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Clare Madge, Parvati Raghuram and Pat Noxolo
Prog Hum Geogr published online 31 March 2014
DOI: 10.1177/0309132514526442

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Conceptualizing international education: From international student to international study

Clare Madge

University of Leicester, UK

Parvati Raghuram

The Open University, UK

Pat Noxolo

The University of Sheffield, UK

Abstract

In a rapidly changing transnational eduscape, it is timely to consider how best to conceptualize international education. Here we argue for a conceptual relocation from international student to international study as a means to bridge the diverse literatures on international education. International study also enables recognition of the multiple contributions (and resistances) of international students as agents of knowledge formation; it facilitates consideration of the mobility of students in terms of circulations of knowledge; and it is a means to acknowledge the complex spatialities of international education, in which students and educators are emotionally and politically networked together through knowledge contributions.

Keywords

International study, mobile agents, circulations of knowledge, geographies of international education, emotions

I Introduction: thinking beyond ‘international student’ as a category

Recent decades have seen a considerable increase in the volume of ‘international’ students worldwide;¹ the number of students enrolled outside their country of citizenship has seen a five-fold increase from 0.8 million in 1975 to 4.1 million in 2010 (OECD, 2012). This is a global phenomenon – UNESCO statistics suggest that virtually every country in the world has experienced an expansion in the

number of international students in the first decade of the 21st century (<http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco>). For instance, from 2003 to 2010 the number of international students in Egypt grew from 27,158 to 49,011; in the Czech Republic from 10,338 to 34,992; and in the Republic of Korea from 7,843 to 59,194

Corresponding author:

Clare Madge, Department of Geography, University of Leicester, University Road, Leicester LE1 7RH, UK.

Email: cm12@le.ac.uk

(<http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco>, latest statistics). However, it is the growth of international students in the so-called major receiving countries (US, UK, Australia, New Zealand and some European countries) that so far has spurred most interest from the research community – from scholars (Findlay et al., 2012; Waters and Brooks, 2011), educational institutions (King et al., 2010), think-tanks (Mulley and Sachrajda, 2011) and educational providers and policy-makers (British Council, 2012; UKCISA, 2008).

This increase in international student numbers is part of a wider ‘transnationalization of education’ achieved through a range of changes to educational policy: the establishment of higher education (HE) ‘partnerships’, satellites and branches between universities in different parts of the world (Looser, 2012); the development of educational networks attempting to ‘globalize’ HE (Tadaki and Tremewan, 2013); the proliferation of a variety of educational brokers, consultants and agents involved in international student recruitment (Hulme et al., 2013); and the prioritization of ‘internationalization’ in the strategic plans of higher education institutions (HEIs), with the attendant ‘competitiveness agenda’ and status building (Knight, 2012). Digital education, the opening of online courses and free online universities (like Udacity and Coursera), as well as a range of technologies for ranking and choosing HE provision globally (Robertson, 2012), have helped to embed these policies of internationalization of education by shifting pedagogic practices (Ryan, 2013).

At this juncture of a rapidly changing transnational eduscape, which has seen significant increases in students crossing borders (both physically and virtually) (OECD, 2012: 360), it is timely to ‘take a step back’ to consider how best to conceptualize international education. It is also appropriate to begin the work of developing conceptual frameworks that can extend across the diverse literatures that deal with international education. For example, the burgeoning geographies of education literature has

opened up our understanding of the complex spatialities of the internationalization of education (Holloway et al., 2010, 2012; Thiem, 2009; Waters and Leung, 2013a, 2013b), while the academic literature on international student mobility (ISM) has added richly to analysing the mobility associated with these developments (Brooks and Waters, 2011a; Brooks et al., 2012a; Collins, 2012; King and Raghuram, 2013; King et al., 2011). Moreover, the pedagogies in education literature has focused on (global) knowledge formations, revealing countless accounts of international student experiences and changing educator practices (Alberts and Hazen, 2013; Mosneaga and Winther, 2013; Sawir, 2013). However, despite increasing overlaps and intellectual osmosis between the geographies of education and international student mobility literatures, there still exists only a limited engagement between these and the pedagogies in education strand. For instance, the international student mobility literature could usefully move beyond simply viewing students in terms of their cultural capital and explorations of how educational mobility is involved in the social reproduction of class advantage, towards consideration of the implications of student mobility for pedagogy. Similarly, those who are interested in educational pedagogy have not really attended to issues of student mobility. This paper argues for the use of international study as a concept that can act as a bridge across these debates. Moreover, these different literatures have broadly distinct ways of considering international students: the former as global elite in the making; the latter as somehow implicitly lacking in (western) knowledge and educational skills and therefore more problematic to teach. In this paper, we bring these literatures (geographies of education/geographies of international student mobility and pedagogies in education) into dialogue through the concept of international study,² in order to present a more complex, differentiated and agentic view of international students

which goes beyond these extremes of excess and deficit.

Thus we aim to build on existing literature on educational mobilities and pedagogic knowledges – not only to explore ‘the ways in which the relationship between international education and (im)mobilities continues to be transformed’ (Waters, 2012: 131) and to understand the ever more complex and emerging global landscapes of education (Holloway and Jöns, 2012), but also to unpack the *categories of analysis* that are used in thinking about and conceptualizing these complex dynamic global eduscapes. Doing so *now* is of practical significance at a time when the value placed on skills in the global economy, alongside neoliberal changes to education effected since the late 1990s, have wrought significant changes to education (Erikson, 2012; Hanke and Hearn, 2012; Lewis, 2011; O’Brien, 2012). This has made it easier and more desirable for the growing number of students in countries such as China, India and more recently Brazil, Saudi Arabia and post-Soviet Central Asia to acquire foreign exchange and study abroad in a range of countries including ‘emerging’ destinations such as Singapore, Korea, Malaysia and Japan (Holloway et al., 2012; Sidhu et al., 2011). Moreover, mobilities are often not simply from one nation state to another; they also occur within nation states, as students study ‘in situ’ to gain international accreditation through transnational education via overseas branch and niche campuses, franchising and accreditation (King and Raghuram, 2013; Matthews, 2012; Waters and Leung, 2012, 2013a, 2013b). At the same time, countries such as the UK, that have traditionally ‘received’ a large number of international students, have paradoxical policies which on the one hand involve an explicit drive to use international student fees as a mode for enhancing income³ (Mulley and Sachrajda, 2011), but on the other hand have increasingly stringent visa restrictions for international travel and greater responsibilities for educational institutions to

keep track of their international students.⁴ As a result of these changes, international students have become ever more problematized by migration authorities, while simultaneously being vital to the HE landscape and to sustaining everyday academic life in many ‘receiving’ countries.

