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Conceptualizing international education: From international student to international study

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Introduction: thinking beyond ‘international student’ as a category

Recent decades have seen a considerable increase in the volume of ‘international’ students worldwide; their numbers have been rising almost four times faster than total international migration (IOM 2008, 105). This is a global phenomenon – UNESCO statistics suggest that virtually every country in the world showed increases in the number of international students in the first decade of the twenty-first century (<http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/>). For instance, the international student population in the Czech Republic grew from 4,583 in 1999 to 30,624 in 2009, in Malaysia in the same period the figures rose from 3,508 to 57,824 (King and Raghuram 2013) while in Ghana the foreign student population at the University of Ghana rose from 1.5 per cent in 2001/02 to 3.8 per cent in 2006/07 (Quartey 2009). 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 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 (UKCISA 2008).

This growth in international student numbers is part of a wider ‘transnationalisation 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; the proliferation of educational networks attempting to ‘globalise’ higher education; and the prioritisation of ‘internationalisation’ in the strategic plans of higher education institutions (HEIs). Digital education, the opening of online courses and free online universities (like Udacity and Coursera), has helped to embed these policies of transnationalisation of education by shifting pedagogic practices.

At this juncture of a rapidly changing transnational eduscape in which more students crossed borders (physically or virtually) in 2012 than ever before, it is timely to 'take a step back' to consider how to conceptualise international education. This is important intellectually, for while academic literature on international student mobility (ISM) has added richly to analysing the mobility associated with the transnationalisation of education (Brooks and Walters 2011; King et al 2011; King and Raghuram 2013), much still remains to be done - 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. Moreover, 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 (Lewis 2011; O'Brien 2012). This has made it easier and more desirable for the growing number of students in some of the major 'sending' countries like China, India and more recently Brazil and Saudi Arabia, to acquire foreign exchange and study abroad (Holloway et al in press) in a range of countries including 'emerging' destinations such as Singapore, Korea, Malaysia, and Japan (Sidhu et al 2011). At the same time, 'receiving' countries, such as the UK, have paradoxical policies which on the one hand involve an explicit drive to use international student fees as a mode for enhancing income¹ (Mulley and Sachrajda 2011) but on the other hand, involve more stringent visa restrictions for international students (a strategy also being considered by New Zealand and Canada) and increased responsibilities for educational institutions to keep track of their international students². As a result of these changes, international students have become increasingly visible as

(problematic?) ‘objects’ of study, while simultaneously being vital to the HE landscape and to sustaining everyday academic life in many ‘receiving’ countries.

Furthermore, given the great diversity of international students³, the multiple and hybrid ways in which students are involved in international study and how the global eduscape is populated by the varied mobility practices of institutions and academics, we must start to question whether we can talk about the ‘international student’ as a meaningful category. Mobilities may not simply be from one nation state to another but 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).

However, it is not only recognition of the diversity of international students and the complex spatial vectors of international student mobility that give impetus to question international student as a category of analysis. It is also important to think carefully about this socially and historically constructed (and hence contingent) category, as international students are sometimes cast as the ‘radical other’ in some academic landscapes in the context of an increasingly securitised migration policy which, in the light of raised security concerns and heightened public pressures to reduce immigration, seeks to curtail inward student migration, after a period of rapid expansion during the 2000s.

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)?⁴. 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 western 'teaching machine'. Thus critiquing the 'marking' of the international student, challenging normalizing conceptions that present the internationalisation of HE in ways which objectify and homogenize students and acknowledging the numerous on-going knowledge contributions of these educational agents, is an important political project for academics to reflect upon.

There are three (interconnected) steps in the argument to make the conceptual relocation from international student to international study: the paper is correspondingly structured into three sections. In section one 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 shift in thinking from (individualized) student to (collective) study, a term which is more all-encompassing and involves us all. The second section 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 shift to international study facilitates a conceptual repositioning to consider the mobility of students in terms of circulations of *knowledge* (rather

than flows of people, see Raghuram 2013). Thirdly, 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 starts to develop multi-centre, multi-scalar spatial imaginations and which unsettles commonly assumed spatialities through a focus on student immobilities and a political reading of the international in relation to the nation, we can 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 relocations. The final concluding section briefly considers the key implications of this conceptual re-location from international student to international study.

