The Future of Cross-Border Academic Mobilities and Immobilities

Power, Knowledge and Agency

Edited by
Aline Courtois,
Simon Marginson, Catherine
Montgomery and Ravinder Sidhu

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Bloomsbury Higher Education Research

Series Editor: Simon Marginson

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Series Editor's Foreword

The Future of Cross-Border Academic Mobility and Immobility: Power, Knowledge and Agency is published as part of the Bloomsbury Higher Education Research book series. This series brings to the public, government and universities across the world the ideas and research evidence generated by researchers from the ESRC Centre for Global Higher Education[1], which was supported by £6.4 million in three successive ESRC awards from November 2015 to May 2024 and continues an ESRC Legacy Centre in 2024–9. CGHE's founding director was Simon Marginson (2015–24) and its present director is David Mills. CGHE continues an active webinar and globally networked research programme in the Legacy Centre phase, which is supported by a small additional ESRC grant of £100,000.

The ESRC decision to fund CGHE constituted recognition of the growing importance of higher education and the associated research in social, economic, cultural and political life. In 2022 there were more than 260 million enrolled tertiary students and more than three million new research papers entered the main bibliometric collections, Web of Science and Scopus. The creation of CGHE was also recognition of the importance of the cross-border and global dimension. Globalization – global integration and convergence – is a contested and uneven process but it continues to roll out. A quarter of all published research papers involve joint authorship across national borders. Almost seven million students worldwide cross borders for education of a year or more. Global movements of students, academics and researchers, knowledge, information and money help to shape not only nations but the international order itself. Worldwide capacity in higher education and research is becoming more plural. Whereas until the early 2000s Anglophone and Western Europe universities, together with Japan, were dominant at world level, rising universities and science in China, the rest of East Asia and Singapore are now reshaping flows of knowledge and higher education. The European Higher Education and Research Areas are flourishing. Latin America, South East Asia, India, Central Asia and the Arab nations have a growing global importance. The trajectories of education and research in sub-Saharan Africa are crucial to state-building and community development.

Perennial research questions about higher education continue. How can scarce public budgets provide for the public role of higher education institutions, for

a socially equitable system of individual access, and for research excellence, all at the same time? What is the role for and limits of family financing and tuition loans systems, or should higher education be provided on a universal taxpayer funded basis, free of charge? What is the potential contribution of private institutions, including for-profit colleges? In national systems, what are the best balances between research-intensive and primarily teaching institutions, and between academic and vocational education? What are the potentials for online delivery and artificial intelligence in extending access, and knowledge? What is happening in graduate labour markets, where returns to degrees are becoming more dispersed between families with differing levels of income, different kinds universities and different fields of study? Can larger education systems provide better for social mobility and income equality? How does the internationalization of universities contribute to national policy and local societies? Does mobile international education expand opportunity or further stratify societies? What are the implications of populist tensions between national and global goals, for higher education and research? And what can national systems of higher education and science learn from each other, and how can they build stronger common ground and cooperate more effectively?

CGHE has taken investigation of some of these questions forward. During its full award period the centre was a partnership of researchers from fifteen UK and international universities, the world's largest concentration of expertise in relation to higher education and its social contributions. It employed over twenty people as postdocs and in junior researcher posts, and carried out fifteen discrete research projects in the first funding phase 2015–20, continuing eight of these into the 2020–4 phase, along with two new projects. In the 2015–24 period CGHE's researchers generated 110 CGHE Working Papers; 35 CGHE Policy Briefings, short CGHE Research Findings, and longer CGHE Research Reports; and 1,090 discrete publications in the academic and policy-related literatures including books and journal papers.

Outputs from CGHE's affiliated researchers are continuing, with several longer term CGHE projects producing substantial publication lists in the first year of the Legacy Centre including those focused on student learning in STEM, research in higher education, and the public good role of higher education. Information about CGHE's publications, webinars and other continuing activities can be found at https://www.researchcghe.org/. *The Future of Cross-Border Academic Mobilities and Immobilities: Power, Knowledge and Agency* is the tenth monograph in the Bloomsbury Higher Education Research series. More information on the Bloomsbury Higher Education Research series

can be found at https://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/series/bloomsbury-higher-education-research/

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Note

1   ESRC refers to the UK Economic and Social Research Council. Part of the
     2015–20 ESRC funding that supported the first phase of Centre for Global Higher
     Education's research was sourced from the then Higher Education Funding Council
     for England (HEFCE). Research England, one of HEFCE's successor bodies,
     provided financial support in 2020–3 in CGHE's second award phase.

Preface

In mid-2022 the ESRC Centre for Global Higher Education (CGHE) ran an extended webinar series on 'The future of cross-border academic mobility' in which many authors of chapters in this book took part. Catherine Montgomery approached Simon Marginson, who was then director of CGHE, with a suggestion for a book on cross-border academic mobility, arising from the webinars. Catherine and Simon brought in Aline Courtois and Ravinder Sidhu to join them as editors and it was agreed to focus on immobilities in higher education, as well as mobilities in their different forms. Alison Baker at Bloomsbury was approached to include the book in CGHE's Higher Education Research series, which publishes the outcome of CGHE research. To our delight Bloomsbury agreed to take on the *The Future of Cross-Border Academic Mobilities and Immobilities: Power, Knowledge and Agency.* In addition to presenters of CGHE webinars, the editors invited in as authors a further group of scholars in order to broaden the geographical, topical and political coverage of the book and enhance its criticality.

Of the twenty-one single authors and authorial teams that we approached, nineteen delivered final chapters of high quality, on time, and responded patiently to our many requests for revisions, shortenings and additional information. We are enormously grateful to all the authors. We have been conscious throughout the process of the other individual scholars, and whole world regions, that we wanted to bring into the book but were unable to do so because of the overall world limit. There is much great work being done on mobility, immobility and the associated issues, and we trust that there will be further collections along the lines of this book.

The chapters in the book were completed after the election of the second Trump government in the United States, with potentials to dramatically problematize cross-border mobility and asymmetric global relations of power in general and in higher education, and before the Trump government took office.

Acknowledgements and thanks

Abbreviations

AIMS	ASEAN International Mobility for Students
AAUP	Arab American University of Palestine
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AUN	ASEAN University Network
CERIC	Central European Research Infrastructure Consortium
CGHE	Centre for Global Higher Education
COIL	Collaborative Online International Learning
DAAD	Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst, German Academic Exchange Service
EHEA/ERA	European Higher Education/Research Area
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
EU-SHARE	European Union Support to Higher Education in ASEAN Region
HEI	Higher Education Institution
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IDP	Internally Displaced Person(s)
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LMR	Labour Market Representative
MOLA	Museum of London Archaeology
MOOC	Massive Open Online Courses
MSCA	Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions
NASU	National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

PI	Principal Investigator
SAR	Scholars at Risk
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
TTS	Thousand Talents Scheme
UMAP	University Mobility in Asia and Pacific
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
YTT	Young Thousand Talents

Part One

Critical Perspectives on Mobilities and Immobilities in Higher Education in a Complex and Uncertain World

Cross-Border Academic (Im)mobilities: An Introduction

Aline Courtois, Simon Marginson, Catherine Montgomery
and Ravinder Sidhu

This book outlines the pressing need to foreground a range of perspectives on the future of academic mobilities, and, importantly, immobilities, exploring alternatives that respond to the overwhelming evidence of resource asymmetries, neocolonial relations and epistemic injustices (Beigel, 2014; Marginson and Xu, 2023). Academic mobility has been over-promised as correlated with international professional capital or graduate human capital (Brown, Lauder and Cheung, 2020; Marginson, 2019). Internationalization of higher education has also long been seen as synonymous with academic mobility and characterized in abstract terms as an unconditional good (Marginson, this volume). But not all forms of mobility are beneficial and not all academics or countries benefit equally (Courtois and O'Keefe, this volume). There can be negative consequences of mobility and aspects of mobility reflect many of the intersectional inequalities in higher education (Sidhu and Yeoh, this volume).

This book explores the elitist and unequal nature of physical mobility of staff and students in higher education (Burford et al., 2021; Fahey and Kenway, 2010; Kim, 2017) and considers the intersection of academic (im)mobilities and power, political subjectivities, agency and knowledge. The book considers barriers and challenges to mobility in the context of geopolitical tensions and the upsurge of national particularism and nativism (Lee and Haupt, 2020, Marginson, this volume), and also suggests that coercion and forced mobility in the context of conflict and war should be considered an integral part of the mobilities picture of globalized higher education. The book also explores a diverse range of positions, policy and discourses around international student mobility and its complex relationships with governments in a range of countries across the globe.

In conceptualizing this book we were inspired by interdisciplinary research from the *mobilities paradigm* and critical studies of internationalization to help make sense of the *complex mobilities* constitutive of international education. At its simplest, this work takes as its focus multiple and interdependent movements in the workings of social institutions and of social practice. Mobilities research has extended the contributions of spatial theories while acknowledging the broader distribution of agency between people, places and things, as proposed by the idea of 'relational space'. Space is understood as 'the product of interrelations [that is] always in the making' (Massey, 2005, p. 5). Mobility scholars like John Urry (2000, 2007), Mimi Sheller (2017, 2018, 2023) and Tim Cresswell (2010, 2012) have concerned themselves with understanding the co-constitutive relations between mobilities and immobilities (or 'mobility regimes'). A number of questions have been pursued which have resonance for this book, 'Who is moving? Who is moving whom? Who has to move? Who can stay put?' To these we add, 'What are the historical relations – political, economic and cultural – which frame movements such as those of international students and scholars?' Recent advancements in interdisciplinary research into mobilities, migration and critical studies of internationalization in higher education have yielded new forms of analysis of cultural, political and economic processes at the scales of the body, the institution, the nation-state and the global. These methodological developments have the potential to contribute further to unsettling methodological nationalism, which is a pressing problem not only for scholarly work but also for policy and social action.

Methodological nationalism, for the purposes of our book, can be read as 'an *ideological orientation* which approaches the study of social and historical processes as if they were contained within the borders of individual nation-states' (Andersen, 2019). Attacks on student and scholar (im)mobilities then cannot be understood simply by examining the foibles of reactionary nationalist politicians, rather, the focus must be on giving analytical weight to historically powerful structural forces across spaces that ultimately speak to the fairness, rights, freedoms, capabilities and distribution of mobility.

The dynamics of mobility and immobility

International students were recently described by an Australian politician as the equivalent of 'boat arrivals', a statement that plays on historically situated and racialized fears in which invaders from the north – Asia – seek to threaten the

security of the nation. From housing affordability to cost of living difficulties, social congestion and precarious employment, a globalizing discourse of 'Blame it on the migrant' is sweeping across space, crossing ideological and political lines. For migration theorist Nina Glick-Schiller (2024), the subjection of migrants to discourses of blame, vilification, criminalization and threat should be heeded by citizens and non-citizens. 'A global category of the unfree is being created,' she declares. Once normalized, the consequences for citizens will be dire:

> the commitment to a just society is being wiped out, and the treatment of migrants is the *normalization of dehumanization* that threatens us all. [The] attack on migrants is the cutting edge, the beginning of a massive campaign to take away the rights that previous generations struggled for – rights to housing, education, health care, retirement income, disability income, unemployment, safe working conditions, clean water, safe food, and clean air.
>
> (Glick-Schiller, 2024)

This is not limited to Australia. There is a paradigm shift in migration politics and student mobility. Geopolitical changes and the move to the far right in Europe and the States have put mobility at the centre of political debates. Elections have been run on immigration policy as was Brexit. It is a key target in the new Trump administration. This has foregrounded mobility but also recast it forever, requiring higher education research to reconstruct understandings of mobility to include forced mobility (Leyton, this volume), mobility in war-torn contexts (Jebril, this volume; Ivanenko, this volume; Oleksiyenko, 2024) precarity and mobility and the link to immigration policy.

When compared to other mobile populations such as labour migrants and asylum seekers, international students and scholars have been, until recently, regarded as highly desirable human capital ('global talent'). They were assumed to cross geographic borders seamlessly, despite being frequently subjected to racialized border regimes (e.g. Wondimagegn et al., 2022). What has been less studied is the creeping intensity of immobilizing practices, bordering and enclosures – that affect students and scholars. For example, international students routinely encounter *racial borders* in the form of racism or racial othering in destination countries, both in the Global North and the Global South. Many experience new modes of precarity, confronting the prospects of *socioeconomic borders* and downward social mobility. Leyton (this volume) offers an incisive portrait of the difficulties facing scholars at risk who are forced to flee authoritarian regimes in Latin America. Having achieved a measure of

safety from surveillance and repression, they are confronted with economic precarity and professional marginalization potentially leading to loss of their academic identities in a neoliberalizing institutional regime. For students and scholars from parts of the Global South, inconveniences and difficulties in navigating spatial borders are now being amplified by immigration procedures using all manner of surveillance technologies. Mobile scholars and students are also rendered immobile by *temporal borders* which are expressed through the burdens of waiting. Here, power geometries enact a 'politics of stuckness' felt most acutely by intersectionally positioned individuals (Tzanakou and Henderson, 2021; Robertson, 2013; Straughan et al., 2020; Sautier, 2021). All of this suggests that the vast workings of mobilities that propel students and scholars to move across geographic borders, co-exist with immobilities, borders and enclosures.

Universities are increasingly being re-positioned to manage border anxieties and alleviate imagined national insecurities fostered by the curious politics of the moment. In the Anglophone world, recruitment geographies and income streams of universities are rendered fragile by mounting populism and geopolitical tensions. Universities are expected to police research activities of academic staff including mobile scholars to ensure national security is not compromised (Marginson, this volume). They are also expected to ensure that visa conditions are met by bona fide international students. As Eder (this volume) demonstrates, universities seeking to recruit Chinese international students are now caught up in geopolitical tensions between China, the biggest source country of international students, and the Philippines, a long-standing ally and former US colony. The mobilities of military personnel, naval vessels and espionage satellites co-produce the immobilities of international students who might be inspired to move to learn a new language, experience a cosmopolitan life, acquire credentials and re-fashion themselves to be different persons.

This brings us to two chapters which capture the harms visited by righteous and brutal militarized mobilities in Palestine. Jebril (this volume) and McGahern (this volume) outline in detail the immobilities and indignities imposed by extreme modes of control and surveillance onto people including students that prevent them from navigating the most basic of freedoms – to go about activities of daily living. The underlying politics of (im)mobilities outlined in both these chapters are instructive that regimes of movement are integral to the formation of different modes of being, in this case, in the making of a lesser category of humanity by a militarized state.

Mobility justice

In her aptly titled book, *Mobility Justice: The Politics of Movement in an Age of Extremes,* Sheller (2018) introduces 'mobility justice' as a framing concept that recognizes that 'all movement is political and all politics is mobile'. Sheller concerns herself with *differential mobilities* of people, materials, technologies, knowledges, risks, microbes, pollutants and so on, which, she argues, are always already implicated in the production and reproduction of unequal relations. Accordingly, uneven and differential mobilities are seen as having roots in colonialism, racial capitalism, imperialism and patriarchy; it is through careful and situated analyses of social relations, subjectivities and place-based stratifications that the reach of these forces become visible. Mobility justice has been used to study the force fields, legacies and durabilities of colonialism, extractivism and racial capitalism on a range of topics including climate change (Sheller, 2018). Conceptually and methodologically, mobility justice opens the space to understand the complex, multilayered and mutable ways in which (im) mobilities effect and affect bodies, places, knowledge regimes and institutional practices.

Universities and mobility justice

The idea of mobility justice is generative for revitalizing the work of universities. First, by normalizing *access* to mobility and connectivity, mobility justice accepts freedom of movement as a 'mobile commons' (see, for example, Papadopoulos and Tsianos, 2013). This concept – *mobile common*s – is particularly important at the present conjuncture where states in multiple settings have initiated punitive legislation to stop acts of solidarity by their citizens seeking to help people seeking refuge and asylum. The mobile commons also signals the rights of differently embodied people such as international students and scholars to move unencumbered by fear and danger in and through public spaces. Their encounters with racial hostility have been the object of several studies over the years in particular during the Covid-19 pandemic (see, for example, Hu, Moskal and Read, 2024; Marginson et al., 2010). Universities are uniquely positioned to play a role in reclaiming the mobile commons by resisting xenophobic nationalism and extremism. They might do so by supporting anti-racist student activism, diversifying their curricular offerings, and supporting programmes for international students and scholars at risk. Far from being utopian, these

projects are necessary to stop, in Glick-Schiller's (2024) words, the making of unfree spaces and subjects.

Second, mobility justice seeks to limit excessive frictions, risks and turbulences and repairs accumulating harms arising from neoliberal rationalities and practices. Research has consistently revealed that the opportunities and rewards of cross border education remain unevenly distributed with social class playing no small part (Robertson, 2013; Waters, 2012). Hard commercialization of education is accompanied by embellishing the benefits of cross border mobility experiences without deep engagements with underpinning race, class and gender stratifications.

Third, mobility justice seeks to question those promoting mobility as the only pathway for opportunity and betterment. The right to stay put, remain in place, retain close familial relations and have tolerable working and living conditions with prospects for advancement must also be acknowledged. In academia, mobility has come to be seen as a necessary strategy for individuals to manage and mitigate the risks of job insecurity (see Courtois and O'Keefe, 2024, and Sidhu and Yeoh, this volume). Mobility justice means asking questions about how movement as a risk-management strategy might be related to earlier waves of migration and the harmful consequences visited on other people and other places.

Fourth, mobility justice rests on epistemic justice which requires close investigations of coloniality and its deep and wide reaches into the power/knowledge regimes that frame academic (im)mobilities. There are many avenues this might take – for example, interrogating the capture of global science by commercial and defence interests, and analyzing state racisms which seek to normalize borders such that the external borders manifest as borders within. Universities have access to unique resources and capabilities to bring about refusals, alliances and intellectual insurgencies. Their ethico-intellectual responsibilities are to further knowledge and understanding of what separates and connects people, and what links humans with the more than human worlds. Simple steps can be put in place to encourage an ethos of thought and experimentation, for example, supporting critical scholarship in the humanities and social sciences, which for too long have been eclipsed by science and technology.

Future scholarship

Significant contributions are being made by various fields such as critical studies of internationalization to better understand the relationalities and

asymmetries that produce academic (im)mobilities. We flag two further areas that might contribute to this work. First, there are generative possibilities of decolonizing studies of internationalization (Montgomery and Trahar, 2023). Some of this work is well under way in bringing in postcolonial insights to challenge Eurocentrism. Provincializing Europe and European social theories while important is not sufficient in its own right. We argue instead for a closer engagement with colonial and racial legacies and grammars to study their continuing influences on academic mobilities and immobilities. What, for example, would academic capitalism look like if we brought to it understandings of raced markets and racial capitalism celebrated by the Black radical tradition of scholarship (see Oddy, 2024)? Topics which might be explored towards this end may include the manner in which colonial tropes inform education market-making; or the uses of cross border education in public diplomacy initiatives in the name of a racialized world order. A second and related set of inquiries might involve *de-nationalizing cross border education*, by prompting questions into the relationalities that link the international other and the citizen. It might be worth reflecting here on how enclosures created by the hard commercialization of higher education, first trialled on cross border students, have now assumed normative status.

Themes of the book

Critical perspectives on mobility and immobility qualify the dominant constructions of mobility which normalize higher education as the domain of the privileged mobile global elite. It is important to theorize both mobility and immobility, and a range of concepts emerge and reoccur through the chapters: deglobalization and the construction of space in higher education; knowledge mobilities and global science; precarity in higher education and the labour market, the last being a distinctive contribution to the book. International student mobility (ISM) is a strong theme through several chapters and the role of agency in cross-border mobility and the contributions of international education graduates to their home countries is also important (Oldac, this volume). The strengthening of intra-regional mobility and patterns within South–South collaborations in the ASEAN region and Malaysia are also important inclusions (Lim et al., this volume and Ishikawa, this volume).

The politics and policies of mobility are a recurring theme. Relative positions of power and influence and how that impacts mobilities are significant. The book also addresses emerging forms of higher education in the ever-evolving global

context. The politicization of mobility and its complex links to immigration and migration are surfaced in the chapters on forced migration and the labour market. The importance of agency in mobility and immobility is reiterated both explicitly and implicitly (Oldac, this volume; Courtois and O'Keefe, this volume; Vatansever, this volume).