The picture becomes more complex as students (often those with greater cultural capital) from places usually seen as ‘destination countries’ are also enrolling (sometimes temporarily) on degree programmes overseas (Brooks and Waters, 2011b; Brooks et al., 2012b). This is varying in response to a rise in domestic tuition fees (Higgitt, 2012), to perceived economic benefits of overseas qualifications in a competitive graduate job market (Findlay et al., 2012) or to more emotionally laden valuations such as ‘the pursuit of happiness’ (Waters et al., 2011). International university ranking schemes also play an important role in shaping student mobility, as high-ranking institutions become desirable centres of education (Jöns and Hoyler, 2013). Additionally, predicted slow-downs in the global growth of participation rates in HE and shifts in the balance of education-related mobility from the ‘West’ to the ‘East’ over the next decade (British Council, 2012) are liable to bring further transformations in both the geographies of transnational education and in the individuals categorized as international students.

In light of these changes, and given the great diversity of international students,⁵ the multiple and hybrid ways in which students are involved in international education, and how the global eduscape is also populated by the varied mobility practices and policies of different institutions and academics, it is timely to problematize ‘*the international student*’ as a singular category. However, it is not only recognition of their diversity and the complex spatial vectors of ISM that give impetus to question ‘international student’ as a category of analysis. It is also important to scrutinize

this socially and historically constructed (and hence contingent) category, as increasingly securitized migration policies in many places require international students to be marked up as the ‘radical other’. Thus heightened public pressures to reduce immigration (Noxolo, forthcoming; Tannock, 2013) are leading to the filtering of inward student migration after a period of rapid expansion during the 2000s (Ewers and Lewis, 2008).

Given these problems associated with the term ‘international student’, this paper questions whether its continued use as a modus of differentiating some students from the wider eduscape is still appropriate. Is it ‘an idea, a concept that has historically served, and continues to serve, as a polemic argument for the West’s desperate desire to assert its difference from the rest of the world’ (Mbembe, 2001: 2)?⁶ Within such a framing, the figure of the international student can act as a metaphor of absence (lacking the knowledge, failing in the classroom, emblematic of the problem of immigration, depicted as marginal victims) against which the ‘development’ and intellectual advances of western education and knowledge can be pictured. This is a troubling picture indeed, which can recycle racist repertoires and clichés of western presence and others’ absence, waiting to enter the ‘light’ of the western ‘teaching machine’. Thus critiquing the ‘marking’ of the international student, challenging normalizing conceptions that present the internationalization⁷ of HE in ways that objectify and homogenize students and acknowledging how ‘knowledge’ has itself altered because of these educational agents, is an important political project. In this paper we explore how such a project might be operationalized by a shift in conceptual focus from international student to international study.

In the remainder of the paper we present three (interconnected) steps in an argument to make this conceptual relocation from international student to international study. The paper is

correspondingly structured into three sections. In section II, we place the spotlight on the agency of mobile *people* (academics and students) who are simultaneously implicated in the co-construction of knowledge production activities. This moves us towards a modification in thinking from (individualized) student to (collective) study, a term which is more all-encompassing and involves us all. Section III analyses pedagogic spaces as focal points through and within which these knowledge production activities circulate. In so doing, we highlight how intellectual knowledges are always in formation (Raghuram, 2009), constantly becoming reshaped owing to the agentic and dialogical practices of both academics and students. Thus the move to international study facilitates a conceptual repositioning of students in terms of circulations of *knowledge* and not only as flows of people (Raghuram, 2013). In section IV, we unpack the concept of the international to enable a more distributed, unsettled and decentred view of international study. In adopting an approach which recognizes the long history of global mobility, that develops multi-centre, multi-scalar spatial imaginations and unsettles commonly assumed spatialities through a focus on student immobilities, we start to reveal an expanded notion of the *international*, moving from (largely unmarked) European-American-Australian centres towards a version that explicitly resituates itself as coming out of multiple locations. The concluding section V briefly considers the key implications of this conceptual move from international student to international study.

II International study: students and academics as mobile agents

In this section we explore what the literature on student mobilities can learn from debates about academic mobilities. In doing so, we place the spotlight on the agency of mobile people and argue that this enables a shift in thinking in two

key ways. First, student mobility for international study should not simply be thought of as a movement occurring at a discrete point in time, but rather as an ongoing process inherent to ever-changing mobile lives (see, for example, Findlay et al., 2012). Second, we focus not only on the impact of mobility *on* students, but also on the agency and resistance *of* international students in transforming the institutions and environments in which they are located.

Although there is a vibrant literature on academic mobility (Chen and Koyama, 2013; Dervin, 2011; Fahey and Kenway, 2010; Leung, 2013), research on student mobility has only engaged to a limited extent with this literature (see, for example, Hammett, 2012; Mavroudi and Warren, 2013). Rather, in treating students as distinct subjects of study, research on student mobility has focused on the causes and effects of individual moves of students and in the process has over-valorized the migration of the individual. However, while we acknowledge that the motivations/drivers for migration might be different for academics and students, there are much larger debates on knowledge production and the role of mobilities therein from which the student migration literature can learn. For instance, the role of academic mobility in producing, reworking and sometimes erasing circulations of knowledge (Leung, 2011) and the ongoing and continuous role of mobility in the building of academic lives (Jöns, 2007), particularly in the context of changes in employment conditions, are clear-cut. Short-term contract cultures have meant that academics (researchers, lecturers, administrators) are often mobile over a large portion of their careers (Kim, 2010a). This moves the focus onto long-term but dynamic transnational networks which are embedded in mobility practices, rather than stories of outward and return journeys centred on a fixed notion of a 'home' institution. This longer temporal focus also conceives individual academic careers as developing through diverse international movements.