International study arising from students and academics as mobile agents

In this section we explore what the student mobilities literature can learn from debates on academic mobilities and in so doing, we place the spotlight on the agency of mobile people. We 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 on-going process inherent to ever-changing mobile careers. Secondly, this gives the imperative to 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 placed. One outcome of this move is that it highlights how students and academics are brought together under the rubric of international study.

Although there is a vibrant literature on academic mobility (Fahey and Kenway 2010; Leung 2012), the student mobility literature has largely not drawn upon this, and the two strands of literature have remained, somewhat curiously, disconnected (but see Warren and Mavroudi in press). Rather, in treating students as distinctive subjects of study, research on student mobility has focused on the causes and effects of individual moves of students and in the process has both over-valorised the migration of the individual and focused on large scale global patterns of student migration. However, there are much larger debates on knowledge production and the role of mobilities therein from which student migration literature can learn. For instance, the on-going and continuous role of mobility in the building of academic lives (Jöns 2007), particularly in the context of changes in employment conditions, is clear-cut. Short term contract cultures have meant that academics (not only researchers, but also lecturers and administrators) are constantly mobile over a large portion of their careers (Kim 2010a). This shifts the focus onto long term but dynamic transnational networks, rather than stories of outward and return journeys centered 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 international students should be considered in the context of mobile careers rather than imagining travel for international study as an isolated 'moment' in which students develop the capital required for 'employability'.

Additionally, early research on international student mobility focused on the impact of mobility on senders or receivers, and only occasionally on those who were actually mobile- the student themselves. It did not explore their differentiated experiences, motivations and aspirations and

tended to concentrate on students in isolation from other external factors, thus presenting the international market as ‘uniform and benign’, and inadequately capturing 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 recent special issue of *Globalisation, Societies and Education* (Waters and Brooks 2011) highlight the need to appreciate the plurality of spaces (such as homes, workplaces, policy spaces, international/transnational space and cyberspace) associated with international student life. Ultimately, it is increasingly recognised that students are multiply positioned subjects who may simultaneously be students, workers, refugees and family members (King and Raghuram 2013). However, they are often still depicted as subjects who are acted *upon*; rarely are they envisaged as complex *agents* who alter the 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 (perhaps as a consequence of the fact that academic writing about academics is almost bound to be a self-representation (see Bauman, in Boyer and Lomnitz 2005, 106). Further, mobile intellectual subjectivities have been firmly placed in the context of wider institutional, geopolitical and cultural relationships⁵. Edward Said’s work on the exilic intellectual, for example, focuses on the impact of the tension between mobility and constraint – the intellectual who is free to travel, except to the place of desire – 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 of the self and of 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 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 US to study, then to Australia and New Zealand as an academic, her recognition of the 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 institutions, 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) has called this flexible capacity to see as a stranger ‘transnational identity capital’, and shows how it is embedded within ‘the imperatives of academic capitalism’, and is particularly powerful in the shaping of key global educational institutions through ‘the mobility of academics and ideas which are clustering into a few centres of excellence within competition on a global scale.’

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. Collins (2010), for example explores the relationship between the growth of international students in Auckland, New Zealand, and processes of urban transformation, suggesting it has led to significant impacts on urban form and experience of the city’s CBD, including the growth in educational services such as language schools and other private training establishments, new residential geographies characterised by low-cost and low-quality high-rise developments, and new ethnic economies of food, service and entertainment businesses that explicitly target international students. In uncovering the connections between student mobilities and changing urban form, Collins (2010) 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, transnational migrants and local and national state actors.

But this agency of students extends further 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 African university students 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 spatially reconfigured their activism in response to changes in the spatial expression of dominant political power across different time periods. Through their actions, students have in turn 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).

But we are not simply arguing that the ‘contribution’ of international students (through their agency and resistance) to the knowledge formation process ‘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, processes, 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 recognising 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 production activities. 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 education and study? This is explored below.

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 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 often isolated individuals presented as passive participants in a global market setting. Here the ‘international’ aspect of the 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- but 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 inter-relational, emotionally embedded approach which recognizes the complexities of internationalisation for the dyadic relationships between staff and students. For instance, Kell and Vogl (2008) recognise the complexities of the embodied nature of educator and classroom practices and focus on the emotional wellbeing 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.