The editors have actively sought out authors who have been situated in areas of the world suffering from the most devastating contemporary conflicts, where immobility in education is most acutely seen and felt. Academics from those contexts who have experienced these conflicts first-hand offer narrative accounts of mobility and immobility from Ukraine, Palestine and Venezuela. We had a stated aim to include alternative perspectives and marginalized voices. We have also had some (albeit limited) success in including a range of countries (12) and regions. The aim was to move beyond solely Western perspectives on mobility and offer a nuanced picture by including the Philippines, China, Japan and the ASEAN region.

The chapters

The book is divided into four parts.

Part 1: Critical perspectives on mobilities and immobilities in higher education in a complex and uncertain world

The first set of chapters present critical perspectives on mobility and immobility, concepts of space and deglobalization; knowledge mobility and global science regimes; and mobility and precarity. This part introduces diverse perspectives on (im)mobilities, underlining the uncertainties and complexities of contemporary contexts in which mobilities now take place.

In Chapter 2, 'Globalization and deglobalization in the evolving geopolitics of higher education', Simon Marginson explores the dynamics of global higher education space, characterized by convergence, interdependence and multiplicity in all forms (stratification, national-cultural diversity, conflicting interests). Nativism, more assertive states and wrenching geopolitics are disrupting mobility and enforcing new immobilities.

Chapter 3, 'Internationally mobile scientists in global science regimes', authored by Ravinder Sidhu and Brenda Yeoh, explores the mobility experiences of early and mid-career Life scientists in Singapore and Brisbane (Australia).

Science-related mobilities are stratified by a spatial hierarchy that differentiates cities, countries and regions into centres and peripheries of knowledge creation and innovation, calibrating the value of themselves and their work.

Chapter 4 by Aline Courtois and Theresa O'Keefe, 'Mobility, immobility and precarity: The mobility imperative and its impact on precarious academics', finds that among precarious academics in Ireland the mobility imperative constitutes a form of governmentality, normalizing mobility behaviour and self-entrepreneurship. Interviewees felt impelled to be mobile and the immobile blamed themselves. Structural inequalities are erased in this process and less likely to be collectively challenged.

Chapter 5 by Catherine Montgomery, 'International doctoral knowledge and cross-border academic mobility: understanding knowledge mobilities and immobilities', explores knowledge generation in doctoral education as a form of cross-border mobility, focusing on the digital repository of UK doctoral research, EThOS, as a space of knowledge flows, linkages, interdependencies and gaps.

Part 2: Coercion, conflict and forced mobilities and immobilities in higher education

The second part includes five chapters on mobility in the context of coercion, conflict and forced (im)mobilities. Perspectives from Ukraine, Palestine and Latin America explore mobility justice in war-torn and conflict-ridden contexts and outline situations of educational dispossession of academics at risk.

In Chapter 6, 'Forced mobility/immobility of students and scholars from higher education in Ukraine', Nadiya Ivanenko discusses the impact of the Russia-Ukraine war including the circumstances of people unable to leave Ukraine, especially those in zones occupied by the Russian army, and outward mobility, including the risks this poses to Ukraine.

Una McGahern's Chapter 7, 'Cross-border student mobilities: Mobility capital and the pursuit of mobility justice among Palestinian citizens of Israel', describes the cross-border student movements of Palestinian citizens from Israel who study at Palestinian universities in the occupied West Bank. It demonstrates the complex and vulnerable interconnections between mobility, mobility capital and mobility justice in settler-colonial contexts.

In Chapter 8, 'Between borders and barriers: Higher education and the experience of 'de-mobility' in the Gaza Strip', Mona Jebril draws on her experience as a Gaza resident and lecturer at two Gaza universities, as well as on her academic research, to discuss how the systematic restrictions imposed

by Israel on academic and student mobility have isolated the universities and undermined their development.

'Rethinking mobilities of academics at-risk: Beyond the humanitarian turn', Daniel Leyton's Chapter 9, examines the mobilities of Venezuelan scholars at risk moving to Chile. It reveals the intersections of authoritarianism, political and economic crisis, neoliberalism, racism, and academic precarity as integral to the process of dispossession involved in their mobility.

Chapter 10 by Asli Vatansever, 'From academic career to nomadic drift: Mobility and labour coercion', situates the institutional mobility of the academic workforce (nomadization), alongside the complexification of qualification systems and de-standardization of postdoc career progression (randomization), and destabilization of the supply-demand balance (precarization). Here precarious mobility functions as a method of labour coercion.

Part 3: New and emerging patterns, flows and models of mobilities and immobilities in higher education

In Part 3 previous and current models of mobility set the scene for explorations of emerging patterns of mobilities in the ASEAN region, and specifically in Malaysia and China.

In Chapter 11, 'International student mobility in a changing global environment: key issues and trends', Hans de Wit, Philip G. Altbach and Lizhou Wang summarize forms of cross-border mobility (degree, credit, forced, virtual and programme) and trends, factors, and issues, including the macro drivers and incentives shaping individual and governmental practices.

In Chapter 12, 'The contribution of student mobility to graduate employability in Southeast Asia: The rising attraction of intra-regional study in ASEAN', Miguel Antonio Lim, Icy Fresno Anabo, Anh Ngoc Quynh Phan, Mark Andrew Elepaño and Gunjana Kuntamarat explore perceptions of mobile students and labour market representatives of the contributions of short-term intra-ASEAN mobility to graduate employability in four ASEAN countries.

Mayumi Ishikawa's Chapter 13, 'Asian models of international universities: Contextualized internationalization and student mobility beyond the Global North', considers Asian international universities and academic mobility in Malaysia by examining an international Islamic university, a branch campus from China, and a medical education partnership between India and Malaysia.

'Charting a new course: International education destinations of Chinese international students', Chapter 14 by Lihang Guan, Ka Ho Mok and Baohua Yu, draws on survey data to review the criteria utilized by Chinese international

students in their selection of international education destinations, following the Covid-19 pandemic.

Part 4: The politics and positioning of mobilities and immobilities in higher education

The final part focuses on the politics and positioning of (im)mobilities. National interest in mobility, policy discourses, immigration, and roles and responsibilities are an integral part of mobilities. Returning can be as important as going out.

In Chapter 15, 'The making of bona fide foreign students: Examining academic mobility through the lens of national interests', Rosalyn Eder discusses how policy discourse in the Philippines, especially the concept of 'bona fide foreign students', shapes the experiences of international students amid geopolitical challenges.

Yusuf Iqbal Oldac's Chapter 16, 'The role of agency in cross-border student mobility and contributions to home countries', draws on interviews with fifty Turkish graduates who studied in five different countries. He identifies three primary responses: refusal to contribute to Turkey, making a better contribution from abroad, and shifting allegiances leading to a more transnational identity.

Chapter 17 by Futao Huang uses a mixed-methods approach to examine 'International academics and researchers in Japan: Motivations, roles and contributions across sectors', including universities, national research institutes and private companies.

'International student engagement and support in Australia', Chapter 18 by Ly Thi Tran, Diep Thi Bich Nguyen, Danielle Hartridge and Gary Lee, focuses on international students as learners and knowledge actors, not commodities, skilled workers, potential migrants or political objects. It reviews the students' needs for support – academic, living and social – if their contributions to knowledge are to be maximized.

In Chapter 19, 'Career pathways to academic success: A narrative inquiry of two elite overseas returnees in China', Mei Li and Xiaohua Jiang explore the experiences of two elite returnees to China, highlighting the interplay of personal and professional factors in their return, the challenges in establishing research teams and their growth as academics.

What's missing and further work

No book can cover everything and there are some omissions in this one. Whilst we included perspectives from a range of country contexts, some very important

countries are missing. It is important to point this out because some of the missing contexts are influential in understanding mobilities and immobilities of higher education. India has one of the largest higher education systems worldwide, is both a source and destination country for international students, and has an extensive knowledge diaspora (Cherian and Rajan, 2024; Krishna, 2022; Varghese, 2021). It is also plagued by deeply rooted social injustices – the rural–urban divide, socioeconomic stratifications, and caste and gender-based discriminations – which are responsible for reproducing educational (im) mobilities at all levels (Sukumar, 2022, see also Krishna, 2021). In recent times, authoritarian and nationalist trends in governance have brought additional challenges by restricting the mobilities of ideas and knowledge practices (Krishna, 2021). The myriad educational mobilities and immobilities of India is an important aspect missing from this book.

The vast educational diversity of the African continent is crucial to the future of educational mobilities and immobilities but it is also missing here. There is extensive international student migration from and within Africa (Breines at al., 2019), and whilst South Africa is known to be an educational hub, Senegal and Morocco are also important mobility destinations (Touré, 2014). English-language research on ISM across the African continent is limited, however, and there is a lack of scholars in our networks working on these issues. Migration scholars who are racialized and/or from the Global South remain structurally marginalized in academia (Arday, 2020; Bhopal, 2024). Internationalization in the African context appears relatively little studied, or there is little in English-language outlets (Tight, 2022). In a systematic review of literature on internationalization, Tight highlights notable exceptions with Jowi (2009) considering African higher education systems and internationalization, Nnazor (2018) focusing on involvement in transnational higher education and Thondhlana and colleagues (2021) examining internationalization in Zimbabwe through a decolonial lens. There are also doctoral theses by scholars from African countries and a few research labs on migration but these are less visible. There is also some research on the affordances of digital and distance education (another omission in this book) as infrastructures to support immobilities in Africa (Breines et al., 2019). Like India, research on mobilities on the African continent is a significant omission and the book is shaped by these limitations, especially as they are connected to colonialism.

A further highly significant omission in the book is the issue of accelerating climate change and the impact of that on migration and mobilities in global higher education. Research is emerging in this area (Cassol-Silva et al., 2023)

but some of it focuses on the link between SDGs and internationalization agendas in the university, largely embedded in an institutional obsession with rankings and targets. Climate change will intensify (and is already intensifying) the inequalities and hierarchies of educational mobility and this is already being felt in many places including small island developing states such as Fiji where immigration from flooded Pacific islands is putting a strain on higher education (Lagi et al., 2023). A chapter on the impact of climate change on mobilities and immobilities would have been a significant addition to the book.

In short, there are many avenues of research in mobilities and immobilities not here. This book offers just some of the paths of exploration. It also calls for more research in this field, and especially critical studies that explore the relationalities, hierarchies and asymmetries that produce academic (im) mobilities in higher education across the world.

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Globalization and Deglobalization in the Evolving Geopolitics of Higher Education

Simon Marginson

Introduction

This chapter reflects on the ever-changing global geo-political space which vectors mobility and immobility in higher education. After theorization, drawing partly on human geography (especially Doreen Massey's *For Space*, 2005), it reviews mobility/immobility in two successive periods in the evolution of global space and the global–national intersection.

In 1990–2015 there was extensive and intensive globalization (worldwide convergence and integration) of higher education, colonized by Anglo-American agendas. A minority of people engaged in physical global mobility and some Euro-American (Western) universities were very active global agents. Virtual mobility transformed spatial connectedness and imagining, albeit within the global hierarchy of countries and universities. Multipolarity also developed, in political economy, education and science, and began to deconstruct the geopolitical conditions sustaining Anglo-American globalization as a one world transformation project. The years 2016–24 saw some continuity but a growing assertion of nation-states, especially in relation to cross-border student mobility as migration; and, primarily in the West, partial deglobalization, political nativism and sharpened geo-political conflict. Earlier patterns of student mobility, Russia's cross-border connections and China's relations with the West in science have all been partly disrupted, and forced mobility has increased, though these effects have been uneven on the world scale.

Making space in higher education

The world is continually evolving and the future is unknown. Higher education is practised in space and time in which human imaginings and practices intersect with material coordinates and space is constructed as relational *social* space. For Massey (2005) space in human geography is not an already existing empty container waiting to be filled, as with physical space in engineering. Space is a sphere of *social relations*, including relations of power. She describes people's lives as trajectories moving through time. Those trajectories intersect, deliberately and accidentally, in space. 'If time unfolds as change then space unfolds as interaction' (p. 61). She also emphasizes that space in higher education, as in any other sphere of social practice, is a field of ever-emerging difference, multiplicity, in all the senses of multiplicity including 'diversity, subordination, conflicting interests' (p. 61). As ever more permutations of the actual and possible emerge (Sayer, 2000), '*the* pertinent lines of differentiation in any particular situation' can vary (Massey, 2005, p. 12).

Continually changing spaces in higher education are co-constitutive with the evolving human and organizational agents that bring them into being. Social space is not pre-existing or natural but is formed in often strenuous effort in multiple geographical scales (see below). Space making combines (a) pre-given historical-material elements, like a territory, resources, institutions and social relations, with (b) the imaginings and interpretations of agents, and (c) the social practices that give their visions form (Marginson, 2022a).

Space and time and the associated materialities in higher education are also filtered by pre-existing relations of power, and they fashion or amplify relations of power in turn. For example, the geopolitics of higher education – which, defined simply, are institutionalized relations of power in the global, regional and national scales of activity in higher education – are one mode of space-making. Individual universities intersect with geopolitical space in at least three ways: (1) they pursue their own geopolitical projects, (2) they are tools or accomplices of the geopolitical projects of nation-states and (3) they are also shaped by prior geopolitical relations, activities and events (Moscovitz and Sabzalieva, 2023).

Local, national, regional, global, planetary

One kind of space with special geographical importance is geo-social *scale*, such as the local, national or global. Scale is 'a produced societal metric that differentiates space' (Marston and Smith, 2001, p. 615). Scales, like other spaces,

combine the actions and imaginings of agents with material coordinates. Agents in higher education both make space within scales and contribute to their formation (Marginson, 2022a). The 'social ownership' of scales is 'broad-based' (Marston and Smith, 2001, p. 615), though scalar definitions can be contested, and there is varying recognition of the scales.

Scales differ on the basis of scope, proximity, material structures and the associated social relations. They include the planetary or world scale, combining human society and nature (Chakrabarty, 2021); the global, society at world level; the pan-national regional (Robertson, 2018) like the EU; the national, which frames and partly funds higher education; the sub-national regional; and the local, which can include the institution, the disciplinary unit or research centre, or student organizations. There is also the individual scale. Global, regional, national and local spaces are each dynamic, changing, imagined and built by human effort. Benedict Anderson (2016) calls nations 'imagined communities': this does not stop nations from wielding law, authority and coercion, financial power and instruments of persuasion. Massey (2005) repeatedly argues against the idea of global space as pre-given and external to agency. Global activities 'are utterly everyday and grounded, at the same time as they may, when linked together, go around the world' (p. 7 and p. 53).

Large multi-disciplinary research universities are typically active in all scales within reach. Higher education has long worked across scales. The Buddhist monasteries of northern India in 500 BCE–1200 CE, the medieval scholarly Islamic madrassas and the European universities beginning with Bologna in 1088 CE were all structured by a double spatiality. They combined *place-bound* materiality and identity in cities and states, with an open mental horizon, universalizing knowledge and *mobile* ideas and persons. Scholars, researchers and students often moved across borders. This double spatiality remains integral to universities and knowledge. Few institutions exist without locality, while without mobility they lose an autonomous identity shared with universities worldwide. The university's autonomous identity and its global role are interdependent, which each providing conditions for the other. However, though autonomy varies by time and place, it is never more than partial, being practised within national laws, regulation, policies and funding.

The scales in higher education are different in kind, heterogeneous. For example, while national science is normed by governmental laws, regulations, policy and funding, global science consists of knowledge in journals and bibliometric collections. It is structured by communicative networks, institutional practices and collaborative relations, and has no normative centre. There is a

lattice of organizational connections and an identifiable cultural hegemony but no single agentic driver, political or economic. The same scientists are active in both global science and national–local science but the norms, relations and behaviours in each case can be different. 'Agents work across scales with varying levels of power as a result of their capabilities, resources and position in the global hierarchy' (Moscovitz and Sabzalieva, 2023, p. 155). There may be more freedom across the border than in state-regulated national systems, but not all can make that choice.

No one scale is necessarily dominant, and relations between them vary – for example geopolitics may alter the respective roles of the global and national scales – but such is the potency of the nation-state form in politics and policy that many see the global scale as a simple function of the national ('methodological nationalism': Shahjahan and Kezar, 2013). Massey (2005) refers to 'romances of coherent nationhood' and vain attempts to 'purify' the national space (p. 12).

Stratified agency and mobility

All forms of space, even the scales, are objects of the strategies of agents who seek to develop, open, close and stratify space in pursuit of their agendas and projects – in both cooperation and competition with other agents. Power, domination and equality/inequality in higher education and knowledge are not so much determined by space and time as coeval with them. Individual and organizational fixedness, mobility/immobility and agency freedoms/unfreedoms are fashioned in the swirling interplay of elements and events, in which there is more than one kind of agentic mobility (physical, virtual) and immobility (chosen and forced) with each associated with both freedoms and unfreedoms. Agency in space-making is a case by case matter and there are exceptions to every generalization, but individual, institutional and national agents markedly differ in starting locations and resources. While mobility often enhances agency, and vice versa, mobility itself is stratified: only some agents are free to enter particular spaces. The virtual environment democratizes mobility of a kind, yet some agents lack the rights and resources to sustain virtual movement, or cannot share their knowledge because their language of use is marginalized.

Some can access government support to fund global mobility. Many others have only their own resources. After Norway abolished its scholarship scheme for the Global South in 2023, 'only the children of the richest people from the global South can have a good education in Norway' (Myklebust, 2023). Ecological devastation or war can render as immobile those who most need

to move. South to North migration grows not when people are poorer, which increases immobility, but when people's capabilities and aspirations to move are increasing (de Haas, 2023). As in national populations, the aspiring middle layers and not the poorest of the mobile are best placed to invest time and money in higher education and most likely to secure state or philanthropic support.

In global higher education, capitalist political economy and hierarchies of class, culture, race, gender and knowledge, ensure the conditions of agents are viciously unequalizing, and their solidarity with each other – within nations and across borders – is incomplete. Yet most have more scope for action than they know (though that scope is never absolute). Foucault (2005) notes that the self is the only condition over which we have full control, the only object we can freely will 'without having to take into consideration external determinations' (p. 133). All agents have consciousness, reflexive inner lives, and can determine their response to structural limitations. 'People are not puppets of structures because they have their own emergent properties' (Archer, 1995, p. 71). And once new space is created additional agents can enter. Not even the strongest can maintain control forever. Eventually every space 'escapes in part from those who make use of it' (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 26). So it has been in the transition from global hegemony to multipolarity in higher education.

Americanizing globalization 1990–2015

The year 1990 saw the end of the Cold War, Pax Americana in geopolitics and the internet in communications, kickstarting three mega-tendencies in worldwide higher education: the accelerated growth of tertiary participation in all but the poorest quarter of countries (Cantwell et al., 2018); proliferating practices in the global scale, enhancing agentic scope and capabilities; and neoliberalism in governance and management. Neoliberalism did not create globalization, but they articulated each other, converging in the primacy of economic policy, the global knowledge economy idea, capitalist student mobility in the Anglosphere and the competitive ordering of universities on a performative basis in global ranking.

The internet brought every university, disciplinary community and scientist into potential synchrony with every other. Air travel was cheapening. All kinds of mobility, connection and collaboration leapt forward. Most institutions were, as usual, strategically cautious and imitative, but there were startling global initiatives, like the early branch campuses in East and Southeast Asia, New

York University's first degree in three countries, the global e-universities (which failed) and MOOCs (which succeeded), and multi-country consortia of 10–50 universities. Singapore invested heavily in the creation of a designated 'Global Schoolhouse' to brand itself as an innovation hub with global reach. European nations built a distinctive Higher Education Area, and their cross-country teams pumped up regional research capacity. ASEAN countries adopted recognition protocols.

Students crossing the border for education of a year or more rose annually by 5 per cent, from 1.96 million in 1997 to 6.37 million in 2021 (UNESCO, 2024). Two in five entered the Anglosphere, many of them paying tuition fees that generated profit for the provider institutions. Non-commercial mobility in Europe, Japan and later China was just as large, with subsidized places, free degrees and the Erasmus programme. Competition for graduate talent was mediated by scholarships. By 2021, 22 per cent of doctoral students in OECD countries crossed national borders (OECD, 2024, p. 259), facilitating research integration. In global science (Marginson, 2022b), journal papers also rose by 5 per cent a year and became epistemically dominant in the natural sciences. Papers with international co-authors peaked at 23 per cent in 2020 (NSB, 2024).

There was more than one kind of global imagining and global space. An expanding network with porous borders appealed to scientists. For national policymakers the global was an arms race in talent and technologies. European leaders saw regional integration that transcended historical conflict. Commercial university rankers saw a market in 'world-class universities', facilitating families investing in cross-border education and university leaders who sought prestige. Rankings fostered multiplicity as vertical differentiation/domination and weakened the imagining of equal universities. 'Social imaginaries circumscribe what is deemed possible or legitimate to think, act and know' (Stein, 2017, p. 329).