Extending this argument to students, we suggest, along with Findlay et al. (2012), that the mobility of students should be considered in the context of mobile careers and mobile lives rather than imagining travel for international study as an isolated 'moment' in which students develop the capital required for 'employability'. For instance, Findlay et al. (2012) argue that mobility for education is, and should be recognized as, part of wider life course mobilities. They explore how mobility is a way of life and a part of family formation and employment and that international student mobility intersects with, or is nested within, these mobilities. We adopt a similar approach but locate these life stories of mobility in the context of academic cultures and the demands of knowledge production, reproduction and circulation. If we take the spaces of knowledge as an important, but often neglected, aspect of international student mobility, then we can see academics and students as inhabiting the shared space of knowledge, in which both students and academics require and depend on mobility. We thus extend Findlay et al.'s (2012) arguments beyond the life course to other (academic) mobility contexts.

Additionally, early research on ISM focused on the impact of mobility on senders or receivers, and only occasionally on those who were actually mobile – the students themselves. It did not explore their differentiated experiences, motivations and aspirations (Carlson, 2013) and tended to concentrate on students in isolation from other external factors, thus presenting the international market as 'uniform and benign', which inadequately captured the 'full complexity and discursive nature of the phenomena of global student mobility' (Kell and Vogl, 2008: viii). More recent scholarship on ISM has extended beyond debates around 'employability' and the relationship between overseas study and labour market advantage to consider the role of student mobility in reproducing social advantage within families and the construction of 'cosmopolitan' identities. For instance,

several papers in a special issue of *Globalization, Societies and Education* (Waters and Brooks, 2011) highlight the need to appreciate the plurality of spaces (such as homes, workplaces, international/transnational space, cyberspace) associated with international student life, while others have focused on embodied and emotional experiences of students (Collins, 2010a, 2012; Fincher, 2011), and indeed their vulnerability in some settings (Park, 2010).

It is also increasingly recognized that students are multiply positioned subjects who may simultaneously be students, workers, refugees and family members (King and Raghuram, 2013) who articulate varying degrees of social, economic and political agency. Collins (2010b), for example, explores the relationship between the growth of international student numbers in Auckland, New Zealand, and processes of urban transformation, suggesting it has had to significant impacts on urban form, including the growth in educational services such as language schools and other private training establishments, new residential geographies characterized by low-cost and low-quality high-rise developments, and new ethnic economies of food, service and entertainment businesses that explicitly target international students (see also Holloway et al., 2010). In uncovering the connections between student mobilities and changing urban form, Collins (2010b) explores the role of international students as urban agents in transforming urban spaces, but also notes that their influence cannot easily be separated from the contribution of a range of other actors including educational businesses, property developers and transnational migrants.

This agency of students extends to active resistance and activism too. As Tikly (2001: 161) observes, education can 'have a critical correspondence with the global economy because of its role in providing a focus and forum for the development of resistance to the status quo'. International students are a wonderfully fertile marginal case, in relation to a range of national

and transnational education systems, that not only produce global inequality but can also produce the knowledge, skills and personnel to challenge it, raising the question 'where and with whom is there purchase for resistance?' One example of such resistance is given by Zeilig and Ansell (2008), who suggest that university students in Africa have long engaged in political activism, responding to changing political, social and economic circumstances through protest that has at times exerted considerable influence on the national stage. Using case studies from Senegal and Zimbabwe, they show how African students have helped reconfigure geographies of political domination and of higher education. This is clearest in Senegal, where student activism contributed to a change of government and to the new government's agreement not to implement fully a World Bank-funded plan for HE (Zeilig and Ansell, 2008).

However, although there is clearly some recognition of the economic, social and political impacts of student mobility, there is much less acknowledgement of international students' role in knowledge production itself (but see Williams and Baláz, 2008, for a discussion of knowledge mobility in the context of the labour market; and Kofman and Raghuram, 2013, for a gendered analysis). International students are often still depicted as subjects who are acted *upon* in the context of *study*; rarely are they envisaged as complex agents who alter the academic worlds around them through their *knowledge practices*.

By contrast, the mobility of academics has been written about for some time in terms of the complexity of mobile intellectual subjectivities (see Bauman, in Boyer and Lomnitz, 2005: 106), often firmly placed in the context of wider institutional, geopolitical and cultural relationships. Edward Said's work on the exilic intellectual, for example, focuses on the tension between mobility and constraint – the intellectual who is free to travel anywhere except to the

place of desire – and its effects on academic institutions, arguing that: ‘Exile for the intellectual in this sense is restlessness, movement, constantly being unsettled, and unsettling others’ (Said, quoted in Fahey and Kenway, 2010: 630). This ‘unsettling’ aspect of mobility, unsettling both the self and others, resonates with Stuart Hall’s formulation of the ‘diasporic intellectual’, in which one can never ‘go home’, but lives always with ‘the enigma of an always-postponed arrival’. This makes for a lived hybridity that comes out of the specificity of the historical moment: ‘out of very specific histories and cultural repertoires of enunciation ... we have to live this ensemble of identity-positions in all its specificities’ (Hall and Chen, 1996: 490).

