaction with agricultural settings and industries. With a life based on dining out in the city, wide availability of precooked dishes and year-round access to products from everywhere in the world, natural and seasonal consumption becomes exotic. The cosmopolitan search for novelty therefore incorporates moral discourses about a return to the roots of humanity in nature. The exoticism of this food leads consumers to maintain their distances instead of fully integrating with it even when living in Nordic countries. Given that this consumption trend is not part of everyday Nordic cooking, it cannot be learned through interaction with the local population. As a result, the consumers adopt about this trend only in its highly aestheticized form, which allows for the integration of a premium consumption trend with anti-market ideals (Pecoraro and Uusitalo 2014).

While previous research has described romantic returns to nature (Belk and Costa 1998; Canniford and Shankar 2013), the respondents' discourses conversely do not advocate for the escape from modern, urban culture (Canniford and Karababa 2013; Canniford and Shankar 2013). As opposed to displaying connections with primitivism - the romantic longing for pre-modern lifestyles (Canniford and Karababa 2013), the respondents are very satisfied with life in the urban environment, and appreciate the aestheticized form of New Nordic Food. Instead

of silencing the commercialization of nature (Belk and Costa 1998; Canniford and Shankar 2013), they welcome the aesthetic commercialization of nature, as emerges from their praises about food presentation and plating. This behaviour can find its explanation in an old contrast drawn between the moral ideals of the enlightenment, which include cosmopolitanism, and the ones of romanticism (Campbell 2005). Romanticism is a movement that emerged in the late eighteenth century, focused on emotionality, rebellion and an individualistic pursuit of pleasure, as opposed to the universalistic and rationalist ideals of the Enlightenment which preceded it. It involved a return to nature as an endeavour that enabled individuals to reconnect with themselves. Taste becomes a way of integrating aesthetics and ethics, since hedonism is seen as an enabler for uncovering moral ideals of truth and beauty. In romanticism, distinction thereby arises from removing oneself from society and into nature, while at the same time leveraging art and aesthetics (Campbell 2005).

The theoretical contribution of this paper builds on these insights to explain the ambivalence consumers experience when trying to be cosmopolitan (Thompson and Tambyah 1999). Previous research has shown that cosmopolitan consumption involves dilemmas between attachment to local settings and being a global citizen (Thompson and Tambyah 1999), as well as between cosmopolitan ideals and the practices of everyday life, which betray these ideals (Bookman 2013; Skrbis and Woodward 2007). They have also pointed to the tension foodies experience between the search for pleasure and societal responsibility, often giving priority to the former over the latter (Johnston and Baumann 2015; Johnston and Szabo 2011). By illustrating how the two processes of re-aesthetization of nature and re-moralization of the exotic combine in strengthening both aesthetic and moral cosmopolitanism ideals, the study illustrates how consumers may partially resolve this dilemma and integrate aesthetic and moral ideals (Bookman 2013; Skrbis and Woodward 2007). The re-aesthetization of nature in global food trends enables consumers to satisfy their

romantic ideals, while the re-moralization of the exotic allows them to maintain the universalizing ideals of enlightenment. Aesthetic and moral cosmopolitan interests for nature thereby link nature and culture rather than opposing them (Descola 2005).

***The contradictory character of cosmopolitan territorial fixations in a global world***

A third contribution of this study lies in demonstrating the territorial fixation of cosmopolitan consumption behaviour, which answers the question: how do foodies integrate the potential contradictions between aesthetic and moral cosmopolitanism ideals in their consumption behaviour? The case of New Nordic Food depicts the unexpected challenge of cosmopolitan consumers' perceived inability to consume products from a specific (foreign) culture despite living in a global city. While previous research has highlighted that aesthetic cosmopolitanism is possible without travelling (Hannerz 1990), this study suggests that when combining aesthetic and moral ideals, physical travel is indispensable for the consumers to experience what they perceive as authentic cultural diversity. As a consequence, the role of physical mobility needs reconsideration in cosmopolitanism research, since belonging to a borderless global humanity might be limited by very material barriers.

This study demonstrates that territorial fixation, while emerging from cosmopolitanism, becomes a dilemma for the respondents in their pursuit of cosmopolitan consumption. Previous research has indicated that mobile, cosmopolitan consumers fix consumption practices in a specific time and space (Figueiredo and Uncles 2015), but it has not drawn links with products' territorial fixation. Given that global transportation technologies have rendered even very perishable goods such as fish available throughout the world within hours of fishing (Bestor 2008), it may appear unusual for some products to be unavailable outside of their countries of origin. While possible from the logistical side, the consumers perceive the import of foreign products as inauthentic. The land that has produced the ingredients therefore becomes indispensable in the authenticity of the product. More than a nostalgic

return to traditional consumption, terroir emerges as a key concept in a global world (Trubek 2008). It requires cosmopolitan consumers to critically re-assess their consumption and establish a balance between aesthetic and moral cosmopolitanism. Some types of cosmopolitan consumption may thus only be feasible through physical travel to foreign consumption environments where such a consumption style authentically originates.