Conditions of global hegemony

The golden age of neo-imperial globalization was the two decades after 1990, petering out into the mid-2010s. Global higher education was shaped as a hegemonized space, dominated by the English language and Anglo-American universities. Relations within that space were fostered by a 'normative internationalization' defined in the West (Marginson, 2023). In principle any and every cross-border connection was meant to be positive (Knight, 2004). While the agency of universities and persons in the Anglosphere was heightened, others

experienced normative internationalization as two-sided, as an inbuilt conflict between Anglo-American global templates and national-cultural norms (Yang, 2014). Golden age globalization was steeply hierarchical, skewed in spatial terms. It was also limited in time. It rested on a particular set of conditions that were not permanent.

There was broad support, in government, international agencies and the public sphere, for liberal capitalist globalization, and this legitimated every instance of cross-border openness, connection and passage. It was believed that integrated open markets would lift all economies. Hence all else being equal, social, cultural and educational engagement across borders facilitated capital accumulation. It was all of a piece. Cross-border student mobility would foster graduates for international business. Cosmopolitan cultural inclusion in education would optimize market reach. Open science would maximize innovation and productivity all round, with talent flowing to the global centres best able to profit from it. All was expected (at least in Anglo-America) to foster Anglo-American soft and hard power. Western governments were comfortable with global openness because it was Western dominated, predictable and limited. Commercial international education secured transfers of capital and talent from the Global East and South to the North and West, in continuity with colonialism. Academic and scientific networks were technically open but culturally closed, confined to English and the Euro-American episteme, managed by the top Anglo-American universities and reproducing their deeply felt sense of cultural superiority.

For governments, neoliberal quasi-markets were the guarantor of globalization. They believed that marketization would optimize the relevance and efficiency of higher education within the national economy. University leaders were comfortable with this. The knowledge economy legitimated them and their status-building endeavours while they expanded in response to social demand. It preserved institutional autonomy, though refashioning it as corporate autonomy. While institutions were now regulated by ordinal indicators like research assessment and graduate salaries, and also university rankings, which structured global higher education space simultaneously as a competitive market and a hierarchy with the US and UK institutions positioned at the top, they could still determine their own programmes, provided they were financially viable.

However, the commitment of nation-states to liberal internationalization could hold only while global economic openness was seen to benefit capital accumulation, Pax Americana provided a safe neo-imperial space in which

Western countries focused on economic goals rather than national security, and electorates continued to tolerate economic globalization and cosmopolitan internationalization in education.

Global multipolarity

The first sign that things were not evolving as expected, and the hegemony in the global space was giving way to the intrinsic multiplicity identified by Massey (2005), was the rapid political-economic advance of countries outside the West, not only China but India, Iran, South Korea, Brazil, Indonesia and others. In purchasing power parity terms China's economy passed the United States in 2016 (World Bank, 2024), and between 1990 and 2015 its Gross Tertiary Enrolment ratio rose from 3 to 47 per cent. This continued to increase into the next period and by 2023 was 75 per cent, just below the United States' 79 per cent (World Bank, 2024).

Science produced outside the West began to take off halfway through 1990–2015 and accelerated into the next phase 2016–24. Between 2003 and 2015 the number of global science papers with authors from China increased from 88,585 to 406,734. By 2022 they had reached 898,949, doubling the US level. Indian researchers published 98,301 papers in 2015, and by 2022, 207,390, well above UK, Germany and Japan. Over the years 2003–22 China's output grew by 13.0 per cent a year, India 11.4 per cent, Iran 15.6 per cent, Turkey 7.5 per cent, Brazil 7.3 per cent and South Korea 6.4 per cent (NSB, 2024). Science was spreading well beyond its foundational locations of the Anglosphere, Europe and Japan: multiplicity as diversity, rather than hierarchy. In 2016–24 science systems were to reach many middle-income and some low-income countries. Of the nations with 5,000 science papers in 2022, GDP per head was below the world average in sixteen, including Ethiopia, Iraq, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia (World Bank, 2024). The global distribution of capacity was now in tension with the neo-imperial knowledge order. Science and scholarship in languages other than English were still excluded from the global system.

Non-Western science was advancing in quality as well as quantity. By the mid-2010s high citation science in China and Singapore, fed by annual increases in state investment, was taking off. In the next period the leading universities reached the global peak. By 2022, China had nine of the world's top fourteen universities, on the basis of high citation papers published in 2019–22 (papers in the leading 5 per cent of their field by citations). In STEM research China moved to world leadership. By 2019–22 it had the top thirteen universities in physical

sciences and engineering with MIT fourteenth, a parallel result in mathematics and computing, and was becoming strong in biomedical and health sciences where the Anglosphere still led (CWTS, 2024). The global research university order was opening up. Lefebvre (1991) is right. Every space 'escapes in part from those who make use of it' (p. 26).

Deglobalization, nativism and geopolitics 2016–24

Tendencies to global convergence and integration in research continued in 2016–24. There is extensive collaboration on Covid-19 and in climate science, and New Zealand and South Korea have joined the Horizon Europe. However, the global space formed in 1990–2015 is partly destabilized. It is less hegemonic, more fractured yet not sufficiently diverse in form to match multipolarity. Moscovitz and Sabzalieva (2023) find that 'higher education is undergoing critical transformations as a result of changing geopolitical dynamics', while adding that 'while widespread, these transformations are not uniform' (p. 151). Normative open globalization sustained by confident Anglo-American hegemony has given way to partial closure, amid an American geopolitical reversal and nativist revolt against cosmopolitanism and migration. Within the global space there are growing barriers to the mobility of persons and knowledge. National governments have a pronounced willingness to intervene in higher education and science, renorming global matters as national matters.

Deglobalization and nativism

Recurring alternation between globalization and deglobalization is inevitable. Space is always emerging, neither tendency can ever achieve equilibrium, and large compounded tendencies like these combine different strands of causation that each have historical limits. However, the amplitude of the oscillations between globalization and deglobalization is not inevitable. This particular transition has been dramatic.

While the growth of trade, offshoring and supply chains was slowing early in the 2010s, signalling a declining potential of economic globalization in capital accumulation (*The Economist*, 2022), the US government retreated from open globalization only in 2018 when Trump introduced tariffs and the China Initiative in science and higher education (see below). The change was bi-

partisan, continuing under Biden. The shift from expansive global space-making to national defence signified the abandonment of Fukuyama's (1992) vision of a single liberal Americanizing space. It was a recognition that global primacy was no longer a given. It was said that China had profited more from the open environment, so that global closure must be in US interests (Inkster, 2020). The decoupling with China also suggests a deliberate structuring of global space as binary, returning to the Cold War spatiality.

Arguably the American part-closure of the global space, with little dissent in the West, reflects the wide and deep Western anxiety about global multipolarity, pushing through the old global hierarchy and white supremacy embedded by five centuries of colonialism. This interpretation is confirmed by the explosive growth in Western countries of bottom-up opposition to cross-border migration, expressed in terms of singular nativist identity. Though there is irreducible cultural difference in every population, nativism wants to 'purify' the national scale in Massey's sense. The unachievable norm fosters a perpetual grievance and this cannot bode well for mixed populations, cosmopolitan universities or mobility. Populists play on fears of downward mobility among those who are struggling. The 2024 national elections in the United Kingdom and the United States were contests for working-class communities hollowed out by austerity, automation and global trade. After decades with little prospect of improvement, they fear being displaced by outsiders whom they rank below themselves (Brogger, 2023, pp. 287–8). 'National protectionist agendas intersect with anti-intellectual and anti-elitist nativist populism through denunciation of internationalization and migration' (Brogger, 2023, p. 288).

When reproduced at this level of breadth and depth, migration resistance cements deglobalization, and governments believe that to survive they must adapt to the mood, not try to change it. Migration regimes have been toughened in Germany, France, the Netherlands, Sweden and Finland, and Trump promises bulk deportations. However, governments do little to reduce permanent migration because low-paid migrants are crucial to a capitalist labour force. When they want to achieve demonstrable reductions in migration, the soft target is international students.

The payout to nativism has been unprecedented interventions in international student mobility, beginning with Brexit in the UK. Both sides of UK politics refused to support a new inward mobility scheme from Europe to replace Erasmus+, though the UK subsidizes the outward mobility of UK students. Both the Netherlands and Denmark problematize the cost of inward EU students, and Denmark reduced international students in English-language programmes

in 2021 (Brogger, 2023). Anti-migration politics have played havoc with international student numbers across the Anglosphere, regardless of the effects on institutional finances: Canada is cutting new study permits by 45 per cent over 2024 and 2025 (ICEF Monitor, 2024), and Australia's policy of individual university enrolment caps may reduce the total by 20 per cent. In the UK it was announced in 2023 that first degree and Masters students could no longer bring dependents. Student visa applications from January to October 2024 were 16 per cent below the same period last year.

Geopolitics: Creating gaps and barriers in global space

The Russia-Ukraine war that began in February 2022 has had multiple consequences for mobility in higher education. Ukraine's infrastructure has been severely damaged (Ivanenko, this volume), though some international students still enter (Oleksiyenko and Shchepetylnykova, 2024). The spaces shared by Russia and Ukraine, and Russia and the West, have been largely vacated, while traffic between Ukraine and the West has expanded. The extensive pre-2022 mobility of Ukrainian students into Russian institutions has vanished, except for movement out of Russian-occupied Ukraine. Institution-level contact between Russian and Western universities has been broken, which appears welcome to the Russian government. There has been large-scale movement of faculty and students out of each country; though not all have resources to hand or can readily earn income abroad. Wars are associated with widespread forced immobility as well as mobility. Other cross-border conflicts affect academic mobility. Passage between Taiwan and China is difficult. Scholars in Israel are increasingly isolated. Palestinian universities and lives have been decimated.

Each geopolitical relation is distinctive and manifests in particular events. In the multipolar order 'norms for international interactions are increasingly contested', including 'the axiom of openness' in science (Chih et al., 2023); but the United States has gone further by engineering partial decoupling from China. It is a radical spatial shift. The China/US relation is the largest co-authorship in science and reduction in that relation has *major* epistemic costs. 'The process of aligning science with national strategic goals threatens to impede global scientific excellence and the capacity to mitigate global challenges' (Chih et al., 2023). Surveys find that researchers in both countries strongly support open scientific cooperation (*The Economist*, 2024b). The sole instigator has been the US government: China does not want to decouple, though after six years China's authorities have tightened the regulation of outward travel and are less

welcoming of visitors (Sharma, 2024a). 'China has become more inward looking, as the West has become more wary' (*The Economist*, 2024a).

The China Initiative triggered aggressive investigations of 150 individuals engaged in both the United States and China, many of them American citizens of Chinese descent. There was only a handful of convictions (*The Economist*, 2023), but a survey by Lee and Li (2021) finds that 20 per cent of US scientists of Chinese descent, and 12 per cent of other scientists, broke ties in China. In 2012 China shared 47 per cent of the internationally collaborative papers of US scientists, in 2022, 32 per cent (*The Economist*, 2024a). Between 2020 and 2022 joint papers declined from 62,904 to 58,546 (NSB, 2024). Visas for Chinese students entering the United States dropped from over 280,000 in 2015 to less than 90,000 in 2023 (*The Economist*, 2023). Border harassment of Chinese students and faculty holding valid visas has included strip searches and forced return to China (Sharma, 2024b). US universities have closed more than 100 Confucius Institutes (Altbach and de Wit, 2023). After the China Initiative began, US university presidents stopped going to China. Between 2015 and 2023 US students in China fell from 15,000 to 350. The US State Department now categorizes China as a 'category three' country, meaning 'don't go if you don't have to go' (Sharma, 2024a). In February 2019 there were 1,219 scheduled direct flights between China and the United States; in February 2024 there were 269 (*The Economist,* 2024a). All contact is faltering.

The US government pressures other Western states to follow. Some no longer accept China Scholarship Council students (Altbach and de Wit, 2023). Many have added additional layers of risk management to cooperation with China. In 2022 the top eight Australian universities conducted just over one-third as many projects with China as in 2019 (Ross, 2023). The national securitization of research in the West has introduced methodological nationalism and zero-sum thinking into global research collaboration. As China maintains normal relations with non-Western powers, the US strategy triggers a longer-term potential for two global science and technology systems with limited movement between them.

The deglobal nation-state

The changes in migration policy and the regulation of research indicate a growing willingness of states to assert their will directly, regardless of university interests and autonomy, and whether universities and science are seen as tools

of geopolitical competitiveness, or risk factors to be managed. When cross-border education and the conduct of research are problematized and more closely supervised universities are being renormed as primarily national agents. Interventions in global practices, especially those touching the core domain of knowledge, are especially problematic because work in the global scale sustains part of the double mission of the sector and enhances its autonomous identity and agency.

Turnbull and colleagues (2024), focusing on the UK, Australia, Hungary and Brazil, argue that recent criticisms of the university 'indicate a new politics extending beyond neoliberalism' (p. 631). This involves both 'devaluations' and 'revaluations' of higher education. Each has implications for institutions as autonomous actors (and hence global actors). 'Devaluation' is pursued by populist conservative critics who attack the university as elitist. 'Revaluing' governments in the Anglosphere no longer trust the outcomes of neoliberal quasi-markets. Prestige competition does not deliver courses more tailored to employability. It leads to expansion not efficiency, too many students in 'unproductive' courses and not enough in STEM. Taking further this argument, 'revaluing' governments are also impatient with the role of universities in impacting migration policy – because of the extent of short-term student mobility, and its tendency to expand the number of applications for skilled migration – no longer give priority to the commercial earnings of those same universities. The devaluation and revaluation arguments again norm universities in solely national terms: their international engagements are ignored, or are valued in terms of a narrowly national utilitarianism.

Conclusions

The new global/national spatiality of universities and science is threefold. First, governments have freed themselves to more forcefully impose single-scale national identity on universities and science. The sector is expected to fall in line. Its own global projects have lesser importance. Partial autonomy is brushed aside. It becomes more difficult for universities to mix and match activities across the national, regional and global scales, and the active potentials of shared global space, for example in science, are diminished.

Second, there is a fading of older Western strategies to secure an inclusive globalization and colonize it. Few as yet argue against the principles of global knowledge and a single science network but many states make decisions that

impair communications or research exchange. Soft power goals recede. Hard power is more important. Open doors are no longer the norm: security concerns that were never entirely absent have become a first-order issue.

Third, the global space is still worked especially in science (with its champions often found outside the West), indicating that positive global space making is not exhausted. However, multipolar higher education is yet to create a stable post-hegemonic order in which people mobility is protected and cultural diversity is a positive factor, not a problem to be managed. What is needed is a mutually respectful diversity, bringing global practices in higher education into line with Massey's ontology of multiplicity (Marginson and Xu, 2023).

How to get there? A self-concerned United States, not yet willing to climb down from the claim to global primacy, is not helping, but not all American universities share this outlook, while many European institutions are multi-scalar in their orientation, though unsure of how to relate to China. The university as an institution is currently travelling well in East Asia and Western Europe. They need to engage more with each other, and to steer clear of the vortex of a binary global geopolitics (it is very important that Chinese universities do this). This requires clearing away some of the scaffolding of the hegemonic order. The pluralization of global capacity enhances the political resources for tackling the stratifying devices currently limiting the global space, such as monolingual journals and global rankings based on Anglo-American templates. However, much depends on the capacity of emerging agents to range beyond their own national borders. Multipolarity provides conditions in which countries and universities in the Global South and East can move into shared global leadership and take initiatives in the shaping of global higher education space. While in 1990–2015 global higher education was made as a hegemonic zone, this has never been the only possibility.

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Internationally Mobile Scientists in Global Science Regimes

Ravinder Sidhu and Brenda Yeoh

Introduction

Science and technology are widely recognized as playing a vital role in tackling 'grand global challenges', notably, climate change, food security, energy independence and environmental sustainability with organizations like the OECD and ILO promoting the merits of an internationally mobile science and technology workforce (IACGB, 2020). Scientists are seen as desirable human capital whose work furthers the betterment of economies and societies, in contrast to other population flows such as undocumented labour migrants, asylum seekers and refugees (Czaika and Orazbayev, 2018; Woolley et al., 2008). The internationally mobile scientist offers a context to investigate knowledge work and imagined forms of citizenship associated with global knowledge economies. This chapter draws on a study of scientists working in the broader domain of biotechnology in two cities, Singapore and Brisbane (Australia), where governments introduced signature policies to further knowledge-driven growth. Inspired by the field of Science and Technology Studies, we set out to investigate how scientists negotiate complexity as they cross cultural, geographic, disciplinary and institutional borders. Using the concept of 'epistemic living spaces' (discussed below), we assemble a picture of the epistemic and social possibilities afforded by global science as part of a globalizing knowledge economy. We examine limits as well as possibilities for scientists to exercise agency over their work and livelihoods in a context characterized by competition and commercialization. In this, we follow Sigl (2019, p. 118) who observes that 'researchers are not just subjected to the conditions they are placed in but co-produce worlds of research and the epistemic fabric of our social worlds'. We find that scientists do not experience frictionless mobility despite the valorization

of STEM disciplines in public and policy discourses (Gonzalez-Ramos et al., 2013). Global science is a malleable and paradoxical space, where cutting-edge innovation mingles with sorting techniques to determine which individuals and scientific practices are of value (Harding, 1991; Subramaniam, 2019).

Governing scientific mobilities

Science operates in a mobile world, seen most acutely in the movement of people and things: botanical matter, animals, cell lines and sophisticated machinery, obligatory fieldwork, conference travel and the outsourcing of clinical trials. Scientific circulations are expressions of broader political projects including colonization and postcolonial modernization. Rather than seeing global science as a singular assemblage of betterment, scholars writing from critical Science and Technology Studies have posed what are termed 'justice questions'. Thus, Jasanoff and Kim (2015) draw our attention to the collective imaginations of the future anticipated by science and technology. These 'sociotechnical imaginaries' play a critical role not only in influencing the kinds of research projects deemed worthy of support, but also in shaping the parameters of what constitutes 'good' science, along with defining the ethico-political qualities anticipated of the 'successful' scientist. Research by critical race and feminist scholars has explored how intersectional indices play out in the knowledge cultures of science, affecting not only the career prospects of individuals but also the effects of scientific work on populations including those that have historically been exploited and marginalized in and through science (see, for example, Nurridin et al., 2020; Rajan, 2017; Subramanian, 2019). Benjamin (2016) prompts us to consider who and what must be confined or fixed in place to make technoscientific innovation possible. In this chapter, we take up this invitation to inquire into the social and epistemic border-crossings constitutive of global science.

A review of the literature on academic mobility reveals a number of salient themes. Taking inspiration from Pierre Bourdieu's (1986) writings, mobility has been associated with the acquisition of '*transnational identity capital*' and '*symbolic capital*', albeit with disciplinary and national variations (Fahey and Kenway, 2010; Kim, 2010; Sidhu, Yeoh and Chang, 2015). A contrasting body of work has argued against the *fetishization of mobility (*Bauder et al., 2017; Gray, 2021; Ortiga et al., 2020; Schaer, 2021; Simola, 2022). Researchers have also pointed to the influences of race, gender and class on mobility trajectories (Ackers, 2004; Amelina, 2013; Grigoleit-Richter, 2017; Yeoh and Huang, 2011).

Notably, discussions of academic and scientific mobility rarely engage with the work of migration researchers and scholars of liberalism, on the patterns of movement initiated by colonial-era labour migration regimes, asylum seeking and skilled migration. Questions relating to who and what is allowed to move, and the circumstances in which people and things inhabit space are important in revealing the manner in which mobility functions as a technology of citizenship and subject-making (Kaplan, 2002; Kotef, 2015; Leung, 2017; Ong, 2007; Sheller, 2016; Yeoh and Huang, 2011). For world systems theorists, development asymmetries between source and destination countries and their associated patterns of stratification are drivers of mobility (see, for example, Khadria and Li, 2022). While broadly acknowledging the spillover benefits of mobility such as remittances, knowledge networks and return migration, they maintain the importance of attending to the co-productions of mobilities and immobilities through analyses of historically mediated structures of power.

A third strand of work argues against the reduction of the scientist to a capital-seeking Homo Economicus and calls instead for a focus on the epistemic pursuits of internationally mobile researchers and their effects on disciplines, researcher subjectivities and professional identities (Davies, 2020; Laudel and Bielik, 2019). We build on this work, using an STS-derived concept, *epistemic living spaces* to investigate the mobility practices of scientists working in biotechnology.