In Stuart Hall’s (Hall and Chen, 1996) narration of his academic life, travelling from Jamaica to the UK as a student and becoming an influential British academic, it is precisely the dialogues that this hybrid identity generates that unsettle the academic institutions surrounding him. For Hall, this was instrumental both in his role in the establishment and in his eventual movement away from the influential Centre for Cultural Studies in Birmingham, UK. Similarly, for Anna Yeatman, moving from Australia to the USA to study, then to Australia and New Zealand as an academic, her need to understand the ‘ethics of place internal to the place’ (Massey, quoted in Fahey and Kenway, 2010: 636) led her to occupy both an insider and outsider position in relation to Women’s Studies in New Zealand, with a sense that this dialogic positioning was essential to the opening out of the discipline to women from more diverse backgrounds: ‘It is now accepted that for all women to be a part of Women’s Studies a dialogical process which is open to differently positioned women ... has to be opened up’ (Yeatman, quoted in Fahey and Kenway, 2010: 637). So academic mobilities are not only shaped by global educational institutional policies and practices, and by the movements of

global capital and geopolitics; mobile academics also shape academic institutions and knowledges through the perspectives that their transnationality provides them. Kim (2010a: 589) calls this flexible capacity to see as a stranger ‘transnational identity capital’, and shows how it is embedded within ‘the imperatives of academic capitalism’. Crucially, it is the clustering of mobile academics and ideas which produces these ‘global hubs of excellence’.

Considering international students through the ‘lens’ of academic mobility requires that we focus not only on the impact of mobility *on* students, but also on their agency *in* transforming the institutions and environments in which they are placed. However, we are not simply arguing that the ‘contribution’ of international students (through their agency and resistance) to knowledge formation ‘be acknowledged’. It is not simply a project of ‘flipping the coin’ because the concept of contribution is itself flawed. It ‘implies the claim of deliberateness: that one originally feels attracted by a sphere of life and that one wants to prove to oneself and others the right to be accepted into the new circle on account of one’s accomplishment’ (Adorno, 2009: 160). For Adorno (2009), the right to move and to study is not a gift, which requires giving thanks, returning a ‘contribution’. Instead, when mobility becomes seen as a necessary part of intellectual production, then the mobile intellectual is not an outsider who contributes to pre-given knowledges which have territorial affiliations; rather, mobile intellectuals are inherent to that knowledge production itself (Raghuram, 2013). The implication of this critique is that it is not adequate for receiving institutions and their HE cultures to simply demand that international students conform to pre-existing structures, knowledge formations and curriculums, but their right to critique and alter the receiving institutions and their systems is also immanent. This is because ‘contribution naively presupposes the merit of the order to which one is supposed to contribute something.

It is precisely the merit of the order that is to be questioned' (Adorno, 2009: 161). Thus recognizing that knowledge formations are brought together not only through academic mobility but also through the circulation, mobility, agency and resistance of international students places the spotlight on the agency of mobile *people* (academics and students) who are simultaneously implicated in the co-construction of knowledge. This pushes towards a shift in thinking from (individualized) student to (collective) study. But what implications does this shift to international study have for thinking about the mobility of students? This is explored below.

III International study routed through circulations of knowledge: pedagogic spaces in formation

This section considers international study as a mobile spatial practice of knowledge production and reveals pedagogic spaces as powerful focal points through and within which these knowledge production activities circulate. In so doing, it highlights how intellectual knowledges are always in formation, constantly becoming reshaped owing to the agentic practices highlighted above. In other words, if international study includes an appreciation of the mobile conditions of knowledge production and the importance of the mobile bodies of both (but not only) academics and students in that process, then student mobility can start to be envisaged in terms of circulation of knowledge rather than (largely) through a migration lens (Raghuram, 2013).

Early literature on the pedagogic issues raised by student mobility tended to interrogate either educator practices or students themselves, in order to explore how to improve student experiences (Haigh, 2002; Scheyvens et al., 2003). The focus was often on the individual scale of analysis, set firmly within the classroom walls, with individuals presented as passive participants in a global market setting. Here the 'international' student was sometimes

portrayed as an exotic 'other' and at other times as one who required pedagogic instruction to 'fit' the teaching requirements of particular localities. In both cases the student was portrayed, in some ways, as the locus of 'the problem'. More recently, this literature is moving away from this instrumentalist notion of pedagogy as instruction towards a more interrelational, emotionally embedded approach (Anderson, 2012; Geddie, 2013; Ryan, 2013) which recognizes the complexities of internationalization for the dyadic relationships between staff and students (Klein et al., 2014; Sawir, 2013). For instance, Kell and Vogl (2008) recognize the complexities of the embodied nature of educator and classroom practices and focus on the emotional well-being of students, while Coate (2009: 271) argues that English HEIs are 'on ethically dubious grounds in terms of their relations with international students' because of the current failure of staff and students in *sharing* responsibility for international students' educational experiences. Sidhu and Dall'Alba (2012) pursue this line of thought in exploring the disjuncture between the disembodied 'brand identities' of the international education export industry and the actual embodied experiences of international students, which, they argue, ultimately undermines the cosmopolitan ethic that international education claims to provide.

In this interrelational notion of pedagogy, international students are relocated as part of a long history of transversal and decentred knowledge circulation. Once we get beyond seeing students as clients, buying knowledge and taking it home in the equivalent of lifelong shopping bags, we begin to see that the global knowledge economy is one that is founded precisely on the generative capacity of circulation: mobility and encounter make knowledge (Raghuram, 2013). International students do not just take away knowledge – they bring it and generate it (Singh, 2009). Both students and academics teaching them draw on countless

historical knowledge-making encounters both in receiving countries and elsewhere (Raghuram, 2009). Knowledge is not simply passed on: minds and meetings leave their mark. In this way knowledge is always already decentred: the individual subject does not generate knowledge alone but through encounter, whether face-to-face or through writing.