In this inter-relational notion of pedagogy, international students are re-located 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. Both students and the academics teaching them draw on countless historical knowledge-making encounters both here and elsewhere (Raghuram 2009). Knowledge is not simply passed on: minds and meetings leave their mark, just as hands do. 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 globalised 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), whilst others point to the increasing salience for global capital of knowledge networks or knowledge communities, in which knowledge flows across space in increasingly frictionless ways, managed through actor-networks of competent personnel (Thrift 2005). Similarly, Jöns (2009) points out the ways in which 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 the institutions involved in these networks, and for the state, but Jöns (2009) subtly shifts 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.⁶

In considering international study in terms of circulations of knowledge (rather than that of people), pedagogic spaces (understood as lecture rooms but also as the spatial patterning of pedagogic encounters) can be seen as key focal points through which knowledge circulates. One way of re-thinking ‘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 through mobile knowledge agents - students and academics. Moreover, recognising 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 coming from Britain to teach 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 slaves originally from West Africa, while Brockway (2012) shows how botanical knowledges located at Kew gardens in London emanated from numerous colonial botanical gardens through the mobility of ‘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 familiarise themselves with systems – immigration regulations, school systems, entrance procedures, application systems, pedagogic languages- in order to gain mobility. Indeed, a detailed familiarity with this globalised knowledge is necessary for becoming an international student in the first place. These circulations of knowledge are, however, also highly uneven. For instance, educators in the west 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 had 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 recognised pedagogically in the class room through reflexive learning, international students are still sometimes seen as in deficit – requiring more effort to teach. Their educational background is seen as a hindrance, a problem to be overcome.

At best international students may be seen as purveyors of pristine ‘southern knowledge’.

However, recognition that knowledges are always in formation and are always already decentered 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 localised 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 localised and individualised 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 to think critically about the knowledge brought by, shaped and produced by mobile students.

One way in which 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 valorisation of chance encounters and informal learning experiences. This shift in 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.

Moving towards a more topological approach thus enables variegated pedagogic spaces to be seen as key focal points through which knowledge circulates within dialogic relationships between linked mobile knowledge agents. Thus the shift to international study facilitates a conceptual repositioning to consider the mobility of students in terms of circulations of *knowledge* rather than flows of people (Raghuram 2013). However, this is not of course a neutral process of uninterrupted flow – as emphasized above the global terrain is an uneven one, 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’.

Interrogating the international: decentering 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 a final move 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 for international study, that starts to develop multi-centre, multi-scalar spatial imaginations and which unsettles commonly assumed spatialities through a focus on student immobilities and absences, we outline an expanded notion of the international, moving from (largely unmarked) European-American-Australian centres towards a notion that explicitly locates itself as coming out of multiple relocations. But in this relocation we emphasise the roles of intellectuals in the formation of national and international spaces, to argue for a more politicized understanding of the international in relation to the nation.

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). Centres, for example, in Mali, Jamaica or India, have their own development impetus with respect to HE leading to an array of education ‘providers’. These might include a combination of pre-colonial state universities, Islamic mosque universities, colonial HE establishments, post-independent national universities, institutions sponsored by multilateral organisations such as UNESCO or the World Bank or newly developed private universities (see Lulat 2003). It is important to recognise the importance of such complex global education networks, in order to go beyond understandings of international study that privilege Anglo-America-Australian as the only centers 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 recognised, driven by the importance of new regional dynamics around international mobility. For instance, intra-regional mobility within Asia is increasing as Asian countries are becoming ‘hosts’ to international students (Walters 2012, 127) and countries such as Singapore, Malaysia and Korea (Bhandari and Blumenthal 2011; Huang and Yeoh 2011; Kim 2010a) hubs for English-medium education. However, the spatial complexities of international study are not simply about a global/international/transnational relocation from Euro-America-Australia to other ‘global’ centres or hubs in Europe or East/Southeast Asia - there is simultaneously a local, inter-regional, and inter-continental mobility occurring too. Thus Matusевич (2008), for example, documents the inter-continental movement of African students to Russia both 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. Ndoleriire (2003) also explores the migration of African students to India while Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (2010) discusses the movement of thousands of Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) students since the 1970s to Cuba as recipients of a free education at universities and other further education institutions. Inter-regional mobility is a constantly occurring phenomenon too: for example, students in Lesotho move to South Africa (Mashinini and Mashinini 2003) or those from mainland China move 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 places.

Thus there is, and has always been, a complex multi-centered 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’ as solely from (largely unmarked) European-American-Australian centres and instead explicitly locates itself as coming out of multiple locations.