Epistemic living spaces

Epistemic living spaces refers to the symbolic, social, intellectual, temporal and material structures that 'mould, guide and delimit researchers' (inter)actions, what they aim to know, their agencies and how they can produce knowledge' (Felt, 2009, p. 19). In other words, the ways in which scientists know the world are entangled with how they live in the world (Felt, 2009). What is possible for scientists to imagine is shaped by the everydayness of working, knowing and living. The analytical utility of epistemic living spaces lies in its attentiveness to the complexities inherent in scientific practice under conditions of international mobility. Epistemic living spaces help uncover the sociotechnical aspects of scientific practices, differential capacities to exercise agency, as well as symbolic regimes and their connections to social imaginaries. Five interrelated dimensions characterize epistemic living spaces, namely the spatial/material, temporal, social, epistemic and symbolic.

The spatial/material dimension refers to infrastructures (material artefacts, technologies, buildings and facilities, places) that make scientific research

possible. For Felt (2009) the spatial includes affects – 'tacit geographies' – the feelings scientists harbour about certain destinations where good science takes place and include feelings about their positioning and status in the world of global science. Scientists, Felt observes, are constantly in negotiation between their public and private lives as they seek out spatio-material resources.

The temporal dimensions of epistemic living spaces are concerned with the time regimes that govern research, for example, the tempo and rhythms of everyday research work, funding cycles and institutional evaluations of research performance. Research temporalities are recognized as having a stretched-out quality – outputs and outcomes may be difficult to pin down into quantifiable time units. The temporalities of family life may pull against the temporal regimes of scientific practice.

Epistemic living spaces also have a social dimension: how people work together (or not), including attitudes and practices of competitiveness and/or collaboration. Sociality might be compromised by 'frictions and dissonances between normative ideals and perceived realities' (Felt and Fochler, 2012, p. 138). Interpersonal synergies and leadership styles, shared disciplinary languages, and intercultural competencies matter in performing scientific practice.

The symbolic dimensions signify the kind of research regarded as important either by individuals or institutionally, along with the virtues and qualities expected of researchers. Scientists may or may not translate the values promoted in science policies into their epistemic practices. Mobility may be taken up as a response to changes in the symbolic value of research; places and institutions may be sought out in the hope of realizing what scientists value (Davies, 2020; Felt, 2009). Finally, the epistemic dimensions relate to the practices, processes, standards and norms through which knowledge is produced and accorded legitimacy.

Study design

The findings reported in this chapter were obtained from a comparative study of two innovation systems (Queensland, Australia and Singapore) with a broader aim of investigating iterations of the 'knowledge economy'. With institutional ethical clearance, PhD-holding scientists employed in university-based and public research institutes in both settings were invited to complete an online survey before interviews were conducted with those who consented to participate. 42 scientists (15 in Brisbane, 27 in Singapore), in early, mid- and

late career phases were interviewed about the presence or lack of opportunities that prompted their mobility, challenges and risks that produced stratifications, temporal regimes associated with scientific practice and questions of value. Our intention was to assemble a picture of 'subjectification', the conditions of possibility for exercising agency while navigating rules and norms in knowledge work in the everyday. The epistemic, institutional, social and political nature of scientific work afforded by mobility sets the context for a discussion of the making of the scientist as a political subject.

Mobility's spatial and material affordances

A consistent theme to emerge from the narratives of scientists concerned their decisions to move in order to secure access to material, epistemic and intellectual resources. Desirable scientific terrains were those identified with geopolitical, spatial, material and reputational prominence. These infrastructures of science – well-appointed buildings with state-of-the-art equipment, access to research monies, and creative and supportive peers and mentors – were magnets for scientists. As Clara a mid-career scientist observed, 'If you ask any young scientist why you want to be in a place, it's to do your work well, and that means funding and people and support.'

International mobility in science was widely seen as normative, supported not only by mentors and peers, but also by national funding agencies. Mobility practices appeared to be initiated during PhD candidatures, financed by travel scholarships from home and host universities, governments, agricultural boards and various philanthropies. Sara, a senior research scientist in Australia, credited her postdoctoral position at the famed Salk Institute in the United States to a travel scholarship from a US philanthropic foundation financed by investments in baking soda, oil leases and horse racing. This single event – winning a prestigious travel scholarship – was significant in opening doors. Sara was able to travel to world-leading labs to participate in their recruitment drives.

Many of our interviewed senior scientists spent time in the United States because of its reputation of being a highly desirable scientific destination: 'Scientifically, there seemed to be no limits to what [I] could achieve in the US' (Charles, senior scientist, Brisbane). Early career scientists, on the other hand were more likely to regard the United States as a space of hypercompetition and exploitation. Promising projects were often 'placed in triage' and individuals

could see their early career status extended by precarious short-term contracts which further limited their career prospects in science.

Mobility as risk management

Early career respondents tended to see international mobility as a strategy to manage the competition, risk and uncertainty in science and technology labour markets. Mobility under these conditions was enforced. As noted above, protracted job insecurities contained some scientists into 'early career-ness' for extended times. Pierre, who was completing a postdoctoral fellowship in Brisbane, held mixed feelings about his decision to leave France for Australia. He attributed his international mobility to a series of push forces – primarily disinvestment by the state in science, a development he associated with a bloated post-war French welfare state. As a postdoctoral fellow drawing a modest salary, it was expensive to negotiate the geographic distances to travel home to see family and friends, and to build professional networks to facilitate his eventual return to Europe. He was discouraged by what he perceived as differences in French and Australian research cultures. In France, senior scientists were very present in laboratories and experimental work was prioritized in contrast to 'administration' (grant-writing) which was the norm in his Australian lab. Having crossed geographic borders to progress his career, he was now confronting a new regime of bordering in which the dynamism of knowledge work – 'doing science' – had to be left behind and efforts channelled instead into securing research monies and managing resources. This prospect of reconfiguring himself from an epistemic subject into a managerial subject for job security and career progression was deeply unattractive for Pierre.

Almost unanimously, interviewees spoke of declining research budgets which were taken up institutionally through calculative rationalities; these were often experienced negatively as creating affective and material insecurities. Research cultures were described as broadly similar in relation to the temporalities of performance management. Labs in both settings, Singapore and Brisbane, used audits, KPIs (Key Performance Indicators), and short contracts as instruments and artefacts of subject-making (subjectification). Individual scientists varied in the extent to which they actualized performativity into their research practices. Scientists spoke of keeping frustrations in check and giving parallel attention to performance measures while keeping in focus the reasons that had inspired them to seek a scientific career in the first place. Most were aware of managing

temporal regimes of publishing, contracts and research evaluation to minimize interruptions to their research. Performance targets were policed differently by lab heads and research directors with some attempting to protect staff from the worst aspects of managerialism, while others took a prescriptive metrics-driven approach to performance.

Epistemic gains and regimes of value

The symbolic and intellectual dimensions of epistemic living spaces featured prominently in the mobility decisions of early, mid-career and senior researchers. Scientists spoke of moving because of perceived opportunities to 'do very different things', enabled by the infrastructures of science, namely equipment, funds and 'good people'. 'When money gets tight, the system gets conservative,' observed senior scientist, Phil, on his reasons for moving from the United States to Singapore. Scientists moved to places and institutions with well-articulated ambitions to push knowledge boundaries, 'to build something' (Novit, mid-career scientist). New learnings – using novel tools and technologies; interdisciplinary collaborations and new styles of thought – consistently featured in interview narratives. Mobility held out the potential to re-shape disciplinary identities and researcher subjectivities. Individual scientists could compare local situated research cultures in different settings and refine understandings of what was and should be considered of scientific 'value' (Davies, 2020). Having moved countries several times (from Switzerland to the United States to Singapore and Sweden) in response to policy changes that privileged translational research and commercialization activities, Novit, a mid-career Swiss national seemed reconciled to his chosen identity, 'I am a geneticist [and] there is nothing commercial about my work.'

Care, relational priorities and scientific work

The relational priorities of scientists are revealing of the ways in which they balance career demands with caring responsibilities. Care responsibilities shaped the mobility trajectories of both male and female scientists. Some jurisdictions had strict rules making visits by elderly parents difficult. The United States was singled out as a place with inhospitable rules which complicated visits by elderly parents and grandparents. Filial responsibilities had to be factored in, a point

made by scientists from Asia in selecting places in which to work and live. Care responsibilities weighed especially heavily on women scientists. Elizabeth, a mid-career scientist in Brisbane, decided early in her career to lower her expectations: 'If I wanted to be head of a research group, I would need to put in more hours. [I try] not to come in [to the lab] on weekends.' Male scientists also reported working long hours but many in the sample were supported by their partners who were described as 'choosing' full-time homemaker roles. In some instances, partners had not chosen to be homemakers but were prevented from working by immigration regulations or non-recognition of their qualifications in the labour market. These accounts lend support to research that has consistently shown that immigration and science funding policies are premised on the normative, disembodied male scientist, who can exercise flexibility without the pull of care responsibilities (Zippel, 2017).

The arrival of children was highlighted as a particularly challenging point in time. Beatriz singled out the birth of her first child while working in Singapore as a scientist as a period of personal crisis: 'In Asia it's hard to obtain part-time work – this is seen as a lack of commitment.' Subjectified to the regimes of work, the first year of her child's life was described as 'filled with anxiety' and 'very overwhelming' as she struggled to manage work and nurture her baby. Women scientists who had worked in Europe, on the other hand, reported more flexible regimes where part-time work was encouraged for parents. Lab cultures appeared to be less driven by over-work and competitive individualism. Elizabeth described the twice daily thirty-minute morning and afternoon coffee breaks as important for building sociabilities; everyone including the head of the lab stopped working to sit and have coffee and conversation together. Lab leaders were attentive to bringing the epistemic and social dimensions of knowledge work together. Sociabilities were regarded as vital in building cooperative research cultures of excellence.

Racial stratifications and global science

Race is seldom discussed in relation to the mobilities of the highly skilled. The culturally diverse science and technology workforce celebrated in studies of Taiwanese and Indian IT entrepreneurs in Silicon Valley is often held up as proof that racial barriers are declining in significance (Saxenian, 2002). In contrast, scholars working from a critical race paradigm have highlighted the persistence of racial structures and practices of racialization in contemporary expressions of transnational capitalism, multiculturalism and arguably global

science. Places regarded as 'knowledge centres' – the United States, the United Kingdom and Europe – remain locked in racial denialism even as the virtues of cultural recognition and cultural plurality are officially espoused (see, for example, Goldberg, 2009; Lentin and Titley, 2011). Outside of the West, colonial racialization and forms of othering remain entrenched in the institutions of the state and in everyday discourses (Goh, 2008). One of the most obvious manifestations concerns the differential value attributed to credentialled bodies. In our study, scientists from destination countries like China, India and Vietnam observed that their credentials and experiences acquired in the Global North were regarded as 'filters' to sort out deserving from less deserving applicants in competitive transnational science and technology labour markets. Norms of whiteness and their accompanying material rewards, privileges and disadvantages prevailed in shaping notions of scientific personhood including in settings like Singapore which is broadly seen to be administered by culturally diverse, non-white bodies. Global science, it seemed, was not immune to the 'deep and malleable global whiteness' identified in contemporary structures and social relations (Christian, 2019, p. 179).

Racial othering featured in the experiences and trajectories of mobile scientists but most were keen not to dwell on this issue. Mohammad, an Indian national, was drawn to Germany because of the country's sustained legacy of excellence in the discipline of Chemistry and was elated when offered a fellowship by the Humboldt Foundation. However, the anticipated epistemic gains of crossing borders to learn in a centre of excellence was marred by 'social problems', his nuanced explanation for the threat of xenophobia and anti-migrant activity in the eastern part of Germany where his hosting university was located. Mohammad was briefed by local police on no-go areas in the city and advised not to be out late at nights. Similar 'social problems' discouraged him from returning to Pune, his hometown in India. Pune, he explained, was no longer 'peaceful'. On further probing he revealed that anti-Muslim sentiments and the risk of mob violence had prompted his departure from India and was deterring his return. After a circuitous route that included applying for work in Canada, Mohammad and his wife, also a chemist found work in Singapore, a place he perceived to be safe on the account of the state's strict policing of inter-ethnic and inter-religious relations.

Concluding comments

Using 'epistemic living spaces' as a framing concept, this chapter has offered an analysis of the affects, materialities, socialities and rhythms of living a scientific

life (Davies, 2020; Felt, 2009; Felt and Fochler, 2012). The five dimensions that make up epistemic living spaces paint a detailed picture of the intersectionally mediated structures and values experienced by scientists, and constitutive of, contemporary research landscapes. Revisiting our findings, we showed, first, that mobility allowed respondents to engage in creative albeit demanding self-fashioning activities that involved diversifying their epistemic choices and facilitating cross disciplinary research. This aspect of international mobility should not be understated as it has long enabled scientific inquiry to flourish. Second, scientists, particularly those in early career stages, used mobility as a risk-managing strategy in response to boom-and-bust cycles in science funding and fluctuations in the value of biotechnology. Time spent learning their craft in world-leading universities and research institutes seemed not to have insulated them from employment insecurity. Third, and in relation to this point, we reiterate other research findings that have shown the deleterious effects of hypercompetitive research cultures for well-being, self-worth and equity, leading some scientists to consider leaving science for different careers. We concur with the findings of studies suggesting that global science risks reproducing social orders that stratify and contain, seen most acutely in the circumstances of intersectionally positioned early-career scientists. Care responsibilities and relational priorities pulled against the norms of work intensification and competition increasingly characteristic of scientific practice in globalizing knowledge economies. Complex racial dynamics shaped mobility trajectories, simultaneously opening opportunities in research landscapes while consolidating norms broadly associated with 'whiteness' (Berhe et al., 2022; Shahjahan and Edwards, 2022).

Despite the clamour of policymakers and industry captains to train and recruit ever greater numbers of STEM professionals for knowledge-led innovation and economic activity, a more complicated picture of knowledge work emerges by using epistemic learning spaces as an analytical lens. Notions of progress afforded by knowledge work appear to involve a wider acceptance of precarious and stratified citizenships. The mobility trajectories of scientists open a space for truth-telling.

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Mobility, Immobility and Precarity: The Mobility Imperative and Its Impact on Precarious Academics

Aline Courtois and Theresa O'Keefe

Introduction

This chapter examines the intersection of academic precarity and international (im)mobilities. It draws on a project that involved forty biographic interviews with individuals who had experienced long-term academic precarity. By this, we mean situations where qualified individuals tried and failed to secure a stable academic post for at least five years. Their stories are important: Research on the impact of international mobility on academic careers generally excludes those who are no longer employed in academia as well as those who were pushed to its margins – for example, staff on hourly paid contracts and/or those working in private colleges. As a result, little is known about those for whom mobility did not deliver its promise of career progress, and why that might be the case.

The focus of the project is Irish higher education, in continuity with our earlier work that revealed the extent and severity of academic precarity in Ireland (Courtois and O'Keefe, 2015) and its intersection with gendered inequality (O'Keefe and Courtois, 2019). Some of our participants were migrants, had experienced other higher education systems, and/or were not in Ireland at the time of the interview, but their trajectories were still shaped by Irish academia. While acknowledging the transnational dimension of some trajectories, the focus on one country ensures that the impact of deliberate political choices and national policies is not obscured or diluted in some abstract transnational space. Academic precarity is indeed shaped by political choices that impact lives directly (decreased funding for higher education, public sector recruitment freeze) and indirectly (unaddressed housing affordability crisis, legislation limiting union

power) as well as by other structural factors such as pronounced gendered and racial discrimination in academia (Kempny and Michael, 2021; Meade et al., 2023) and a broader national labour market that distinctly disadvantages migrants (Laurence et al., 2023).

The chapter examines the effects of the 'mobility imperative' on precarious careers. While we have written more extensively on this topic elsewhere (Courtois and O'Keefe, 2024), here we draw on Foucault (1991) and focus on the role that this mobility imperative plays as a form of governmentality in the context of academic precarity in Ireland. This governmentality is different from that which polices immigration (Fassin, 2011) because it does not rely on observable, specific technologies such as formalized requirements, institutionalized mechanisms or defined criteria. It is largely discursive but nonetheless powerful, and acts as a self-disciplining mechanism, which may shape mobility decisions but more importantly, makes those who are not mobile, or not mobile in the right way (which is never clearly specified, but also never achievable), responsible for their precarious situations.

The mobility imperative and the governmentality of mobility decisions

There is a vast policy literature framing academic mobility as essential to scientific productivity and economic competitiveness. This has contributed to normalizing the expectation that early career academics (ECAs) engage in mobility no matter their field or research area, to enhance their research profiles and chances of permanent employment. However, an emerging body of research questions the 'mobility imperative' in early careers through the lens of academic precarity. Indeed, while some migrant academics may secure employment abroad, others remain precarious for extended periods (Schaer, 2022; see also Vatansever, this volume). In some cases, mobility worsens precarity, for example when returning migrant academics find themselves frozen out of national networks and generally not welcome back (Seeber et al., 2023). As suggested, for example, by Bataille and Sautier in the Swiss context (2020), Filippi and colleagues in the Italian one (2022) and as we suggested might also be the case in Ireland (Courtois and O'Keefe, 2024), we may wonder whether the mobility imperative, under the guise of encouraging the accumulation of international experience to increase one's chances upon return, may in fact be a way to get rid of a surplus of precarious workers for good.

Looking at the intersection of precarity and (im)mobility reveals the 'stickiness' of mobility (Tzanakou and Henderson, 2021). Precarious financial circumstances make mobility particularly sticky: Marie Sautier (2021) gives the example of a researcher forced to commute between two countries because her poorly paid temporary contract does not justify or allow her to move her whole family. She finds herself unable to network, develop her research or benefit from her position abroad in any tangible way. In another piece (Courtois and O'Keefe, 2024), we gave examples of academics whose precarity was worsened by mobility: being new to a workplace, foreign and on a precarious contract exposed them to exploitation and bullying, entrenching their employment and financial precarity. In some cases, precarity makes it difficult to move at all: for example, when it means jeopardizing residency rights and the relative security (in terms of regular work, or relationships) one may have built somewhere (Courtois and Sautier, 2022). Precarity is multidimensional and cumulative, and worsened by structural factors such as gender, race, class and disability; while the mobility imperative is pervasive in academia, mobility is neither accessible, nor equally beneficial to all.

Foucault (1991) coined the term 'governmentality' to describe the 'conduct of conduct', namely the pervasive and diffuse promotion of norms of behaviour that can efficiently replace coercion. These norms circulate between institutions and individuals and become internalized. Individuals are thus led to engage in self-disciplining mechanisms to conform with neoliberal values. The desired outcome is the emergence of the neoliberal subject, one that is self-reliant, and takes full responsibility for their success or failure. In neoliberalizing contexts previously characterized by welfare provision, neoliberal subjectivation makes more acceptable the erosion of public services, workers' protection and social welfare because health, education and financial security become individual responsibilities. Of course, the governing of mobility has a longer history than the recent acceleration of neoliberal capitalism and looks very different in the Global South. In Global North contexts, the promotion of voluntarist attitudes to international mobility for labour can be analyzed as a form of governmentality, which shifts the responsibility for workers' employment and security from national employment frameworks, social welfare and pension systems to individuals themselves (Courtois, 2020). The 'mobility imperative' can therefore be viewed as part of the broader discursive arsenal used by states, supranational agencies and national institutions to construct international mobility as both an economic and moral ideal that aligns with ideas of freedom, self-realization, self-reliance and autonomy (Farrugia, 2016; Jeanes et al., 2015).

Neoliberalism shapes much of academic life. Competitiveness, pursuit of individual success, overwork, managerialism and self-disciplining techniques are some of its manifestations (e.g. Maisuria and Helmes, 2019). Shame and self-blame are the other side of this coin and emerge clearly in the accounts of precarious academics (e.g. Shahjahan, 2020). Failure is individualized as precarious workers blame themselves for not being good enough, not strategic enough (Loveday, 2023). The way precarious workers are treated in the workplace increases their sense of shame and self-blame as it signals that they do not fully belong, and that they are 'non-citizens' (O'Keefe and Courtois, 2019) – and this is typically much worse for minoritized academics who suffer micro-aggressions from colleagues and students alike (e.g. Gatwiri et al., 2024). In this context, the mobility imperative resonates with the neoliberal figure of the 'entrepreneur of the self' (Rose, 1999). It can be internalized as yet another neoliberal self-disciplinary mechanism, one that not only shapes behaviours but also contributes to the individualization of 'failure' and 'success' in academia.