Literatures on globalized knowledge formations beyond the topic of international students are often focused on the roles of mobile knowledge agents, both in processes of knowledge formation and on the kinds of knowledge produced. Many have pointed to the processes of sifting, translation, linking and recombination of information that characterize the agency of key global knowledge brokers, such as NGOs (Bach and Stark, 2004), while others point to the increasing salience for global capital of knowledge communities, in which knowledge flows across space in increasingly frictionless ways, managed through actor-networks of competent personnel (Thrift, 2005). Similarly, Jöns (2009) considers how the international mobilities of German academics, sponsored by the German state through the Humboldt Foundation, created long-term networks of academic relationships that made Germany a key post-war intellectual hub. Folded into Germany's post-war economic success story there was an emphasis on capital accumulation, both for institutions involved in these networks and for the state, but Jöns (2009) transfers attention from a focus on the direct advantages for 'senders' and 'receivers' to what Faulconbridge (quoted in Jöns, 2009: 334) calls 'globally stretched practices of knowledge production and circulation'. In other words, there is a shift from mapping mobile bodies to understanding how knowledge is changed through its mobile conditions of production. Whether the emphasis is on knowledge agents or knowledge circulations, the focus is on the building of knowledge competencies (Kim, 2010a) the capacity to create, manage and deploy knowledge as it circulates through space.

In considering international study in terms of circulations of knowledge (rather than that of people), pedagogic spaces (formal lecture rooms and classrooms, but also the spatial patterning of pedagogic encounters; see Holloway et al., 2010) are key focal points through which this knowledge circulates. One way of rethinking 'the porousness of the lecture room walls' (Madge et al., 2009: 37) is to see knowledge as circulating through and around these spaces, creating a shared dialogic place in which different mobile knowledge agents, institutions and infrastructures of education play a role⁸ (see also Kraftl, 2013, on learning as a spatial practice). Moreover, recognizing knowledge as a set of mobile spatial practices also pushes pedagogy towards more dialogic forms, with an emphasis on developing transferable competencies in relation to the evaluation and management of ephemeral forms of knowledge, rather than a Fordist emphasis on transmitting and absorbing permanent information (Tabulawa, 2009). For example, Susan Mains (2004), herself a mobile academic who moved from Britain to teach for a period in the Caribbean, challenges the way the Caribbean is constructed by knowledge practitioners from outside the Caribbean, and suggests more dialogic pedagogic practices in which Caribbean students question the assumption that academics should be in control of the curriculum. This more dialogic practice begins from an acknowledgement that spatial circulations of knowledge are always embedded within complex power dynamics at a variety of spatial scales.

Moreover, if knowledge requires, or results from, dialogic processes then categories such as 'western knowledge' and 'southern theories' also need nuancing. 'Western' knowledge has always emanated from the engagements of mobile people from many places. Carney (2011), for example, highlights how the rice farming systems and businesses of the southern states of America were developed through the transfers of knowledge from people forced

from West Africa, while Brockway (2011) shows how botanical knowledges located at Kew Gardens in London originated from numerous colonial botanical gardens through the mobile 'indigenous' knowledge of people living in those places. Knowledges are always in formation, constantly borrowing from diverse times and places, and enacted through the mobility of knowledge agents.

But it is not just that knowledge located in the western teaching machine (Spivak, 1988) has long histories of global circulation: international students, as knowledge agents, are also interpreting long histories of global knowledge circulation, in addition to 'new' knowledge that they encounter when they move internationally. Student minds/intellecets have already had to familiarize themselves with systems – immigration regulations, application systems, pedagogic languages – in order to gain mobility. Indeed, a detailed familiarity with this globalized knowledge is necessary for becoming an international student in the first place. These circulations of knowledge are, however, also highly uneven. For instance, educators generally do not need to acquire knowledge of the systems from which students come; they rarely know about the education regimes or even of the immigration regulations that the students have to negotiate to become 'international'. Moreover, although knowledge circulation may be highly interdependent, and enacted through various mobile agents, it is certainly not equally valued: even when the knowledge of international students – indeed all students – is recognized pedagogically in the classroom through reflexive learning in everyday classroom encounters, (some) international students are still sometimes seen as in deficit – requiring more effort to teach.⁹ Their educational background can be seen as a hindrance, a problem to be overcome.

At best (some) international students may be considered by educators in the classroom as purveyors of pristine 'southern knowledge'. However, recognition that knowledges are always

in formation and are always already decentred questions the limits of situated 'southern' knowledges too (Jazeel and McFarlane, 2010). If knowledge is a mobile spatial practice, which is produced through encounter and dialogue, then knowledge cannot easily be localized as southern or western. Students are already imbued with a mix of reference points and knowledges, although these knowledges can be held by mobile students in intensely localized and individualized ways. It is recognition of this 'back and forth' movement that is involved in knowledge production that is more fruitful than asking students to apply their own knowledge as if there is a 'pure' southern knowledge which can be mined. This to-ing and fro-ing of knowledge from mobile students formed, and continues to form, a contribution in the shifting boundaries of what constitutes contemporary geographical knowledge. It enables recognition of the multiple voices that have made a supposedly pure Anglo-American geography what it is today (Noxolo et al., 2008) and helps us think critically about the knowledge brought by, shaped and produced by mobile students (see also Sawir, 2013, who demonstrates how international students facilitate the internationalization of the curriculum and the intercultural learning of domestic students in Australian classrooms).

One way to do this is to think about these knowledges in terms of 'topologies of [educational] practice' (see McGregor in Mulcahy, 2006: 66), which focus on the ways in which problem-based forms of learning push beyond formal classroom walls, towards fieldwork and experiential learning, but also towards the pedagogic importance of proximal relations between different groups of learners, enabling the valorization of chance encounters and informal learning experiences. This relocation of emphasis from the particularity of lecture rooms as pedagogic spaces, to the 'patterned forms and locations of association and the meanings these

have for people' (McGregor in Mulcahy, 2006: 66), enables an understanding of networks of learning that involve both academics and students in relations of knowledge production, not only when the international student physically travels to an overseas university, but also in the continued relationships and conversations that happen before arrival and after graduation. Such networks of learning can be seen in the creation of indigenous universities (such as the Universidad Intercultural de Chiapas in Mexico and the Universidad Autónoma Indígena Intercultural in Colombia) which aim to create indigenously culturally and epistemologically attuned modes of learning through intercultural dialogue. Cupples and Glynn (2014), for example, explores the University of the Autonomous Regions of the Nicaraguan Caribbean Coast, showing how teaching and research grounded in ancestral, embodied, experiential and everyday knowledges and realities can forge the basis for the construction of cultural citizenship by learners located differently in the 'colonial matrix of power'. Through intercultural communication in varied pedagogic spaces, such as participatory community radio, an indigenous television station and a trans-American Arts alliance, indigenous knowledges circulate and come to be seen as 'dynamic, contested and heterogeneous, and that like Eurocentric knowledges they continue to develop, hybridize and function as sites of productive disagreement' (Cupples and Glynn, 2014: 65).