This unsettling of the international is furthered by an understanding of the variegated experiences of student immobility. For example, recent work has investigated students educated at ‘home’ through international accreditation (Hall and Appleyard 2011) and the students who ‘stay on’ in the country of migration (see Baas 2006 and Jackling 2007 on students staying on in Australia). The multiply-positioned ‘immobile’ domestic student too plays a part in international study as they relate to and shape experiences of international study. 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 (to start April 2013), may deter international students from studying in the country⁷. 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. Thus international study does not operate on a benign level playing field but in a ruffled terrain riven with inequalities, immobilities and differences.

In addition to immobility, the spatialities of international study can also be unsettled through a consideration of absence. Here it is important to acknowledge the partiality of our spatial perspectives on what constitutes the ‘international’. The unknown fragile futures of new variegated spatial arrangements of HE are rarely imagined in academic literature, particularly from the perspective of those not in the ‘hub’. For instance, how might climate change, Twitter, the African Virtual University, the ‘Arab Spring’, the Eurozone crisis or the emerging BRIC economies impact on new educational scenarios and student mobility in Bolivia, Mongolia or DRC? Recognizing that our understanding can never be complete is an important element in recasting our spatial imaginary of international study.

This recasting of our spatial imaginary of the international can be further extended by considering how the spatiality of contemporary international student mobility and immobility draws upon older histories of migration. For example, many students travelled along established colonial routes in postcolonial contexts, as for example from Cape Verde to Portugal or India to the UK (Khadria 2001; Raghuram 2009). 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 twentieth 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 organisation for the 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 shaped both the nationalist movement and constructed policies in India after 1947. This suggests the need for the spatial imaginary of international study to more directly engage with a historically-layered approach.

However, we are not simply advocating a more (spatially and temporally) complex view of the international; rather we want to argue that international space is itself made and remade in relation to the nation through the activities of mobile intellectuals. For example, contemporary knowledge, and hence education, has been shaped by the movement of intellectuals especially during the inter-war years (Turner 2006; Simon 2012). German nationalism and anti-Semitism were the primary provocation for this migration. The intellectual leadership offered by Jews from Europe (Adorno 2009) led to particular critiques of nationalism and the search for a more universal and 'cosmopolitan' ethic. Moreover, African and Asian intellectuals in the post-independence period have often drawn on their experiences of migration (whether for study, for refuge or for economic opportunities) to construct forms of nationalism that frame and draw on international space. This construction of nationalism through notions of the international can also take the form of rejection of the international/globalization as a threat to the nation (Glassman et al 2008; Zhao 1997). This has been seen by some as a sign of the class interests of educated elites as they seek to take privileged political roles within the nation (Guibernau 2000). However, equally, the international can be constructed by intellectuals as a space that is porous, so that it is a space of solidarity with global political movements (Stephens 1998), or with diaspora

communities (Murunga 2008). In all these cases the intellectual contribution of mobile intellectuals to the nation-state is paramount. These brief snap-shots highlight how mobility, nationhood and knowledge can be differently intertwined over time. Not only can international mobility and knowledge have different provocations and expressions in different places, they also depend on many different relations with the nation, nation-building and its' criticism, illustrating how the international is continually being produced in relation to the nation.

In more recent policy discussions, student mobility is still often evoked at the scale of the nation – for instance what students contribute to the UK economy, or how international education is Australia's third biggest export sector. However, these readings focus on flows of money (under the export heading of national budgets and contributions to national competitiveness) but to date there has been little academic interest in the nation a political category within debates on international students or study. However, as Madge et al (2009) have argued, nationalism and national consciousness owes much to internationalism, to the sharing of knowledge about nationhood. International study raised the political consciousness of future leaders, fuelling nationalist movements and playing a productive role in reshaping nations and regions. Distance from their countries of birth also led students to recognize and develop regional relationships that would be important after independence (Scott 2002). Attempts to impose European forms of education in colonial settings did not simply lead to a class of 'mimic men' (Naipaul 1967) but also to new spaces of resistance and critical interrogation of colonialism and its messages. Internationalism and knowledge circulation were essential to nationalism. Thus it is possible to move beyond imagining international student mobility as serving economic interests through an internationalization agenda that is centred on particular global hubs and nodes, to considering

international space as a political space, constituted through multiple knowledge circulations of mobile intellectual agents.