The study and sample

Our project focused deliberately on those who had experienced long-term precarity as these tend to be invisible. We recruited participants primarily through social media. We explicitly encouraged those with experience in private colleges and further education to consider participating as we felt that they might self-exclude otherwise. After thirty interviews, we issued a further call focused on minoritized academics, who nonetheless remained underrepresented in our sample – possibly because we are both white, without visible disabilities and cis-gendered, in addition to having recently become permanent (see O'Keefe and Courtois, 2024).

We conducted forty semi-structured biographic interviews in 2020 and 2021, all online. These focused on participants' professional trajectories and explored multiple dimensions in a holistic way. International mobility was not a primary focus but came up in many interviews, often spontaneously. We obtained ethical approval from our respective institutions, and we examine the 'ethical dilemma' that arose due to our positionality (permanent but with experience of long-term precarity) in another piece (O'Keefe and Courtois, 2024). Our participants are de-identified, with details such as placenames changed.

A total of 35 respondents worked in the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences and 5 in STEM or Health. There were 31 women and 9 men and 22 had a form

of mobility experience. Of these, 10 were migrants, 9 were return migrants (including some with multiple experiences abroad and one about to depart again), and 3 were migrants who were or had been mobile to other countries as well. Out of 40, 20 had been in precarious academic roles for ten years or more.

The mobility imperative and the stigmatization of immobility and precarity in Irish academia

The 'mobility imperative' is not yet institutionalized in Irish academia – international experience is not a formal requirement at any level – and whether it plays a role in recruitment decisions is unknown. Yet the idea that mobility is desirable, if not necessary, frequently surfaced in the accounts of our participants, often pointing to a stigmatization of immobility.

Immobility and missed opportunities: *Sharon and Steve*

Those who had not worked abroad suggested that this might have contributed to exclude them from a hypothetical pool of credible candidates. Steve, on the other hand, felt that his eight years working in UK academia had contributed to his precarity once back in Ireland, due to the exclusionary culture of his field. Nonetheless he suggested that a different form of international experience – one inaccessible to him – might have been beneficial:

> You know you can't just go off and – you know it would really benefit you to go off and do a postdoc or something in fecking Canada or something – when you have elder care and childcare and all that kind of stuff going on, as a kind of nontraditional mature kind of PhD student working in a practice-based discipline with firm ties, you know.
>
> (Steve)

Despite his own experience, Steve seemingly referred to a more prestigious form of mobility, associated with academic ambition and success, and which precludes those from marginalized backgrounds. Sharon, a migrant academic who had lived and worked in Ireland for several decades, was not able to move (internationally or even nationally) due to being a parent to young children, and also suggested it might have impacted her chances of securing a lectureship:

> I do feel I should have, you know, if I wanted to be a lecturer, it would have made more sense to pursue the teaching assistant jobs, you know, maybe travel, do the

lecturing somewhere you know, kind of get stuck in, keep my eyes open for stuff, but to be honest, I never really wanted to move away from home. You know, I really did want to be with my family …

Given that research tends to be more valued than teaching experience, this may sound counterintuitive, but we encountered many highly accomplished academics who, like Sharon, were left to wonder where they possibly went wrong. Sharon went on to talk about her children, who were all still in school when she started her career, and added:

> it was just not the time for me to all of a sudden decide to take off, even though my husband was always very supportive. He's like 'if you want to do things, do them and we'll find a way forward' so it was never that I didn't feel supported. I was just like 'my God. Life is hard enough. I don't actually feel like trying to do this'.
>
> (Sharon)

She seems to tacitly accept the 'mobility imperative' as the idea that an academic career is not possible without mobility. Additionally, underplaying the weight of her care responsibilities, she suggests that her lack of motivation, or dedication – in a way, her failure at enterprising her self (Rose, 1999) – was the reason for her immobility.

Rejecting the mobility imperative and giving up: John, Fran and Róisín

Some participants questioned and rejected the mobility imperative. John, who, for context, had left academia because he was 'sick of this shit' after trying to secure a permanent post for over five years, explained why he did not pursue an opportunity in another city:

> I was just not willing to work my butt off to try to establish my career in a tenure-track position, and at the same time try to keep university management happy and you know, I just wouldn't be happy moving to [City] either. I don't feel it necessary that I should move across the country for work, you know … I'm not willing to do that anymore.
>
> (John)

The mobility imperative was one of several features of 'early careers' (overwork, conforming to managerial demands) that he rejected at once. But this meant getting out of the competition altogether, as he later explained, adding mobility to a long list of unachievable expectations:

it means that people who are appointed are extremely good, and they're willing to travel across the world in order to get a permanent job. And I can't compete with people who've done 15 papers out of their PhD or who are very specialized in a technical area that the department feels it needs right now. I can't compete with that, and that's OK. I'm alright with that.

(John)

Fran had been hopping from one research post to another for over ten years at the time of the interview but had found a sense of stability as the same institution employed her on successive contracts. She claimed that she no longer aspired to an academic post, did not need much money, and enjoyed her non-academic part-time job as well as her annual trip to Sydney – in other words, she had found a way to manage academic precarity and find satisfaction elsewhere. In this context, she framed her immobility in terms of a lack of 'interest':

I am not prepared to do that – the stress of all of that kind of crap like I would have no interest going to [other university] and I would not move to [Other Irish city]. I'm not going to the North. I have no interest in working in the UK. I'd be gone to Sydney like that (snaps fingers).

(Fran)

The only destination she considered was a place disconnected from her academic work. She defiantly refused to conform to the mobility imperative, as a way perhaps to reclaim some agency and sense of freedom – but in a context where she had abandoned her initial plan to become a permanent academic anyway. For Róisín, the rejection of the mobility imperative was even more explicitly associated with despondency about her prospects:

Definitely there is that whole 'Oh you should go abroad thing and then maybe we'll hire you'. But to be honest, I'm so pessimistic that I don't even feel that way, like I feel like that I would go abroad to some university you know, start life all over again and whatever, and I still wouldn't have a guarantee that I could get a job back in Ireland when I come back you know that kind of way, like there's just no guarantees anymore of anything.

(Róisín)

Róisín had been seeking stable work for ten years and experienced injustice in the hiring process on multiple occasions – she noted, for example, that only men had been appointed to recent permanent positions in her field. Despite being unspecific and unformalized, the 'mobility imperative' is so potent that for John, Fran and Róisín, refusing to be mobile was associated with giving up hope for an academic career.

Immobility, entrapment and self-blame: Janak and Samantha

Some participants perceived immobility as a personal mistake, or a form of entrapment; and their inability to escape almost a moral failure on their part. This was the case of those who had stayed at the same institution for a long time, trapped in a hamster wheel that did not give time to reflect or strategize. For example, Janak, who had even been warned by a colleague:

> She said one sentence which made me reconsider if I should say at [Private College] for any minute longer because she said 'make sure that you don't stay for too long at [Private College]. I stayed for seven years and I realized it was far too long.' … and I have the same impression now you know that I'm staying for too long at [Private College], because I don't see – it's like quick sands you know, I'm not moving forward anymore. The more I navigate, the deeper I get into trouble, into precarity.
>
> (Janak)

Samantha had got trapped doing a PhD and taking on increasing amounts of poorly paid teaching and administrative work – sometimes assigned by her own supervisor. She ended up with more than a full-time teaching load, struggling financially, and unable to progress her PhD or to build her research profile in other ways. Reflecting on this, she wondered:

> The contradiction that I can't get over is like why? Why did I feel like I needed to continue? And there is a part of me, again, that probably felt like I needed to keep working to like, progress this career, whatever it is … I invested so much time and so much effort into something that I felt like it may be hopeless, but if I don't persist with it – like what a horrible way to live your life while your friends are moving to Australia and living it up and you know, starting at any other job.
>
> (Samantha)

Immobility is here associated with a feeling of entrapment and paralysis and contrasted with the fantasy of 'moving to Australia and living it up'. Due to this immobility-entrapment, Samantha felt she had no networks outside this specific institution and few prospects. Both Janak and Samantha were undervalued and repeatedly denied opportunities in their workplaces. Immobility and precarity had fed each other in a vicious circle, and both shared a sense of guilt about not managing to escape their situations, as if their immobility and associated precarity was a personal failure.

International competition and the vulnerability of precarity: Brendan and Tim

In a context of competition for extremely scarce positions, the figure of the international candidate emerged as a threat. Brendan explained how he felt when he was desperately looking for academic work while on social welfare:

> and the other mental image I had … the job market is on the horizon and I'm heading towards a job, maybe on a bike or maybe walking. And next thing all these massive like French TGV trains come flying past full of new graduates from New York and places. And I just thought I'm screwed. I'm completely screwed.
>
> (Brendan)

Those who were marginalized and felt 'stuck' in Ireland (due to being unable to move or feeling too uncompetitive for the UK or international labour markets), feared that the internationalization of recruitment would only entrench their precarity. Several participants felt that whatever career they had patiently built, sometimes enduring low pay and poor treatment for years, could be snatched away by 'the glamour kind of international candidate' at any moment:

> But you know, there's always that anxiety as well that you've been working on it for seven years, but you know, there's the glamour international kind of candidate who can come in who can, who can pick it up, you know.
>
> (Steve)

With many UK universities announcing redundancy plans, the UK was no longer perceived as a possible destination but rather, as a potential exporter of academics – not necessarily 'stars', but nonetheless intimidating competitors:

> And of course the fear now for people at my stage, you know a position is coming up, but if people are fleeing the UK, because humanities departments are closing kind of every day over there at the moment, and they're going to come over to Ireland, and all of a sudden – whereas, you know, ten years ago maybe it was a pool of people, you know, five years out of their PhD, a few post docs and a book, and now you're competing with Senior Lecturers and Associate Professors, and you haven't a hope.
>
> (Tim)

Brendan and Tim, as well as Steve, had all taught abroad, but did not see themselves as 'international' in this sense. The figure of the international star

was associated with other aspects of academic 'stardom', such as high number of publications, rapid career progression and a profile untainted by protracted precarity. Those working in the same workplace, on precarious contracts – and particularly teaching-only contracts – felt particularly vulnerable.

Precarious mobilities and stigma: Nick, Claudia and Amelia

The demand to appear not only successful, but also successful in a conventional way (i.e. linear career progression, no gaps, control over one's research agenda and development) means that while mobility might be a way to temporarily escape or at least disguise precarity (Courtois and O'Keefe, 2024), it needs to be managed carefully:

> So for instance, if I can't get a job this summer and I do go back to Asia and me and my partner go somewhere together like Malaysia or something to pick up English teaching for a while, I'm not gonna put that on my CV because it's a massive step backwards. So yeah, in that sense I think if you do start taking work for the money, which you have to do eventually, yeah, that would start to look bad, I think.
>
> (Nick)

Discussions of experience abroad often led respondents to ask themselves what they did 'wrong', how they could have managed their careers better, including around their international mobility: networked more, published more, timed it better, gone elsewhere, come back sooner, stayed longer, not come back at all, taught less, taught more, etc. Expressions of anger and resistance co-existed with a sense of guilt and personal failure. This was very pronounced in the accounts of two migrant women from working-class backgrounds:

> I thought I'm just gonna have to go back to New Zealand and you know, that was my thing, I'm gonna have to go back, right to where I started. That's why I was so depressed with that. I have to go back right where I started, right before I did my PhD, living in my parents' house, with no money, living off my mother. Looking for a job.
>
> (Amelia)

> I remember thinking, you know, when I left Poland, people said to me, 'why are you doing this?' I mean, I'm coming from the North of Poland, which is quite poor you know, and a very high unemployment rate and everything, and I said, well, I'm going away because I want better opportunities, you know. And after 20 years you know, like turning around to my mother, you know, I'm asking her for a lend of money, when I don't have enough money to buy shoes for my children.
>
> (Claudia)

Amelia, in particular, had chosen a short-term contract in Ireland over a more secure opportunity in her native New Zealand, under the impression that a postdoc abroad was what was expected at her career stage. Moving while precarious and remaining precarious despite moving – to the point of perhaps having to move back to one's starting point – were associated with a palpable sense of guilt and personal failure underscoring the pervasiveness of a mobility imperative that leads individuals to blame themselves for their failure to be mobile successfully.

The mobility imperative: Keeping precarious workers in their place?

Accounts from those with experience of long-term academic precarity suggest that the mobility imperative is deeply embedded, despite not being institutionalized in Irish academia. Mobile or not, the precarious academics we spoke to had seemingly internalized the mobility imperative as a norm of academic behaviour. Following from Rose's description of the entrepreneur of the self (1999), international mobility can be interpreted as another facet of the academic self-entrepreneur, one that signals dedication, freedom, autonomy and, less explicitly, prestigious and supportive scientific networks, economic and passport privilege, and other determinants and markers of academic success.

Under conditions of precarity, where mobility is either outright impossible, or itself precarious, the mobility imperative emerges as a powerful self-disciplinary mechanism. Those who were unable or unwilling to move (Sharon, John, Róisín, Fran), or to move strategically (Steve, Brendan, Nick), felt that somehow, they were at fault; with those who had become trapped in exploitative workplaces (Samantha, Janak) feeling particularly guilty for their immobility. Those who had been internationally mobile either as migrants to Ireland (Sharon, Claudia, Amelia, Janak), or as Irish-born academics returning from abroad (Brendan, Steve, Nick, Tim) did not view themselves as 'international', despite the passport privilege that all but one of them enjoyed. The figure of the successful international academic is an ideal that must be conformed to but that remains unattainable for most. In the absence of observable technologies (requirements, criteria, measurements of mobility), what constitutes worthwhile or successful mobility remains undefined, subjective, open to recruitment committees' interpretation; and largely unachievable from a position of precarity and structural disadvantage.

Those who questioned or rejected the mobility imperative (John, Róisín, Fran) expressed a sense of personal inadequacy associated with their immobility. Mobility functioned as a compelling form of governmentality by encouraging those who could move to do so, despite unfavourable conditions and unclear benefits, and more importantly perhaps, those who could not move to blame themselves for their immobility. The structural inequalities at play (Sharon's and Steve's care responsibilities, Janak's ethnicity, Claudia and Amelia's working-class origins) and the penalties associated with long-term precarity (e.g. lack of networks, chaotic trajectories, depleted economic resources) are erased as the failure to move or to move successfully is individualized. This makes individuals feel accountable for their situations, instead of the institutions and governments that have been driving precarity. It is in this sense as well that mobility makes precarious academics governable.

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International Doctoral Knowledge and Cross-Border Academic Mobility: Understanding Knowledge Mobilities and Immobilities

Catherine Montgomery

Introduction

Global flows of doctoral students, as highly skilled migrants, constitute ways to create knowledge across and within certain boundaries, as they move around the globe as 'knowledge brokers' (Bilecen and Faist, 2015, p. 217). In this chapter I construct doctoral student mobility as knowledge generation and explore the ways in which this form of knowledge mobility might become a significant part of future cross-border mobility. Against a differentiated pattern of intra-European mobility and data which shows strong North–North mobility for doctoral study (HESA, 2024), it is important to acknowledge some aspects of international doctoral knowledge as marginalized, 'Southern knowledge' embedded in global divisions and long-standing patterns of inequalities in power, wealth and cultural influence (Connell, 2007, p. 212). Whilst there are changing mobility patterns and shifting geographies of transnational knowledge networks, hegemonies and centre–periphery polarization of study destinations from the Global South endure (Gerard and Lebeau, 2023, p. 2). Internationally mobile doctoral students are part of privileged mobile networks which characterize their knowledge creation as part of current or future transnational elite (Bilecen and Faist, 2015).

Doctoral knowledge embodies both mobility and immobility, combining mobile and immobile persons and mobile and immobile knowledge. This has resonances with Massey's (1999) explorations of the 'spatializing' of globalization, evoking the intersections of place, power and geography in the 'power-geometries of time-space' (1999, p. 28). These complex interplays between physical and

metaphorical (im)mobilities of knowledge in a transnational space are explored here through the digital repository of UK doctoral research, EThOS. Against these complexities, the chapter explores the nature of doctoral knowledge as transnational mobility and considers the ways in which doctoral knowledge can be mobile but also influenced by systemic immobility within both time and space.

The chapter refers to work from a two-year-funded ESRC impact project examining international doctoral research as a coherent body of knowledge. Using the British Library's digital repository EThOS of doctoral theses carried out in British universities, the research analyses the theoretical, methodological and practical impact of international doctoral research for social, cultural and community organizations (Montgomery, 2019, 2020; Montgomery et al., 2024). The EThOS repository is a near complete set of all UK doctoral theses dating back to 1650. The project developed a prototype of an Artificial Intelligence tool which enables analysis of the under-used and undiscovered research in the EThOS collection. This project engaged with organizations including Museum of London Archaeology (MOLA) and Kew Gardens as partners trying out the new tool in answering research questions, outlining the potential benefit to community and science organizations. Here, the EThOS repository is considered as a case of knowledge mobility and the affordances and challenges of constructing this as mobile knowledge are explored.

The mobility 'turn' and internationalization

Spatial mobility across borders has been associated with both elitism in education and upward social mobility. The mobility paradigm or what Urry (2000) termed the 'mobility turn', or a 'mobilities' perspective' associates value with educational movement away from home, also attributing symbolic power to educational mobility and marginalizing those who are educationally immobile (Xu and Montgomery, 2019). However, in recent decades there has been 'a reconsideration of spatial mobility, its patterns and manifestations' (Faist, 2013, p. 1638) in a move away from the mobility imperative (Forsey, 2017).

In terms of mobility in the context of the internationalized university, however, research in this field has clung to the concept of mobility as physical student mobility and adherence to geographic or physical student mobility has contributed to a narrowness of vision for internationalization in higher education (Whitsed et al., 2021). This has allowed an economic construction of

internationalization to maintain its ground and the dominance of ideas around mobility as physical and geographic have also contributed to a continuing over-emphasis on elite Anglo-European perspectives (Montgomery and Trahar, 2023). In this chapter I consider the movement of persons against the notion of bodies of knowledge, questioning whether the idea of knowledge is a fixed hegemonic, Anglophone notion or whether it can be considered a form of mobility. Geographic mobility remains the domain of the privileged Western elite, but it may be possible for knowledge in its abstract form to be accessed elsewhere, although free universal movement of knowledge is also a privilege of the global elite. Broader conceptualizations of mobility are thus necessary, including thinking about internal education mobilities within large economies such as China (e.g. rural to urban) (Xu and Montgomery, 2019) and forced migration (Vatansever, this volume; Ivanenko, this volume). In this chapter I suggest that the role of knowledge generation in mobility or knowledge mobility is a crucial part of the mobility picture (Smith McGloin, 2021) and that movement of knowledge is an integral part of global science (Marginson, 2022).

Knowledge mobility is influenced by patterns of physical academic mobility which are in turn part of the established and historical colonial pasts of international education (Perraton, 2014). Student mobility has been characterized as being dominated by movement from the Global South to the Global North, although, as indicated above, data shows the strength of North–North mobility, particularly in North America (Open Doors Data). In the UK this South–North mobility trend was characterized by a predominance of Indian students who, from the late nineteenth century, travelled as international students in their thousands, including many of its future leaders (Perraton, 2020), confirming links between international education and Empire.

It is important to note here that the terms 'Global North' and 'Global South' are problematic terms with Chankseliani (2022) emphasizing that 'the global science system is a relational system which cannot be understood by following the logic of North–South divisions' (2022, p. 784). Connell (2017) notes that directions of travel and patterns of knowledge dominance are reinforced by the neoliberal governance of universities, as these patterns benefit the economic and ideological base of Western higher education. Oldac, Nkansah and Yang (2024) note the ways in which international research collaborations are also dominated by reverence to the West/North. Whilst the numbers of scientific papers co-authored by authors from different countries has increased dramatically over time (Marginson, 2022), one of the major criticisms of contemporary North–South partnerships is that they are dominated by the agendas of the Global

North (Oldac et al., 2024). Hountondji's (1996) notion of 'extraversion' points to the ways in which researchers tend to defer to Europe and the United States as the source of the most credible ideas and reliable knowledge. 'Extraversion' is also reinforced by patterns of travel, but it is important to consider the complexities of this, with Pazstor (2015) challenging the idea of internationally mobile doctoral students as a migratory 'elite'. Funding schemes, which are often controlled by the Global North, play a role in access to international educational opportunities. Khattab and Fenton (2015) also explore the nuances of academic staff mobility and note the influences of hierarchies of class, gender and ethnicity. With Europe as an example, Khattab and Fenton (ibid.) underline the unevenness of scientific personnel mobility in the EU and the influence of this on the model of European Science.