Moving towards a more interconnected approach thus enables a variety of pedagogic spaces to be seen as key focal points through which knowledge circulates within dialogic relationships between linked mobile knowledge agents. The shift to international study enables the mobility of students to be conceptualized in terms of circulations of *knowledge* rather than just flows of people (Raghuram, 2013). However, these circulations are not neutral processes of uninterrupted flow – the global terrain is uneven and

the contributions of knowledge agents are not valued equally. Indeed, as we argue in the next section, the agency of international students and mobile academics in the creation of these international pedagogic spaces must be theorized in all their complex spatial manifestations, demanding careful interrogation of 'the international'.

IV Interrogating the international: decentring and unsettling the spatial imaginary of international study

In the two previous sections the international is summoned as an outcome of circulation – of people and of knowledge. In this section we unpack the concept of the international, to enable a more distributed, unsettled and decentred view of international study that is explicitly distributed across multiple locations. Towards this, we deploy examples from Africa, Asia, South America and the Caribbean to counter the previously predominant focus in the literature on Europe, America and Australia as student migrant destinations.

There is a long history of global mobility for the purpose of HE so that the 'international' is constituted differently across the globe and involves mobilities beyond the circuits of western knowledge production (Mufti, 2005; see also Fechter and Walsh, 2010, on the complex postcolonial migration patterns of western professionals). Centres, for example, in Ethiopia, Jamaica or India have their own development impetus with respect to HE, leading to an array of education 'providers' with differing notions and methods of pedagogy. These might include a combination of pre-colonial state universities, Islamic mosque universities, colonial HE establishments, post-independent national universities, institutions sponsored by multilateral organizations such as UNESCO or the World Bank or newly developed private universities (Bascom et al., 2011; Cobbah, 2010; Lulat, 2003; Majgaard and Mingat, 2012). It is

important to recognize the salience of such complex global education networks, in order to go beyond understandings of international study that privilege Euro-America-Australia as the only centres of global HE while other places, networks and connections remain obscured.

This more decentred (temporally contingent) multi-polar vision of global education is increasingly being recognized, driven by the importance of new regional dynamics around international mobility. For instance, intra-regional mobility within Asia is growing as Asian countries are becoming 'hosts' to international students (Waters, 2012) and countries such as Singapore, Malaysia and Korea (Bhandari and Blumenthal, 2011; Huang and Yeoh, 2011; Kim, 2010a) become 'hubs' for English-medium education. However, the spatial complexities of international study are not simply about a transnational relocation from Euro-America-Australia to other 'global' centres in Europe or East/Southeast Asia – there is simultaneously a local, interregional and intercontinental mobility occurring too. Thus Haugen (2013) explores the recent intercontinental migration of African students to China while Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (2010) discusses the movement since the 1970s of thousands of Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) students to Cuba as recipients of free HE. Intra-regional mobility is a constantly occurring phenomenon too: for example, students from the southern African region moving to South Africa (Crush and Tawodzera, 2012; Vandeyar, 2012) or those from mainland China moving to Hong Kong and Macau (Li and Bray, 2007) – which highlights the importance of proximity in student mobility. Local mobilities of students from rural places to urban centres are also a common feature of HE in many places¹⁰ and are a concern in national literatures in many countries (Corbett, 2013; Florinskaia and Roschina, 2006; Li et al., 2013).

Thus there is, and has always been, a complex multi-centred character of student mobility

for international study at a variety of spatial scales, including south–south transfers and circulations between smaller regionally significant places. This multi-sited, multi-scalar character of international study challenges simplistic dichotomies of here/there and unsettles the spatial imagination away from thinking about 'the international' and about pedagogy solely in relation to (largely unmarked) European-American-Australian centres, and instead explicitly locates itself as coming out of, and to, multiple locations.

This unsettling of the international is furthered by an understanding of the variegated experiences of student immobility. The multiply positioned 'immobile' domestic student plays a part in shaping experiences of international study. This includes students who do not leave their country of origin and are educated at 'home' through international accreditation (Hall and Appleyard, 2011; Leung and Waters, 2013; Song, 2013; Waters and Leung, 2013b) and students who 'stay on' in the country of migration after their educational course finishes (Baas, 2006; Jackling, 2007; Wambua and Robinson, 2012). Educational regimes of governance including border control regulations that are used more or less effectively to immobilize certain bodies also shape international study. For example, there are concerns that the new immigration policies being promulgated by the UK's Coalition Government, including changes to post-study work visas and more stringent visa regulations (starting April 2013), may deter international students from studying in the country (Mulley, 2013; Taylor, 2013).¹¹ Indeed, educational mobility for many is only achieved after negotiating a whole host of immigration and admission processes designed to restrict, filter and sometimes prevent mobility (Mosneaga and Winther, 2013; Tannock, 2013). Thus international study and its attendant pedagogic practices do not operate on a benign level playing field but in a ruffled terrain replete with inequalities, immobilities and differences.¹²