Thus we have attempted to recognize the complexity of ‘the international’ in relation to study in four key ways: firstly, its multi-centre, multi-scalar spatial nature; secondly, the immobilities, and absences that it involves; thirdly, how these are routed through long histories of global (im)mobility; and finally through a political reading of the international in relation to the nation. This moves us to argue for an expanded notion of the international, one in which the spatial imaginary can transmute beyond provincial Anglo-American-Australian boundaries and ‘frames’ of understanding. This decentering 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 politicized knowledge agents. This enables a shift in perspective in which the multiple contributions (and resistances) of international students as agents of knowledge formation can be recognized, which encourages a move away from approaches that objectify students towards ones that recognize that the internationalisation of HE is something in which all of us, including all students and all educators, are networked together through knowledge contributions. In the conclusion we briefly consider the main implications that arise from this shift in conceptual thinking from international student to international study.

Concluding implications

This paper has sought to decisively shift the conceptual focus from international *students* to international *study*. This conceptual re-location is important for three 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, mutualities, incommensurabilities and circulations in a shared, albeit uneven, global terrain. Second, the shift to international study places 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.

Considering the mobility of students through the lens of international study, rather than through the category ‘international student’, suggests that all academics are 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 (higher) education is not a pure self-existing unit within which pedagogic practices occur; rather it is constituted through flux and by 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. (And not forgetting that international students may become colleagues too through staffing appointments). Acknowledging that knowledge is produced through these encounters between academics and students requires that we reflect the mirror back on ourselves as active players in international study and acknowledge our emotional and political entanglements with the internationalisation of education. This *challenges the emotionally flat imaginaries* of the international student migration literature in which ‘we’ as academics are rarely part of the picture (but see Kenway and Youdell 2011). In so doing we will have to grapple with an approach that is both politically and emotionally embedded with a robust and sensitive appreciation of our (multiple) positions as academics in the process of international student (im)mobility. 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). And this will involve an engaged pedagogy that extends well beyond the classroom walls (Madge et al 1999) and a view of learning spaces as both inter-subjective and inter-discursive (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 neo-liberalizing university are multiple and contradictory (Larner and Le Heron 2005).

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 south-south, multi-scalar and multi-polar circulations that characterise the shifting 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 of place-based immobilities and absences is important because the latter can produce exclusions and marginalisations which have consequences on the ground for people in different places at differing time periods. So it is important to recognise 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 consequential results, because international study is bound up tightly with questions about inequality, aspiration and 'development'.

Challenging the flat spatial terrain of international education enables 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 their 'place' in the world of HE and their role in challenging, resisting or replicating current inequalities in 'global' higher education; to show that their mobility and that of students' is intertwined and that knowledge, the stuff of academic life, implicates them in international study.

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Notes

¹Currently most universities in the UK depend on international students for 10-30% of their income.

²The recent case of London Metropolitan University is apposite here (Grove 2012).

³ Students differ according to level of study, subject of study, period for which they move, country of origin and destination, social positionality etc. The term 'international' too is complex as sometimes students physically move but increasingly it may be the 'educational institution' that reaches out and crosses borders. The relationship between international mobility and internal mobility is also multifaceted: students may move internally prior to, sometimes in order to, move

internationally. Then there are regulatory policies around registering students as migrants. For example, in the UK students are considered to be international if they are in the country primarily for the purpose of study or are children of parents who do not have resident status. The category international student also includes UK citizens who have been outside the EEA for the past three years but have returned to the UK primarily for education. On the other hand, migrants who have been in the UK for three years for purposes other than education may classify for fee purposes as home students, as do EEA students. So the category of international students includes a range of different students with different immigration statuses and nationalities. These regulations are reviewed regularly with rights to extension of stay, employment and rights to housing altering depending on the political considerations around migration. 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 whom might be considered an international student.

⁴ Here Mbembe (2001) was referring, broadly-speaking, to Africa, but we have transposed his idea to the concept of international students.

⁵ Indeed, one could argue that much of postcolonial studies is an extended reflection on the complexities of mobile intellectual subjectivities: some have in fact been dismissive of the field as merely an articulation of a relatively privileged subject position (Dirlik 1994), and placed alongside cosmopolitanism as the ‘class consciousness of frequent travellers’ (Calhoun, quoted in Ley 2004, 160).

⁶ In a related manner Kraftl (2012) argues that geographical studies of education concentrate on what facilitates, flows from or hinders learning – but say far less regarding the content and experience of learning as a spatial practice.

⁷ This includes limiting 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>).

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