The international doctorate as mobile knowledge: The EThOS collection

Research relating to the doctorate is broad ranging and predominantly focuses on doctoral education which is constructed around the pedagogy of the doctorate. There are fewer examples of research which construct the doctorate as a coherent body of knowledge integral to research capacity (Oancea, 2023), or as knowledge which can inform disciplines and push forward science. Notable exceptions include the work of Larivière (2012) who coined the term 'on the shoulders of students' but with reference to doctoral students' participation in publishing. Shen et al. (2022) note that some research includes doctoral students in categorizations of international academic mobility, with Lee and Elliott (2020) defining doctoral students as diasporic academics and Fontes et al. (2013) casting the doctorate as the first stage of scientific mobility.

This chapter aims to reconceptualize doctoral research as a critical site for the creation of new knowledge (Manathunga et al., 2023) and aims to explore the mobility and immobility of doctoral knowledge. The chapter references research carried out by the author using the EThOS repository which contains 637,000 digital doctoral theses held by the British Library, representing an aggregated total of almost two million years of research across a full spectrum of disciplines. The author's research team have developed an Artificial Intelligence tool prototype which improves the capacity to mine, analyse and summarize the theses in the digital collection. The new search tool is designed to help users narrow down a large set of theses by providing

two main functions: clustering and text summarization. The clustering feature automatically organizes the theses into a user-specified number of categories, based on their content (Montgomery et al., 2024). The team has also carried out a descriptive analysis of the data in the EThOS collection.

Based on an analysis of the metadata of the EThOS repository using a searchable, curated, open access csv file of 637,000 abstracts, titles and theses by institutions and dates, we see that the collection reflects a history of doctoral knowledge in academic disciplines across almost four centuries. It charts this history of doctoral research and knowledge, and illustrates the emergence of themes, shapes of contributions to disciplines, timescales and geographies. The repository can offer emerging patterns of doctoral knowledge in all academic disciplines, with the collection being curated into nineteen subject categories linked to the Dewey Decimal system.

Looking at doctoral theses in EThOS over time, it is possible to see the exponential development of the numbers of doctorates in the last two decades. Table 5.1 shows that the highest numbers of theses in the collection date predominantly to the period between 1980 and the present time, with a clear period of expansion between 1950 and 1979.

This shows the growth of the significance of the doctorate and a growth in mobility, particularly in the last two decades. It also indicates that in constructing the EThOS collection as a body of knowledge, we are working with a predominantly recent data set.

Highlighting the Social Sciences and Health as way of narrowing the sample, we can also see that the collection of theses is uneven across the disciplines, with Medicine and Health constituting the biggest (and earliest) portion of the theses and Law having a lower number of doctoral theses, reflecting the different forms of legal qualifications and research beyond the doctorate. Table 5.2 shows the numbers of doctoral theses in a selection of the social sciences and health fields.

Table 5.1 UK Doctoral Theses by Period

Period	Number of UK doctoral theses
Pre-twentieth century	1,776
1900–1949	6,608
1950–79	60,573
1980–99	154,962
2000–2023	415,321

Table 5.2 Doctorates by Discipline in Social Science and Health

Subject discipline	Number of UK doctoral theses
Medicine and Health	102,109
Social, Economic and Political Studies	73,486
Law	7,466
Librarianship and Information Science	2,183
Language and Literature	27,241
History and Archaeology	19,399
Philosophy, Psychology and Religious Studies	30,899
Education	19,543
Total number of Doctoral Theses	**282,326**

The EThOS collection also provides insights into patterns of mobility of international students. Renate Simpson's (1983; 2009) seminal work on doctoral education in the UK showed that early groups of international doctoral students were predominantly Indian in origin. Table 5.3 shows the numbers of doctoral theses relating to India by date in the collection, selected by the occurrence of India in the title, abstract or keywords. The India theses are spread across all disciplines with the majority in Sciences and Engineering. It should be noted that the current lack of biographical metadata in the EThOS collection means that it is not possible to isolate students who come from India to the UK to study, so this data shows the theses which are about India rather than necessarily by Indian international students. As a result, whilst interesting, the theses about India are not an indicator of geographic mobility but could act as an example of transnational mobile knowledge based around a specific context or idea. Due to the ambiguity of the data set, it is difficult to understand the perspective of the theses about India as colonial, postcolonial or decolonial.

Despite this, the UK's colonial relationship with India is mirrored in the 6,029 doctoral theses relating to India. Further analysis of the institutions where theses about India were studied shows that SOAS (the School of Oriental and African Studies of the University of London) had a notable number of the theses about India in the early decades, with more than 200 theses between 1950 and 1979 compared to Oxford University's eighty theses about India in the same period. The collection thus shows patterns of international student mobility across UK institutions as well as disciplines and contexts. Further qualitative analysis of the collections of theses related to India or the authors themselves might more clearly illustrate existing connections, collaborations or reasons for selecting specific institutions.

Table 5.3 Doctoral Theses Relating to India by Period

Period	Number of theses relating to India
Pre-twentieth century	12
1900–1949	172
1950–79	640
1980–99	1,022
2000–2023	4,183
Total	**6,029**

How is doctoral knowledge crossing borders?

There are several ways in which the doctoral research held in the EThOS collection can be said to be mobile or crossing borders. First, there is physical geographic mobility represented by the movement of people across the globe to engage in doctoral programmes in the UK. In 2021–2, out of a total of 85,635 doctoral students registered that year, 32,560 were non-European and 8,800 were (non-UK) European, indicating that around half of the doctoral students that year were international students (HESA, 2024). Whilst the EThOS repository contains digital texts, the collection charts geographical movement of knowledge agents as part of complex global networks. Marginson (2022) underlines the role of human agency in the development of global science, noting that 'electronically mediated communication has made possible the birth and rapid expansion of a global science system, not driven by technology as such but by human agents' (Marginson, 2022, p. 1567).

Doctoral knowledge, like other forms of knowledge, is closely linked to its 'knower' or creator and their context. The importance of doctoral students as agents of knowledge is therefore significant. Marginson (2022) notes that the global science system is not simply a field of data, but it is 'a field of historically grounded social relations, which are only partly structured and are open to contextual variation, contingency and the ever-living potentials of agency' (Marginson, 2022, p. 1570). Here I am referring to the doctoral knowledge in EThOS as an illustration of a network of complex social relations and accompanying knowledge, dynamic in time, geographies and histories (Massey, 1993).

In addition to being individually mobile knowledge agents, international doctoral students are also part of complex global networks which involve movements between their institutions in the UK and 'at home', their supervisors and their networks, and these are part of their trajectories through their cultural

contexts and past and future mobilities and immobilities (although further analysis of EThOS would be required to understand these trajectories). One of the complexities of EThOS as a network of agents and knowledge is its nexus as both national and global. Marginson notes that '[s]cience is not either global or national/local. It is both at the same time' (Marginson, 2022, p. 1567), and this is apparent in the social, historical and cultural aspects of the research in the EThOS repository.

Supervisors exert huge influences on students' choice of theory and approaches and in some ways doctoral knowledge could be seen as a form of international research collaboration between student and supervisor (Oldac et al., 2024). Marginson (2022) notes that the growth in papers co-authored from more than one country is a significant part of empiricism in global science but co-authorship between supervisors and their doctoral students is hard to isolate and identify. The collaboration and co-authoring between international students and their supervisors contribute to an 'expanding pan-national network' of global science (Marginson, 2022, p. 1572) but the influence of doctoral knowledge is infrequently highlighted. Supervisors' influences can project far into the future with Moscovitch (2018) considering the influence of the political economist Harold Laski's teaching on his students (e.g. G.L. Mehta and Renuka Ray), some of whom became postcolonial leaders in India, and on the key Indian leader Jawaharlal Nehru. Many supervisory relationships are sustained beyond the UK, but further research is needed on the patterns of this beyond the students' return to their home country or their further mobility.

There are also power relations in supervisory pedagogies (Singh, 2009) with supervisory relationships being classed and racialized and doctoral supervisors being predominantly white and middle class and at least half of doctoral students in the UK being international. Doctoral student research and engagement are also confined to what the institution allows (Carey, 2018) and research is highly institutionalized, set in the fields of knowledge, structures and the communities of the academy (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012), making it challenging for doctoral students, particularly international doctoral students, to participate on their own terms.

What are the challenges to this form of knowledge mobility?

There are a range of tensions and contradictions in understanding doctoral knowledge as transnational mobility and the EThOS collection demonstrates

some of the challenges and complexities of knowledge mobilities. As a coherent body of knowledge, EThOS reflects patterns of mobility and immobility both through the movement (or lack of movement) of its agents (doctoral students) and the knowledge generated across the disciplines by international doctoral research. It also shows patterns of knowledge immobility with a tendency for Western theory and concepts to dominate, particularly in the Social Sciences (Montgomery, 2019). In an earlier analysis of EThOS (ibid.), the geographical contexts and directions of the theses analysed showed an uneven circulation of knowledge with international students who explored internationalization mostly focusing on either experience of or in UK institutions or on their own higher education systems, often using dominant Western concepts and theorists to explore their own non-Western country contexts. This underlined the influence of 'extraversion' as outlined above and indicated what Connell terms 'a pattern of quasi-globalization' (Connell, 2007, p. 218).

The current marketized system of international higher education has to a certain extent limited the social composition of international doctoral students with the significant number of self-funded students meaning that doctoral study remains the domain of the privileged. Data on the source of doctoral research funding is scarce, but there exist huge disparities globally in funding knowledge production (Chankseliani, 2022). There has been increasing emphasis on diversity in research and knowledge production as being integral to 'good' science (Olenina et al., 2023). Diversity in the context of research and knowledge production can be defined in a range of ways including disciplinary knowledge, methodological diversity, ethnicity, gender and race (ibid.). Understanding the nature of the diversity (in terms of origins and directions) of knowledge in doctoral research is not straightforward as whilst doctoral students may travel from the so-called Global South, they may be part of privileged mobile networks which characterize their knowledge creation as part of a present and/or future transnational elite (Bilecen and Faist, 2015).

A further challenge with constructing doctoral knowledge as part of a mobile system of global knowledge and science is that universities cling to a narrow view of what constitutes research and knowledge (Connell, 2017). In the Western academy there is a consistent devaluing of non-Western theoretical knowledge and knowledge generated by international doctoral students is not usually constructed as significant or powerful knowledge (Singh and Meng, 2013). International students tend to be either exoticized for their 'cultural' value or minimized by racialized attitudes which conflate national stereotypes with learning (Holliday and Aboshiha, 2009).

There are also powerful external forces which constrict inclusive views of research and knowledge in higher education. The global publishing system coupled with research assessment exercises (known as REF in the UK) leads to an 'oligopoly of large international corporations' (Brembs et al., 2023, p. 2) which drive a specific and limiting belief in what constitutes excellence in research and the influences of competition and neoliberalism give fuel to that fire (Watermeyer and Olssen, 2016). Therefore, questions are asked about the quality or consistency of the research in the EThOS collection, ignoring the fact that there is considerable contemporary concern about the quality of empirical results published in traditional journals and questions over the issue of the 'replication crisis' (Brembs et al., 2023, p. 2). The coupling of publication in high impact journals with the assessment of research in universities puts a stranglehold on universities' capacity to be open to alternative forms of knowledge including indigenous knowledge. Manathunga et al. (2023) note that 'First Nations and transcultural doctoral candidates should be encouraged to mobilize their theoretic-linguistic knowledge to critique dominant western/ northern knowledge production and work towards full epistemological inclusion' (2023, p. 121). They further point out that both supervisors and students should actively aim to locate their own cultural knowledges at the centre of their work (Manathunga et al., 2023).

Conclusion

This chapter has aimed to rethink the value of doctoral knowledge and has argued that this alternative and under-used source of knowledge could be understood as a form of transcultural knowledge mobility (Manathunga et al., 2023; Shen et al., 2022). Doctoral knowledge as represented in the EThOS collection can offer alternative understandings of the development of the disciplines in higher education; it can open up alternative histories of the development of UK higher education institutions and there are opportunities to trace knowledge trajectories across the globe, although this would need further research, for example using the digital identifier Orcid or a similar large-scale tool. This might shed light on the relationship between doctoral research and the influences of colonialism within the theses relating to countries such as India. If efforts to integrate currently marginalized doctoral knowledge into constructions of global science could come to fruition, it could raise the potential of open access (and therefore more mobile) knowledge systems. This might enable the unique form of knowledge represented by EThOS to become more mobile across

borders, enabled by Artificial Intelligence, bearing in mind the challenges and ethics of such tools.

As outlined above, there remain significant challenges in achieving genuinely inclusive knowledge mobility, for doctoral knowledge or other forms of knowledge. Immobility of knowledge, inequalities in mobilities and marginalized knowledge systems represent epistemic injustices (Tuhiwai Smith, 2014) and for knowledge to be mobile it is necessary for ideas to influence each other, not just circulate, in a system of intercultural exchange. The discussion above of the inequalities embedded in the nature of the knowledge of the EThOS collection are germane to this debate as they indicate whether knowledge is genuinely mobile or whether doctoral knowledge is simply circulating within the domain of an elite higher education system. A further issue relating to immobility of knowledge is the dominance of the English language in the global publishing system, and in the Westernized global higher education system. The EThOS collection is mostly in English, and this is true about many of the larger repositories of doctoral theses across the world (e.g. the United States, New Zealand and Canada hold large open repositories of doctoral theses in English), although there are smaller ones in the Netherlands and other European contexts which are in multiple languages. The Indian thesis repository Shodhganga (https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/) is an exception to this, with many theses in numerous Indian languages, reflecting the multilingual context of Indian higher education.

EThOS could be described as a place or space of knowledge, echoing Massey's (1993) idea of place, made up of flows and movements and the 'myriad interlinkages and interdependencies among places' (Kitchin, 2016, p. 814). Like EThOS as a space, Massey's boundaries of space are both social and spatial with consequent hierarchies and relative positioning, bringing immobility and exclusion alongside mobility. Whilst EThOS offers almost endless potential to explore doctoral research and surface it for the benefit of the academy and global science, there are global contextual challenges to its construction as an inclusive form of mobile knowledge.

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Part Two

Coercion, Conflict and Forced Mobilities and Immobilities in Higher Education

Forced Mobility/Immobility of Students and Scholars from Higher Education in Ukraine

Nadiya Ivanenko

Introduction

Mobility has emerged as a defining feature of contemporary higher education, seen to be facilitating cross-cultural exchange, knowledge dissemination and academic collaboration. In Ukraine, a country marked by war, geopolitical tensions, economic challenges and educational reforms, the mobility of students and scholars has taken on particular significance, considering the role of mobility in knowledge exchange, academic collaboration and national development. Focusing on the factors influencing mobility/immobility, this chapter aims to provide insights into the patterns of migration, both domestic and international, within Ukraine's higher education sector. Furthermore, the study explores the challenges faced by mobile individuals, including cultural adaptation, language barriers and institutional constraints. Additionally, the chapter examines the potential consequences of brain drain and brain gain for Ukraine's educational and scientific landscape.

This research employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative data analysis with qualitative case studies. Quantitative data are obtained from official sources, including government reports, university statistics and international databases.

The impact of the war on the education process and mobility

Since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, Ukrainian higher education has been facing huge and formidable challenges (Ivanenko, 2024). One of the significant challenges in organizing the educational process

within higher education institutions (HEIs) is ensuring learning conditions that minimize the risk to the life and health of students and staff. This objective aligns with the constitutional duty of the state, as defined by Article 53 of the Basic Law. Institutional and regulatory support has been instrumental in addressing this challenge from February 2022. Measures include the relocation of HEIs together with the staff, from areas of active hostilities or potential destructive actions to secure territories, or their integration into other HEIs within designated safety zones. Only during the 2022 relocation, 131 tertiary education institutions moved to other regions, with a total number of 91,000 students and over 11,000 faculty. These institutions are usually hosted in just a few rooms of their partner educational institutions. Faculty and students continue to work and study remotely, regardless of their physical location.

According to the interactive map of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, as of May 2024, 3,798 education institutions have suffered bombing and shelling throughout the country, and 365 of them have been destroyed completely. Among them, sixty-eight institutions of higher education were badly damaged or completely destroyed. The Mykolaiv, Kharkiv and Chernihiv regions suffered the highest losses, with twenty-five, twenty-three and twelve HEIs destroyed respectively. The total number of educational institutions affected by the war is shown in Figure 6.1.

During the first half of 2024 the number of HEIs impacted by damage, including postgraduate education institutions, increased by 1.2 times. The

■ Total number of educational institutions affected by the war, %
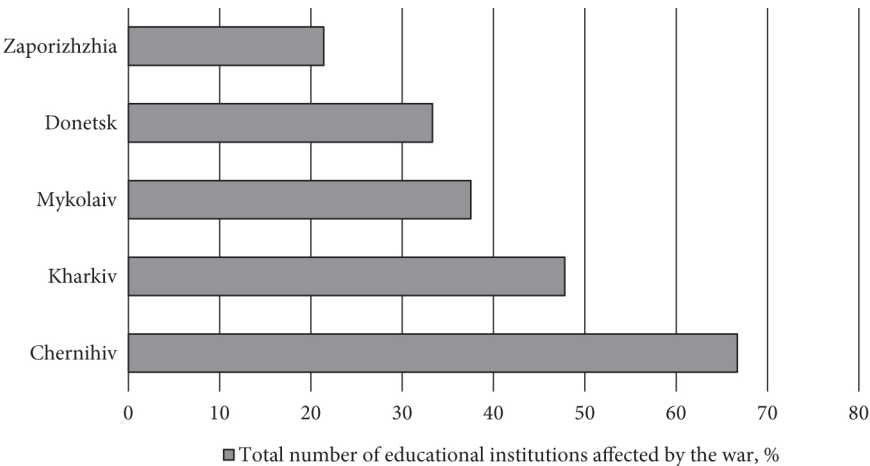
Figure 6.1 Total number of educational institutions affected by the war by region.

relocation of educational institutions is understandably necessitated by the active hostilities occurring in the eastern and southern regions of Ukraine. However, these relocations require significant investments of time and resources to be successfully implemented and sustained, thereby resulting in interruptions to students' education and impacting the quality of their studies.

Efforts have also focused on identifying and rectifying deficiencies in administrative and management practices within the education sector (Minister of Education and Science of Ukraine, 2022). HEIs in safer regions had to return to a hybrid format and adapt their educational processes to new conditions in order to ensure safety and security for students and faculty. In times of war, educational establishments are often targeted, resulting in loss of life and destruction of infrastructure. Resources must be devoted to providing shelter from bombardment, but not all of institutions have space to accommodate their students. Despite ominous trends such as infrastructure destruction, displacement of students and faculty, student and staff loss, security concerns, cyber threats for universities' information systems, financial strains, educational process organization issues and students' and academic staff mental health and well-being, Ukrainian higher education institutions persist in functioning and providing educational services.

Shift to remote education

Ukrainian higher education was compelled to switch rapidly to distance and hybrid modes of delivery, utilizing distance communication and educational tools with the start of the war. Based on displacement data, students located close to battlefront zones are being exclusively taught in a distance format, rendering it impossible to acquire practical professional skills. This situation underscores the challenges faced by students amidst the ongoing conflict, highlighting the urgent need for comprehensive support measures to mitigate the adverse effects on their educational experiences. As of 1 July 2023, among the 635 HEIs and institutions of pre-vocational education surveyed, 16.4 per cent had transitioned entirely to full-time education, while 48.0 per cent continued to operate remotely. Additionally, 32.6 per cent adopted a mixed format for educational delivery, while 3.0 per cent had not resumed activities for various reasons, such as forced breaks or having to re-organize educational activities and processes in response to fast changing conditions (Minister of Education and Science of Ukraine, 2023).
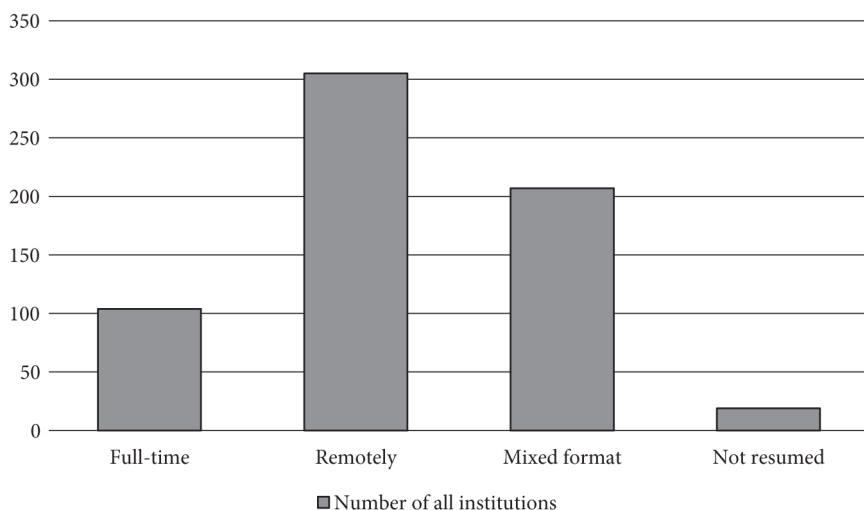
Figure 6.2 Number of HEIs by format of study in July 2023.