This recasting of the spatial imaginary of the international derived from our reading of the existing literature can be further extended by considering how the spatiality of contemporary ISM and immobility draws upon older histories of migration. For example, many students travelled along established colonial routes in post-colonial contexts – for instance, from India to the UK (Raghuram, 2009; Zheng, 2014). The painful politics associated with colonialism and its past spatial relations, inequities and injustices are essential to shaping contemporary neo-colonial relations of education (Madge et al., 2009). Moreover, although historical records of international education are always fractured, with memories constantly being lost and archives always only ever being partial (Clover, 2005), historical analyses highlight the constitutive role that international students have played in nationalist projects by becoming leaders and producing knowledges and policies that have shaped postcolonial spaces in the 20th century. Clover (2005), for example, shows how many future political leaders, judiciary and academia of the Caribbean states had been previously educated in Britain and had occupied positions of leadership in the West Indian students Union, formed in 1945, which acted as a welfare, political and social organization for newly arriving students in London. Similarly, Lahiri (2000) gives a compelling account of how Indian students studying in Britain prior to the two world wars both shaped the nationalist movement and constructed policies in India after 1947. The movement of international students as a part of international relations is also evidenced by Matusевич (2008). The author documents the intercontinental movement of African students to Russia prior to the Bolshevik takeover in 1917, but more especially in the 1950s during the Khrushchev period through the provision of generous educational scholarships, as the Soviet Union sought to reaffirm its internationalist credentials and gain favour from newly independent African states. This suggests the

need for the spatial imaginary of international study to engage more directly with a historically layered approach which recognizes the diverse pedagogic practices that make up international knowledge.

In sum, we have attempted to recognize the complexity of ‘the international’ in relation to study in three key ways: first, through its multi-centre, multi-scalar spatial nature; second, through the immobilities that it can involve; third, through consideration of how these (im)mobilities are routed through long historical relationships. This moves us to argue for an expanded notion of the international, one in which spatial imaginaries can transmute beyond provincial Euro-American-Australian boundaries and ‘frames’ of understanding. This decentring of international study forces an acknowledgement that knowledges are always in formation, constantly borrowing from other times and places, and enacted through the mobility of knowledge agents. This enables a transformed perspective in which pedagogy and international study are seen as constituted through, and an outcome of, the agency of international students. It thus encourages a move away from approaches that objectify students towards ones that recognize that the internationalization of HE is something in which all of us, including all students and all educators, are implicated. In the concluding section we briefly consider the main implications that arise from this conceptual shift from international student to international study.

V Concluding implications

In responding to Holton and Riley’s (2013: 68) suggestion that ‘the conceptual ... approaches ... opened up by the contemporary changes taking place in the HE sector’ require further attention, this paper has sought to move the analytical focus from international *students* to international *study*. This relocation is important for four main reasons. First, it places international

students within wider *academic* concerns, pushing past the narrow focus on international students as financial and human capital, and working towards a sense of international study as a broad-based and variegated process of knowledge production that involves a wide range of actors (students and those working in educational institutions), mutualities, incommensurabilities and circulations in a shared, albeit uneven, global terrain. Second, the shift to international study locates international students within wider *theoretical* contexts, making them part of broader debates about the meanings of the international/national, the local/global and knowledge/study, pushing beyond an empirical focus on flows and mobilities. Third, a focus on international study places international students within wider *temporal* contexts, both individually and collectively. Individually, international students can be understood within longer-term academic careers, passing through a number of educational and spatial contexts on their way to and from being students. Collectively, international student mobilities can be seen as part of a wide range of historical intellectual movements that have constituted both knowledge and ‘international space’ across centuries. Finally, using the analytical focus of international study can transcend the distinctions between diverse sets of literatures, thus offering new avenues for *reshaping future research* directions in international student mobilities, pedagogies of education and geographies of education, as detailed below.

Considering the mobility of students through the lens of international study, rather than through the category ‘international student’, suggests that there are many actors implicated in this mobility. In a rapidly changing global eduscape, it is particularly important for academics to recognize our emotionally and politically embedded roles and relationships in international study. This is because HE is not a pure self-existing unit within which pedagogic practices occur; rather it is constituted through

the flux of mobile bodies (including students and educators), ideas and things (books, money). As academics we are involved in mundane (and often normalized) practices of international study and undergo intimate and intricate relationships and encounters with international students on a daily basis – as teachers, supervisors, partners in knowledge interactions, managers of their study, and, increasingly, as people who have to police their attendance, act as border regulators and report their absence.¹³ Acknowledging that knowledge is produced through these encounters between academics and students requires that we *all* reflect the mirror back on ourselves, and the cultures of our institutions, as active players in the ever-changing everyday practices of international study. This is important, for as Tadaki and Tremewan (2013: 367) demonstrate, it opens up a space to consider the ways in which international study might hold transformative potential, and how we as academics might have some (albeit circumscribed) agency to alter and challenge certain ideas, practices and norms of internationalization to ‘*make the international differently*’.

This focus on thinking about (and doing) the international ‘differently’, of seeing universities and all those present in them as active agents of international study ‘in the making’ (Tadaki and Tremewan, 2013), has implications for pedagogies of education. In this paper we highlight how knowledge has always been made by mobile students although this ‘making’ has often been neglected or has been downplayed as a ‘contribution’. This paper therefore suggests the need for more attention to be paid to the pedagogies of learning that such a view of international students’ role in education demands. For instance, this will involve an engaged pedagogy that extends well beyond the classroom walls (Madge et al., 2009) and a view of learning spaces as both intersubjective and interdiscursive (see Praeg, 2006); thus ‘pedagogy is removed from limited notions of

instrumentalist values of instruction and didactic relationships with students. Rather, pedagogy is considered as having political and strategic intent, linking histories and biographies with issues of culture, power and politics' (Lavia, 2007: 297). In this process of the academic 'learning to learn' there is the possibility of creating space for an ethical relationship where the 'black box' of the institutional knowledge corporation can be opened up through continual questioning, reflexivity and dialogue by the academic with respect to international study.