***A new lead for encouraging ethical consumption practices beyond activist circles***

The conclusions of this study provide actionable insights into the adoption of ethical consumption principles by consumers who are moderately engaged in global ethical consumption. These consumers are torn between the desire to distinguish themselves through consumption and a desire for including cultural diversity and global ethics (Johnston and Baumann 2015). They experience the dilemma of responsibly living a cosmopolitan lifestyle in today's society (Smith 2012). This paper extends these insights specifically into the domain of cosmopolitan consumption by concentrating on the exotic and unknown character of adopting a global ecological consciousness. This consciousness goes beyond the enchanting properties of community-supported agriculture (Thompson and Coskuner-Balli 2007) or the adoption of ethical consumption behaviour for narcissistic reasons (Naderi and Strutton 2013). Rather than being linked to new experiences of community, protection of the environment becomes participation in distinctive global moral discourses. It thereby constitutes a way of encouraging ethical consumption among consumers who are aware of environmental problems but struggle to adopt ethical consumption behaviour.

**Conclusion**

While foreshadowing future trends is always a risky endeavour, the future of food trends integrating aesthetic and moral cosmopolitanism ideals might best be approximated using the example of an aesthetes' extremist retreat into nature, the (anti)hero Duc Jean Des Esseintes, imagined by Joris-Karl Huysmans in the novel 'A Rebours'. The last member of an

aristocratic family, De Esseintes retreats into isolation in the countryside, where he pursues an aesthetic return to nature, challenging his senses for instance through various olfactory, visual and gustative experiments (Huysmans 1924). The novel, which has coincidentally been translated in the English version into ‘Against Nature’, is one of the defining books characterizing the “decadent” literary movement by mocking the self-obsessed focus on nature present in romanticism. The retreat into aesthetic cosmopolitanism projects that use a thin layer of moral cosmopolitanism in order to gloss over their individualistic character might therefore be exacerbated in future food trends and lead to self-absorbed returns to nature.

At the same time, insights from other trends such as the hipster movement (Cronin, McCarthy, and Collins 2014) point to the increased ironic appropriation of consumption trends, an outcome that would have the benefit of countering the individualistic seclusion depicted in such a dire way by Huysmans (1924). The global spread of novel food trends could participate in this latter outcome, given that continuous contact between cultures in a global world encourages cultural reflexivity about both larger consumption cultures and one’s own (Askegaard, Kjeldgaard, and Arnould 2009; Emontspool and Kjeldgaard 2012). A globalized ironic perspective on exotic and ethical food trends may therefore well be an outcome of the processes described in this paper, reflecting the recurrent revival of past trends in re-aestheticized and re-moralized formats.

This paper provides insights into the way in which urban consumers adopt aesthetic and moral cosmopolitan ideals in a world characterized by ever-present cultural diversity. It offers three theoretical contributions to existing scholarship. The paper firstly finds that moral cosmopolitan consumption integrates a larger variety of moral ideals than the ones usually counted among global ethical discourses. It further differs from ethical consumption through a lack of community affiliation and by reflecting only a superficial commitment with ethical



discourses. Moral cosmopolitanism thus globalises ethical consumption behaviours by extending them beyond individual ethics and towards broader moral performances. Secondly, the paper introduces nature cosmopolitanism, which reflects the cosmopolitan discovery of a culture unknown to global urban consumers. Nature cosmopolitanism arises through the processes of re-aestheticizing nature and re-moralizing the exotic. Thirdly, the paper points to a returning relevance of territoriality questions when it comes to cosmopolitanism, in a global world often perceived as deterritorialized. It suggests that when combining aesthetic and moral ideals, physical travel is indispensable for consumers to experience what they perceive as authentic cultural diversity. The territorial fixation of food trends such as New Nordic Food thereby requires consumers to critically re-assess their consumption and establish a balance between aesthetic and moral cosmopolitanism. This study thereby provides a novel perspective on the interconnections between cosmopolitanism, nature and locality in global food trends. Further research should assess the extent to which these interconnections are globalized for instance by extending to a deeper, ethnographic investigation of nature cosmopolitanism, or through a larger population sample.

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