As shown in Figure 6.2, from a security standpoint, full-time education provision is notably absent in institutions located in all eleven frontline, near-frontline and potentially vulnerable regions of the country, excluding Odesa, Kyiv and Chernihiv regions. In sixteen regions nationwide, not a single university has shifted to full-time provision. This group encompasses HEIs in Vinnytsia, Zakarpattia, Ivano-Frankivsk, Khmelnytskyi, Cherkasy and Chernivtsi regions, in addition to those in frontline, near-frontline and potentially hazardous regions (excluding Odesa region). The highest rates of full-time delivery of education among institutions of this type are observed in the Volyn region. These data underscore the varied approaches taken by HEIs across different regions of Ukraine in response to security concerns and highlights the complexities inherent in ensuring educational continuity amidst challenging circumstances.

Support from the global academic community

Since Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022, as a result of hostile shelling and hostilities, a significant number of academics have been forced to leave their places of residence and work, becoming internally displaced persons, refugees or have joined the Armed Forces of Ukraine. This massive outflow of human and intellectual capital poses significant threats to Ukraine's economic, social and humanitarian development. In response, widespread actions were taken by

most European universities (Brooks and Rensimer, 2024). Different foreign HEIs offered opportunities for Ukrainian students and academics to continue their studies and work. Additionally, universities in Poland, Estonia, Lithuania, the UK, Greece and other countries expressed support for Ukrainian students, offering continued education, scholarship programmes and psychological and financial support. Poland's National Agency for Academic Exchange launched the Solidarity with Ukraine programme, which provides Ukrainian students and young researchers with preferential conditions for study and research.

A range of opportunities were opened for visiting professors and postdoctoral researchers from Ukraine in various European universities. Eurizon (https://www.eurizon-project.eu/about/) includes a special focus on coordination and support measures dedicated to support technical collaboration with Ukrainian scientists to support Ukrainian research infrastructures. The Central European Research Infrastructure Consortium (CERIC) (https://www.ceric-eric.eu/) continues to host Ukrainian post-doctoral researchers at its partner facilities across Europe, located in Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, Romania and Slovenia. The Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) fund supports Ukrainian academics at all stages of their career through mobility across borders and exposure to different sectors and disciplines. National initiatives, such as the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD)'s 'Ukraine digital: Ensuring academic success in times of crisis' programme and UK-based 'Ukraine twinning initiative', have already fostered the establishment of new partnerships, many of which will hopefully continue long after the war has ended. Thus, faced with an ongoing war, links to the international academic community through partnerships and mobility programmes have been a lifeline to many Ukrainian institutions.

Outflow of Ukrainian and international students

Since the beginning of the war in 2014, the outflow of Ukrainian students abroad has been increasing, due to unfavourable conditions, including the destruction of educational institutions (see Table 6.1).

Since 2022, there have been significant outflows of Ukrainian students to European, Asian and other study destination, many receiving favourable support to further their studies. The onset of the war has motivated many more Ukrainians to pursue education in other countries. Polish higher education institutions, for instance, have welcomed a growing number of Ukrainian

applicants each year. The admissions campaign for 2022/3 and 2023/4 in Ukraine took place in challenging conditions. Many higher education institutions found it impossible to conduct career guidance activities among high school students in the usual face-to-face format. As noted, the presentation platforms of HEIs had to transition to a virtual mode, which does not allow for the authentic university atmosphere to be truly reproduced. Moreover, the number of applicants from active combat zones and occupied territories decreased. These individuals lacked the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the admission conditions, had limited internet access or faced danger if seen to be opting for Ukrainian higher education. Some were lured into choosing fake Russian educational institutions that functioned as instruments of Russian propaganda which subjected students to brainwashing. The questions remain unanswered whether circumstances will improve to enable the educated youth to return to Ukraine, and whether Ukraine will develop promising, well-paid programmes for returnees.

At the start of the 2021–22 academic year, over 84,000 foreign citizens from more than 150 countries were enrolled in Ukrainian HEIs (see Figure 6.3). The ongoing war in Ukraine has severely impacted in-bound international students, particularly those from Asia and Africa, disrupting their mobility and study experiences. With the outbreak of the full-scale war, most foreign students were forced to leave Ukraine. International students did not necessarily return to their home countries. Many took the opportunity to obtain rights equal to those of the EU citizens as refugees from Ukraine, including rights to education, thus moving to the adjoining countries (War in Ukraine, 2023).
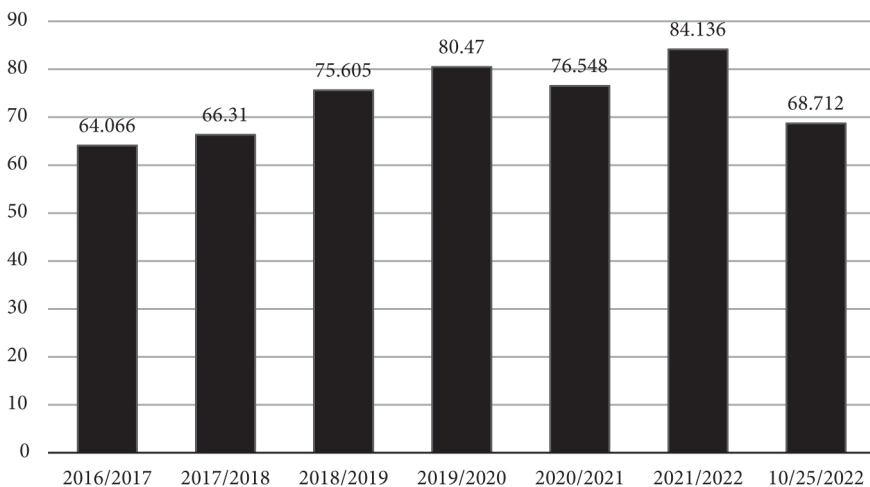
Figure 6.3 Number of foreign students in Ukraine over the period 2016–22.

Table 6.1 Migration Mobility of Students from 2010 to 2018

Category/Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
International students in Ukraine	35,066	53,664	60,480	69,969	63,172	63,906	64,066	66,310	75,605
Ukrainian students abroad	25,983	28,456	32,608	46,382	47,724	59,648	66,668	77,424	82,171

Source: Author, from data originally in Kovbatiuk and Shevchuk, 2020.

Loss of academic staff

There is also a huge loss of academic staff in Ukraine's higher education sector. According to available data, 665,000 higher education and school students (16 per cent of the total number) and 25,000 educators (6 per cent of the total number) left Ukraine. In wartime conditions, HEIs are forced to optimize labour costs by reducing allowances, fragmenting rates and reducing staff. Since 1 January 2023, many HEIs had to significantly cut the number of staff positions for scientific and pedagogical workers, support staff and other employees due to significant funding cuts, as well as reductions in the student population. These developments have forced educators to leave the profession altogether or move to more secure fields or seek employment in foreign higher education institutions. It is noteworthy that a significant number of scientific and pedagogical workers left Ukrainian HEIs to work abroad for considerably higher salaries even before the reduction in positions began. Their outbound mobility can be attributed not only to the security situation in the country but also the possibility of secure income and greater financial rewards for their work.

As of 1 January 2023, the total number of employees at the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine was 26,167, including 13,883 researchers, compared to 14,212 in the previous year – a decrease of 329 (2.3 per cent). By 20 July 2023, 2,202 researchers (16 per cent of the actual number of researchers) at the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine (NASU) had lost the opportunity to work in their roles. Among these, 1,497 (11 per cent) had left Ukraine, and 705 (5 per cent) were internally displaced persons (IDPs) within the country, with 3.9 per cent working remotely, 0.7 per cent on unpaid leave, 0.5 per cent on forced downtime with 67 per cent pay and 0.3 per cent on paid leave. Furthermore, 197 researchers from NASU institutions, representing 1.4 per

cent of the total number of NASU scientists, are currently serving in the Armed Forces of Ukraine and other military formations.

According to the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, the primary factors and risks that will impact the national economy, public life and the processes of (re)training are the loss of material and technical infrastructures, including staffing shortages caused by the relocation of citizens to safer regions, or because they find themselves in occupied territories. For those who have relocated to safer regions within the country or to study abroad, there is an increased likelihood of a significant reduction in state orders for the next academic years. In the aftermath of the war, a substantial portion of students, teachers and other staff from these educational institutions may choose not to return to Ukraine, opting instead to stay abroad. Moreover, the number of opportunities may decrease due to changes in the number of educational institutions and training bases, and the evolving staffing needs of the national economy and public life during and after the war (Ivanenko et al., 2024). These dynamic changes require balanced government decisions to address the challenges effectively.

Challenges faced by the outwardly mobile

In some ways, international academic mobility in Ukraine experienced an increase in scale, intensity and volume. This has been facilitated by strengthened international cooperation between foreign and Ukrainian universities, support for Ukrainian higher education students and teachers during times of war, grant and targeted support by charitable foundations, and collaborations within international projects such as the Erasmus+ International Academic Mobility project. However, there are also challenges underpinning these mobility patterns. These include the complexities of organizing educational institutions under martial law, limited student awareness of international academic mobility programmes, limits to outbound mobility by some men of conscription age and the return of Ukrainian students to continue studies at Ukrainian universities.

Martial law in Ukraine restricts the ability of men aged eighteen to sixty to leave the country. In accordance with Resolution No. 366 of 2 April 2024, male students aged eighteen to twenty-two can now participate in academic mobility programmes for one term, though this exemption does not apply to researchers or older students pursuing second higher education degrees. Postgraduate students and interns can still travel abroad. These restrictions significantly hinder international academic exchange.

Financial and logistical issues further complicate the situation with academic mobility, manifesting in universities' inability to send or receive students, insufficient funding and grant support and a lack of standardized textbooks and universally recognized curricula. The level of public funding of higher education was reduced by 10 per cent after the start of the full-scale armed aggression. The lack of funding for the research activities at HEIs is significant. In 2023 Ministry of Education and Science cut funding of fundamental research by nearly 60 per cent, and applied research, scientific and technical development by nearly 70 per cent, and for all research by young scientists by nearly 80 per cent.

A survey among 2500 students of Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv was conducted to learn if students agree with the statement that there is a sufficient number of international opportunities available (such as exchange programmes and internships) after the outbreak of a full-scale war, and also to learn which students plan to continue their studies abroad or return to Ukraine universities during the war (n.d.).

Respondents displayed a notable degree of optimism regarding the possibility of Ukrainian young people returning home after the war (see Figure 6.4). In the survey, 32.1 per cent of respondents indicated 'strongly agree' or 'rather agree', while the majority (40.7 per cent) reported no perceived increase in international opportunities. For respondents not enrolled in full-time international mobility programmes at the time of the survey, their potential future actions were modelled: if given the opportunity to study abroad (including international mobility programmes), what would they do upon completion? Among students, 21.6 per cent expressed no intention to go abroad, 30.7 per cent planned to return to Ukraine, 23.7 per cent intended to seek employment abroad for experience, 2.7 per cent anticipated staying abroad for reasons other than education or work, just 1.5 per cent planned to enrol in
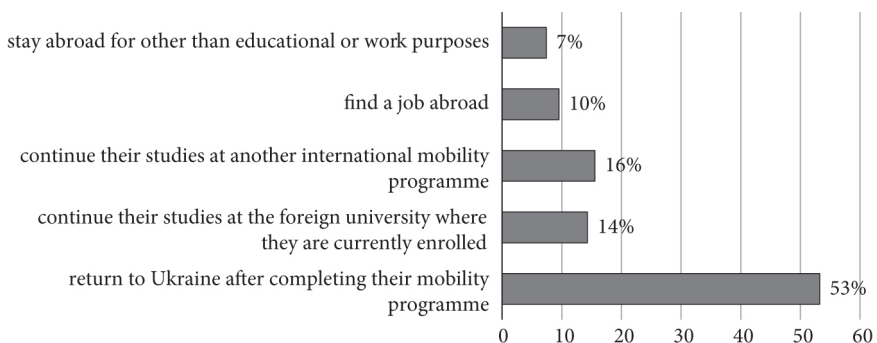
Figure 6.4 Students' intentions to return.

Table 6.2 Number of Students in Higher Education Institutions as of February and December 2022

Degrees/months of 2022	February 2022	December 2022
The total number of students of HEIs, HEE, persons	1,335,690	1,112,965
Junior Specialist	130,503	31,852
Junior Bachelor	3,550	2,880
Bachelor's degree	707,287	727,848
Specialist	2,419	778
Master's degree	238,318	316,623
Doctor of Philosophy	25,071	32,859
Doctor of arts	110	125

Source: Author, using data from the Government Bureau of Statistics of Ukraine.

another programme abroad and merely 0.9 per cent intended to participate in another international mobility programme. Additionally, 19.0 per cent found it challenging to answer this question.

Table 6.2 illustrates the student population at the beginning and end of 2022. A notable finding is the significant decrease in the total number of students, a decline of 222,725, indicating a substantial reduction in enrolment. This decline can be attributed to various factors including serious war-related disruptions including casualties, mobilization of students for military service and emigration to other countries. This trend is particularly evident among students pursuing junior specialist and specialist degrees, where the numbers have decreased by fourfold and threefold, respectively. Conversely, there has been an increase in the number of students pursuing bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees. This data suggests a noteworthy trend wherein many adult males were returning to education, possibly as a means to avoid military mobilization.

Implications of the forced mobility/immobility

Since the commencement of Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022, academics and students engaged in international mobility programmes have encountered numerous challenges that have significantly impacted their academic pursuits, cross-border experiences and academic careers (CoEU, 2023). These challenges encompass various factors, including logistical, safety-

related, administrative, economic and psychological aspects, profoundly impacting the mobility landscape.

Safety concerns

The escalation of hostilities following the invasion has raised significant safety concerns for academics and students engaged in international mobility. The risk of violence, conflict zones and geopolitical instability has prompted apprehension among participants, leading to a reluctance to travel to or remain in affected regions. Safety considerations have become paramount in decision-making regarding participation in mobility programmes, with many individuals opting to postpone or cancel their mobility plans altogether.

Disruptions to travel and logistics

The imposition of travel restrictions, border closures and disruptions to transportation infrastructure have posed substantial logistical challenges for mobile academics and students. Flights cancellations, visa suspensions and quarantine requirements have complicated travel arrangements, leading to delays, uncertainties and additional expenses. The logistical hurdles associated with international travel have made it increasingly difficult for individuals to participate in mobility programmes and fulfil academic commitments abroad.

Administrative barriers

The administrative complexities arising from the invasion have compounded the challenges faced by academics and students in international mobility. Administrative processes, such as visa applications, residency permits and academic credential recognition, have become more cumbersome and time-consuming, exacerbating bureaucratic hurdles for mobility participants. Additionally, the lack of clarity and consistency in administrative procedures across different countries and institutions has added to the administrative burden faced by mobile individuals.

Psychological strain

The psychological toll of the invasion on mobile academics and students cannot be overstated. The pervasive sense of uncertainty, fear and anxiety stemming

from the conflict has taken a significant toll on mental health and well-being. Coping with the stressors of displacement, separation from family and friends and adaptation to unfamiliar environments have posed formidable challenges for individuals engaged in international mobility, impacting their academic performance, motivation and overall quality of life.

Educational disruptions

The invasion has precipitated disruptions to educational activities and academic calendars in affected regions, adversely affecting mobile academics and students. Closures of educational institutions, shifts to online learning modalities and interruptions to research projects and academic collaborations have undermined the educational experience and hindered the attainment of learning objectives for mobility participants. Moreover, the uncertain and volatile geopolitical landscape has posed challenges for long-term planning and academic continuity, further complicating mobility experiences.

Furthermore, students encounter several challenges when navigating border crossings. To pursue studies in foreign institutions, students are required to furnish a series of essential documents, including: (a) a valid student card or student visa; (b) translated and notarized documents confirming enrolment at a foreign university; (c) military registration documents verifying deferment from conscription (mobilization); (d) a certificate from the Territorial Center for recruitment and social support, permitting students of professional pre-higher and higher education, student assistants, postgraduates and doctoral candidates to embark on travel abroad for full-time or dual educational programmes (Kuznichenko, 2022).

Ukrainian researchers abroad

Moreover, there is a precarious situation for Ukrainian higher education researchers abroad, which is deeply rooted in the uncertain position they face in securing academic jobs in their host countries. This uncertainty stems from a multitude of factors, including geopolitical tensions, language barriers, credential recognition challenges and limited job opportunities: host countries are hesitant to hire academics from Ukraine due to political sensitivities or concerns about potential conflicts of interest. Moreover, the geopolitical context may exacerbate xenophobia or discrimination against Ukrainian nationals, further limiting their employment prospects.

Language proficiencies pose a significant barrier for Ukrainian researchers seeking academic positions abroad. While English is widely used as the language of instruction and communication in academia, proficiency in the local language of the host country is required for certain academic positions or research projects. Ukrainian researchers may encounter challenges in adapting to language requirements and may face limited opportunities if they are not proficient in the language of their host country.

The recognition of academic credentials obtained in Ukraine varies across different countries and academic institutions. Ukrainian researchers encounter difficulties in having their qualifications recognized abroad, particularly if there are discrepancies in educational standards or accreditation systems between Ukraine and the host country. Credential recognition challenges can hinder the career advancement and professional integration of Ukrainian researchers in the academic job market abroad.

The academic job market is highly competitive, with limited job opportunities available for researchers in many countries. Ukrainian researchers face stiff competition from local and international candidates for academic positions, particularly in fields where there is oversupply or low demand for research expertise. Moreover, the availability of funding for academic research projects may be limited, further constraining job opportunities for Ukrainian scholars abroad.

Ukrainian researchers encounter administrative hurdles related to visa and work permit requirements when seeking academic jobs abroad. Visa restrictions, residency requirements and work permit regulations can complicate the employment process and may deter potential employers from hiring Ukrainian researchers. Uncertainties surrounding visa and work permit issues can exacerbate the precariousness of their situation and add to the challenges they face in securing academic jobs abroad.

Conclusions

The harsh realities of war are accelerating advancements in various research fields, notably data science and artificial intelligence, particularly for drone technologies. Additionally, these developments extend to areas like digital governance and digital forensics. Addressing public and mental health crises, as well as the widespread war crimes, is of utmost urgency. This underscores the critical role of the social sciences and humanities, both within Ukraine and on a

global scale. Questions that were once primarily theoretical in disciplines such as political science, media studies and gender studies have now become highly relevant. The near absence of Ukrainian studies in Europe and the decolonization of Slavonic/Russian studies have unexpectedly emerged as significant issues for national and international security. This includes recognizing the colonial histories of the region, examining the impact of Russian imperialism, giving more attention to the perspectives of smaller Slavic nations, indigenous groups and those who have been historically oppressed and promoting a more diverse and inclusive curriculum. The decolonization of Slavonic/Russian studies is a crucial step towards a more just and equitable understanding of the region and its people. That is why in many of these swiftly evolving or newly emerging research areas, collaboration with Ukrainian researchers is beneficial and indispensable. Their extensive knowledge and unique life experiences, gained within a major Slavic nation, offer invaluable insights and perspectives that can significantly enhance research outcomes.

The scope for educators and students to exchange experiences and knowledge through mobility programmes remains pivotal. It is noteworthy that amidst the challenges posed by the coronavirus pandemic and the war in Ukraine, opportunities for international travel via grants and exchange programmes have increased. In a show of solidarity, foreign educational institutions have extended various opportunities for students and educators, often at no cost, to facilitate continued learning, professional development and cultural exchange. Some of the most common types of support provided include (a) full scholarships targeting Ukrainian students, covering tuition fees, accommodation and living expenses; (b) language courses to help Ukrainian students and researchers integrate into their new academic environments; (c) internships and work placements to gain valuable practical experience and build their professional networks; and (d) exchange programmes to temporarily study or teach at foreign institutions, fostering cultural understanding and collaboration.