But this process will not be unproblematic and is unlikely to be easy – there are no innocent positions and the spaces and subjectivities of the neoliberalizing university are multiple, unpredictable, contradictory, contested and sometimes resisted (Cupples and Pawson, 2012; Forbes-Mewett and Nyland, 2013; Larner and Le Heron, 2005). However, narrating these opportunities and challenges will place academics within debates on ISM and geographies/pedagogies of education, making these bodies of work both more complete and *emotionally fertile* (see also Cupples, 2012; Kenway and Youdell, 2011; Waters et al., 2011; Zembylas, 2012). It will open opportunities for an imaginative approach to international study embedded within a robust and sensitive appreciation of our (multiple) positions as academics in the processes of internationalization. This is an issue that is relevant to all of us (not just those interested in the geographies of education literature) in our daily lives as academics (Berg, 2012; Peake, 2011).

Moreover, focusing on international study produces perspectives that are more fully appreciative of the contextualized, complex stories of HE emanating from multiple centres in which the enduring achievements and agency of varied international students comes to the fore. In disrupting and destabilizing the spatial fixities of much of the international education literature, we are advocating that more attention be paid to the complex and historically layered multi-

scalar and multi-polar circulations that characterize the changing and uneven terrain of international study. In other words, we are calling for the need to decentre spatial imaginaries through complex understandings of the geographical multiplicities of international study. However, developing approaches that can envisage that international study is simultaneously as much about multi-scalar circularity and mobility from historically contingent multiple locations as it is about place-based immobilities is important because the latter can produce exclusions and marginalizations which have consequences on the ground for people in different places at different times. So it is important to recognize the limits to international study – many places and people are marginal to, or completely absent from, dominant imaginations (and realities) of 'global' HE. This matters because perceptions of international study not only reflect the world, but also shape it, which can have powerful consequences, because international study is bound up tightly with questions about (in)equality, 'aspiration' and 'development'. In this paper we move towards *challenging the spatial terrain of international education* to enable us to build towards an approach that is more malleable, flexible and contingent – one that thinks through the unsettling unevenness of international study.

To conclude, this paper argues for the need for reflection by those working in international study to consider our 'place' in the world of HE and our role in challenging, resisting or replicating current inequalities in 'global' HE; to show that our mobility and that of students is intertwined and that knowledge, the stuff of academic life, implicates us all in international study.

Acknowledgements

We appreciate the generous and insightful comments made by the reviewers. Clare Madge and Pat Noxolo would like to acknowledge the support given by the University of Leicester and the University of Sheffield respectively, in granting study leave to enable their contribution to the paper.

Funding

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Notes

1. Broadly speaking, students are classified as 'international students' if they have left their country of origin and moved to another country for the purpose of study (OECD, 2012: 371). While this definition of 'international student' varies both institutionally and nationally, in this paper we primarily focus on students from beyond the global North. In the UK, EU students are largely accorded the same status as UK students with similar fee regimes, visa and work regulations (<http://www.ukcisa.org.uk/International-Students/Fees-finance/Home-or-Overseas-fees>). However, students from beyond the global North are generally racialized, securitized and 'marked up' in different ways, particularly in the post-9/11 scenario when scrutiny over student migration has heightened. The specificities of the historical postcolonial routings of student movement to the UK give further impetus for the focus on students beyond the global North. So, given the lack of space, and as a counter to the spatial focus of much previous literature, we have decided to focus more on examples and case studies from beyond the global North.
2. This bridging dialogue has also been encouraged by the International Network for Learning and Teaching in Geography (INLT), with the aim of facilitating exchange of materials, ideas and experiences about learning and teaching geography and stimulating international dialogue (see also Klein et al., 2014).
3. According to Universities UK (2012), HE as an export industry provided around £7.9 billion annually to the UK economy in 2009 and has the potential to provide almost £17 billion by 2025. International students also contribute in other ways, including the development of professional networks, contribution of cutting-edge skills and knowledge, and cultural interchange which facilitates potential longer-term international understanding and cooperation.
4. The case of London Metropolitan University in 2012 is apposite here (Grove, 2012).
5. Students differ according to level of study, subject of study, period for which they move, country of origin and destination, social positionality, etc. Then there are different regulatory policies around registering students as migrants. For example, see the various criteria used to categorize home and international students in the UK (<http://www.ukcisa.org.uk/International-Students/Fees-finance/Home-or-Overseas-fees/>). So the category 'international student' includes a range of students with different immigration statuses and nationalities. These regulations are reviewed regularly with rights to extension of stay, employment and housing altering depending on political considerations. Analytically this suggests that the boundaries of the category 'international are porous, change with time and extend far beyond any simple racial or national boundary' (Madge et al., 2009: 35); there are shifting inclusions and exclusions to who might be considered an international student.
6. Here Mbembe (2001) was referring, broadly speaking, to the concept of Africa, but we have transposed his idea to the concept of international students.
7. In this paper we employ the term internationalization rather than globalization because education is often seen as a national good. In this regard we are following the ISM literature, which tends to use the former term. While we recognize that there are many globalizing influences on education (cf. Sidhu, 2004), we adopt internationalization for convenience and consistency.
8. Moving to the language of international study also helps to get past the divide between supply-side (institution-based) and demand-side (student-based) analysis by placing students and educational institutions and brokers as occupying a shared space of learning (Raghuram, 2013).
9. This is precisely because learning and teaching are intersubjective, racialized encounters, sometimes based on inaccurate assumptions about certain students from particular places.
10. Although it must be noted that such local mobilities are often associated with (in)equality issues which complicate simplistic neoliberal notions of 'educational choice'.
11. This includes reducing the time non-EU students may spend studying in the UK, restricting the amount of paid employment they can do during their studies and limiting their ability to bring spouses or children with them unless enrolled in a postgraduate course lasting

- more than one year (<http://www.migrationinformation.org/Feature/display.cfm?ID=922>).
12. See Jöns and Hoyler (2013) who explore these uneven global geographies of HE through a critical analysis of world university rankings. Also see Forbes-Mewett and Nyland (2013) who illustrate such inequalities through the case of an Australian institution heavily reliant on international student income that did not provide adequate funds for international student support services.
 13. Not forgetting that international students may become colleagues too through staff appointments.
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