However, certain restrictions persist, particularly affecting men due to mobilization and conscription requirements. Furthermore, the ongoing hostilities have hindered mobility for some individuals unable to leave occupied territories. The destruction of educational institutions has exacerbated displacement, with some seeking relief from the depredations of the war, contributing to increased uptake of student and academic mobility programmes

The challenges faced by academics and students in international mobility since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion are multifaceted and profound.

Addressing these challenges necessitates concerted efforts from governments, educational institutions, international organizations and the broader academic community to mitigate risks, provide support mechanisms and ensure the safety, well-being and academic success of mobility participants in a turbulent global context.

The precarious situation of Ukrainian higher education researchers abroad is characterized by the uncertain position they face in securing academic jobs in host countries. Geopolitical tensions, language barriers, credential recognition challenges, limited job opportunities, and visa and work permit issues all contribute to the complexities of their situation. It is imperative that the focus of the international community's support to Ukrainian higher education shifts to long-term goals. New academic links to Ukraine, forged by thousands of displaced Ukrainian academics, offer unique opportunities for mutually beneficial collaboration. Addressing these challenges requires proactive measures to support the professional integration and career advancement of Ukrainian researchers in the global academic community.

To the above, it is worth adding that outbound mobility by Ukrainians has generally been insignificant before the war and an academic diaspora as such has not taken shape and this along with adjustments to a new country's language and culture creates additional psychological pressures. However, the fact remains unequivocal that they are under the influence of completely different factors than those of their colleagues who have remained in Ukraine.

An important consideration concerns the eventual return of students, educators and researchers to Ukraine. The potential for individuals to opt to remain in other countries could diminish Ukraine's educational and scientific excellence. Addressing this question is imperative for safeguarding Ukraine's educational and scientific future.

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Cross-Border Student Mobilities: Mobility Capital and the Pursuit of Mobility Justice among Palestinian Citizens of Israel

Una McGahern

Introduction

The ability of Palestinian citizens of Israel to access a higher education in Israel has been historically restricted and territorially circumscribed. Representing approximately 20 per cent of the total population, just 2.9 per cent of students enrolled at Israeli universities in the 1970s were Palestinian, compared to 6.7 per cent in the mid-1980s and 13 per cent in 2013 (Arar and Haj Yehia, 2016, p. 44). While this number continues to grow, so too does the number of Palestinian students seeking a higher education elsewhere. Driven by long-standing inequalities of access to Israeli universities which have been well-documented elsewhere (Arar and Haj Yehia, 2016), it is estimated that 18 to 24 per cent of Palestinian citizens who pursue a higher education today must leave Israel to do so, compared with 5 per cent of Jewish Israelis (Wind, 2024, p. 155).

Where these students have sought an alternative academic home has changed in line with shifting geopolitical realities. In the first decades of the Israeli state, universities in the eastern bloc of socialist states of the former USSR attracted the bulk of Palestinian students seeking a higher education, supported by bursaries from the Israeli Communist Party. From 1991, universities in the United States and Western Europe attracted increasing numbers of Palestinian students, while, from the late 1990s and early 2000s, students increasingly re-oriented their direction of travel to universities in Jordan and Turkey.

In 2012, however, a new and unexpected destination of choice emerged: Palestinian universities in the occupied West Bank. At the peak of this trend, during the 2018–19 academic year, approximately 10,000 Palestinian citizens

of Israel were studying at universities across the West Bank (McGahern, 2023; McGahern et al., 2024). More than half of these were registered at the Arab American University of Palestine (AAUP) near the city of Jenin, exceeding the number of Palestinian students registered at either Haifa University or Tel Aviv University that same year (Bigman, 2020).

Given the history of violent partition of Palestinian communities living on both sides of the 'Green Line' (the 1949 armistice lines that constitute Israel's de facto border) and the segregationist nature of Israel's ongoing settler-colonial project across Israel-Palestine, most Palestinian high school students had, until 2012, rarely, if ever, stepped foot in the West Bank, let alone in Jenin (McGahern, 2023). Forced to navigate an unfamiliar and heavily securitized border and then cross it on a weekly and sometimes daily basis over an extended period of time (four to six years of university study), the physical mobilities, action spaces and mental maps of these students were quickly transformed through the activation of informal Palestinian networks which sought to bridge mobility gaps, pool limited resources, build confidence and fill in gaps in geographical knowledge and travel know-how.

As this chapter will show, these students not only sought to develop their individual and collective capacities to move across a heavily securitized border but to counter or circumvent the logics of settler colonialism which continue to undermine, restrict and erode both their capacities to move and the potentiality of their movement. Employing the concept of 'mobility capital' to analyse the adaptive and counter-hegemonic moves of these students casts important light not only on the more tenuous nature of Palestinian student mobilities but on the ongoing struggles of indigenous communities to access and exercise their rights in a settler-colonial context.

Cross-border mobility in a settler-colonial regime

Settler colonialism is a form of colonialism whereby settlers move to, occupy and seek to replace the original population of a colonized territory with a new society of settlers (Veracini, 2010; Wolfe, 2006). 'Grounded in space yet facilitated by mobility' (Katz, 2022, p. 213), the emergence and continuation of settler-colonial regimes is rooted in struggles over movement as much as it is in contestations over land. Despite the large volume of work tracing uneven patterns of mobility in a variety of different settler-colonial contexts, settler colonialism itself has only recently emerged as a central focus of analysis in mobility studies (Carpio et al., 2022). Critiqued for its heavy focus on the

mobile experiences on individual, white, male and middle-class travellers within primarily Western liberal country contexts, the emphasis that the new mobilities paradigm (Sheller and Urry, 2016) places on the complex interdependencies and multiple relationalities that exist between people and places in movement and stasis makes it well suited to deeper explorations of the 'politics of mobility' (Sheller, 2018) and, more particularly, the politics of fear and disorientation, as well as of dispossession and violence, that shape (im)mobilities in a settler-colonial context.

As Hagar Kotef (2015, p. 3, 6) notes, political orders are 'regimes of movement' and 'any understanding of subject-positions (or identity categories) and the political orders within which they gain meaning cannot be divorced from movement'. As such, while it remains important to examine the spaces that people move through, the modes of transport that they use, or the practices, habits and behaviours that they develop along the way, we must not lose sight of the structures that enable and perpetuate uneven patterns of (im)mobility in the first place. In particular, we must be mindful of both the spaciocidal dimension of settler colonialism – that is, the 'dispossession, occupation and destruction of Palestinian living space' (Hanafi, 2009, p. 106) – and the processes of 'accumulation by dispossession' (Sabbagh Khoury, 2022) of land and resources, goods and services, rights and opportunities, as well as of technologies and infrastructures that facilitate and extend the mobility, autonomy and sovereignty of some while limiting or denying these same rights and opportunities, capacities and potentialities, to others.

During the *Nakba* (or disaster) of 1948, over 400 Arab villages were destroyed and approximately 750,000 Palestinians displaced or expelled from their homes on land that was to fall within the newly established borders of the state of Israel. Proximity to new borders, major highways and strategic junctions contributed to further patterns of depopulation, destruction and confiscation of land over subsequent decades (McGahern, 2017). Those who remained in Israel acquired their citizenship 'incidentally' (Bishara, 2017), by virtue of their presence in the new state, and were 'entrapped' by it (Sabbagh Khoury, 2022, p. 5). Efforts to 'Judaize' the land, or 'fill' in the vacuum left by the destruction and depopulation of Arab neighbourhoods with new Jewish settlements (Falah, 1991), were facilitated by eighteen years of military rule (1948–66) imposed unilaterally on the remnant Palestinian community. This included the introduction of a new regime of movement reinforced by emergency regulations which sought to restrict their movement, arrest and deport 'infiltrators' (Palestinian returnees), introduce curfews, establish 'security zones' and no-go areas and confiscate land (Robinson, 2013).

Strategies of 'circumvention, infiltration and illegal border crossing' (Ghanim, 2014, p. 478) emerged as border-torn residents sought not only to return to their homes and agricultural lands but to secure access to markets to buy and sell their goods and services. Such acts of border crossing carried an immanent threat to life with approximately 5,000 returnees estimated to have been killed as a result of 'shoot-to-kill' policies during this time (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2016, p. 170). While many of the overt measures of containing and immobilizing the movements of Palestinian citizens have abated since the abrogation of military rule in 1966, or rather shifted territorial focus to the occupied Palestinian territories (Ben Arie, 2020), systems of surveillance and control have remained, creating a climate of fear and paranoia, as well as acute levels of anxiety, stress and insecurity associated with the border and the act of border-crossing.

Formally, legal prohibitions on entering PA-administered areas of the West Bank are not enforced against Palestinian citizens but produce deterrence through fear of enforcement of Israel's security apparatus. So endemic is the state of anxiety and uncertainty caused by the anticipation of violence at the border that a 'politics of fear' has become a central pillar of Israel's settler-colonial project which assists not only 'in disciplining, displacing and erasing communities' (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2015, p. 7) but in constructing the moving Palestinian body as a security threat.

This rupturing of Palestinian lives, spaces and movements has resulted in clear patterns of border-avoidance as well as of internalized patterns of 'self-surveillance in the everyday' (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2016, p. 187) as Palestinians seek to minimize the potential risks of physical and material harm now and in the future. Such patterns of border-avoidance have been further compounded by the disorienting effects of shifting border fences and technologies. The 'politics of disorientation' (Bishara, 2015, p. 34) caused by Israel's expansive system of checkpoints and the unpredictability of its closure policies obstructs the ability to plan and undertake journeys safely and with confidence. The arbitrariness of violence at checkpoints in turn creates a state of 'anxious anticipation of humiliation and violence' (Peteet, 2017, p. 63–4) which has not only accentuated border-avoidance practices but restrained mobility more generally.

Mobility capital and minority capital accumulation strategies

Notwithstanding these structural realities and pressures, settler-colonial spaces are not only 'structures of mobility injustice' (Carpio et al., 2022) but spaces of varied and variegated counter-hegemonic struggles where indigenous actors

seek out new and alternative ways to move and mobilize, to exercise their rights to move, to assert their presence and to re-appropriate places on the move (McGahern, 2016; 2017; 2019). This is particularly true in settler-colonial contexts where partial citizenship rights are granted to some elements of the indigenous community and where individual and collective moves reflect 'a form of indigenous agency that does not simply accept purely individual rights offered via settler governmentality but seeks cracks and opportunities to assert and, to an extent, effectively deploy self-sovereignty' (Sabbagh Khoury, 2022).

In order to attend to the assertive and counter-hegemonic 'moves' of indigenous and minoritized actors living in settler-colonial contexts, and the role these moves play in struggles for mobility justice, we must first attend to the concept of mobility capital. If capital can be understood as any set of resources which are 'mobilizable and usable in pursuing social advantage' (Anthias, 2007, p. 789), then mobility capital is about the mobilizability of resources towards that end. Defined as 'the capacity of entities (e.g. goods, information or persons) to be mobile in social and geographic space' as well as 'the potentiality of movement' that they possess to do so now or in the future' (Kaufman et al., 2004, pp. 749–50, 752), mobility capital is based on three interdependent elements: access, competence and appropriation.

'Access' refers primarily to the wide range of structural factors which facilitate or constrain the potentiality and capacity to move, such as access to economic means, legal documents and material resources (such as a car or the correct ID) but also access to time (or rather the ability to take time away from other responsibilities and duties). 'Competence' signifies the sets of skills and aptitudes as well as the knowledge or know-how needed to undertake a journey and be mobile (such as possession of a driver's licence, knowledge of particular roads and terrain, the location of checkpoints, points of congestion and the timings of closures). 'Appropriation', or more specifically, 'the cognitive appropriation of opportunities to realize projects' (Moret, 2018, p. 103), by contrast, refers to the ways in which 'agents (including individuals, groups, networks, or institutions) interpret and act upon perceived or real access and skills' (Kaufmann et al., 2004) and relates to the particular calculations, choices and adjustments made that are based on the perception of constraints and opportunities but also lived experiences and shared repertoires of knowledge of moving.

The accumulation of embodied and shared knowledge, skills and practical experiences of being mobile over time is particularly important to stress here. 'Savoir-circuler' (Moret, 2018, p. 105), the knowledge and skills produced through regular practices of circular mobility, is based on this wider repertoire of lived experiences. People learn from their own experiences and the experiences

of others, whether positive or negative, and make determinations based on that whether they are prepared to experience the same situations again, or not. Socialization during childhood is particularly crucial in determining habits and behaviours in adulthood (Flamm and Kaufmann, 2016, p. 177). If a person has accumulated a specific 'stock of experiences' (Kalwitzki, 1994, cited in Flamm and Kaufmann, 2016, p. 177) of border-crossing throughout their youth, their levels of comfort, confidence and willingness to do so on an individual basis as an adult are likely to be higher. Where that stock of experiences is limited or absent, the potentiality of being mobile is reduced unless other strategies must be deployed.

The role of networks in increasing the capacity and potentiality of actors to move is thus key in assessments of mobility capital on the individual or group level, but also in formulation of capital accumulation strategies more generally. While its role is acknowledged across all three elements of analysis, its significance remains downplayed in the literature. As will be shown, both the capacity and potentiality of being mobile not only depend upon access to informal networks to address particular resource gaps, and gaps in knowledge, know-how and experience but also, crucially, to overcome fear, manage anxiety and build the confidence needed to be visible, present and mobile in unfamiliar, unpredictable and risky spaces. While this 'social network work' (Moret, 2018, p. 124) does not always guarantee a positive outcome for disadvantaged or indigenous groups with weak or absent ties to dominant networks, these networks nonetheless provide an essential set of practical and psychosocial resources which help to shore up the potentiality and capacity to be mobile, as well as the potential to accumulate economic, cultural and other forms of capital together.

Methods

The analysis which follows is based on semi-structured interviews with Palestinian students, teachers and faculty members in spring 2019. Locating its analysis at the level of individual 'mobility biographies' (Flamm and Kaufmann, 2016, p. 177) where respondents were invited to share accounts of their personal experiences of border-crossing, the research that underpins this study is motivated by an ethnographic sensibility which seeks meaning in the marginalized patterns and contradictions of everyday life. Particular attention will be paid here to the mobility biographies of students enrolled at the AAUP in Jenin, the primary destination of travel for students studying in the West Bank.
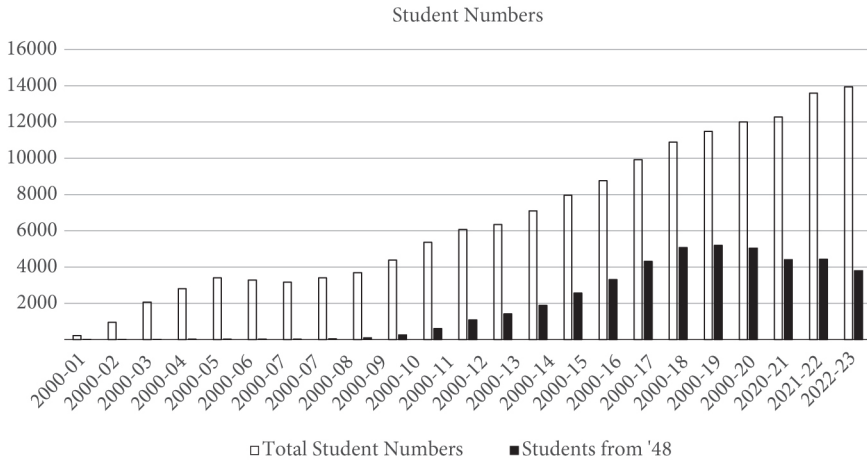
Student Numbers

Figure 7.1 AAUP student numbers from 2000 to 2022.

Source: Author.

Established in 2000, AAUP is located 15 km southeast of Jalama checkpoint on the Green Line, close to the city of Jenin, and forty-five minutes' drive from Nazareth, the largest Palestinian city in Israel. Following a concession agreed at the 2007 Annapolis summit to open Jalama checkpoint to vehicular traffic (Shamir and Blovosky, 2021), restrictions on the movement of Palestinian citizens across the Green Line were eased, leading to a slow but steady increase in the number of students enrolling at AAUP. This study was undertaken at the peak of this wave of cross-border student mobility, during the 2018–19 academic year, when there were over 5,200 students from Israel enrolled at the university representing almost 50 per cent of the total student body.

The mobile pursuit of education

Siwar was in her third year of her occupational therapy degree at AAUP when I met her. She had never been to the West Bank, let alone Jenin, before the start of her degree despite the close proximity of her village to the Green Line. As a result, she completely lacked a 'stock of experiences', habits and behaviours connected to cross-border travel (Flamm and Kaufmann, 2016, p. 177). The idea of crossing the border was inconceivable to her, and when she did so for the first time on the first day of classes, it was a source of great emotional distress to her and to her mother who cried all the way in the car to Jenin.

A number of factors enabled her rapid reorientation towards the West Bank as well as expansion of her action spaces across the border. In addition to the more straightforward entry requirements based solely on students' Bagrut (high school matriculation) results, the proximity of AAUP to large concentrations of Palestinians living in the northern Galilee and central Triangle regions of Israel, the use of English and Arabic as languages of instruction, as well as the wide availability of sex-segregated dorms close to campus attract students and reassure parents nervous about letting their children, but especially their daughters, travel far away from the family home. Cheaper accommodation charges and discounted tuition fees for students who achieve the highest marks in their Bagrut further incentivize students to take the decision to cross the border, albeit reluctantly so.

Crossing the border, however, was not a straightforward experience for her. In practical terms, her entry into the West Bank, as with other Palestinian students from Israel, was funnelled through checkpoints administered by private security companies and reserved for Palestinian use only. The most important of these checkpoints is at Jalama, which, similar to other terminal checkpoints along the Green Line, has an extensive security infrastructure in place to surveil, triage and control Palestinian movement.

Students like Siwar had to quickly develop new competencies – that is, the skills and aptitudes as well as the knowledge and know-how – to cross the checkpoint quickly and safely. In the absence of a common or shared system of public transport across the Green Line, they used different methods of transport that were largely determined by where they live and what material and financial resources were available to them. A *sherut* (shared taxi) service, for example, ran a service several times a day from Nazareth city centre to Jalama. This service is cheap, costing just a few shekels each way, but is extremely slow and time-consuming as passengers must disembark on either side of the checkpoint with their bags, pass through the checkpoint on foot, pass through security checks, board another bus on the other side and wait for it to fill before setting off again. It is also the most unpredictable and stressful option of all as passing through a checkpoint on foot makes those travelling through them more vulnerable to delays and the whims of security guards.

Students with greater independent financial means travel by car, demonstrating the relative ease which some students have had in capitalizing on pre-existing resources (in the form of having their own car or access to the family car). By far the quickest and most stress-free option, a car journey from Nazareth to AAUP takes only forty to forty-five minutes when traffic is moving

well. Crossing Jalama early one morning with Nadja, a third-year dentistry student from Nazareth, in her family car, we passed the checkpoint with barely a glance from the guards. For some, travelling by car was their only option. Ola, for example, is a dentistry student and mother of a two-year-old boy who had to travel back and forth from her home in Nazareth to campus each day. She would be unable to study, she says, if it were not for the car her family makes available to her.

Most students, however, do not have access to a car. While car-shares are common, particularly among students travelling from the same town or village, the vast majority of students without access to a car travel on specially chartered private buses which pick them up from set locations in Israel (usually a town or a major junction close to a cluster of villages) and drop them off directly at the gates of campus each week. These buses are organized and paid for in advance by families, illustrating once again the particular importance of informal networks in helping students and their families to pool resources in order to bridge the mobility gaps caused by inadequate public service provision and the lack of individual knowledge and know-how of border-crossing. Pick-up points are determined by where demand is highest, with a number of large towns benefiting from their own dedicated bus service. Malak, for example, is a dentistry student at AAUP who takes a private bus from the large town of Ar'ara in the Galilee each week. 'Half the town are here in Jenin', she jokes, so while she could borrow the family car, she says, the direct bus that travels non-stop from her town to campus suits her and her family much better.

Travelling by bus, however, is not convenient for everyone. Dala is from Nazareth but lives in Jerusalem with her family. She is one of at least 200 students from Jerusalem studying at AAUP. Most of the boys from Jerusalem have cars, she says, so the buses are generally full of girls only. The bus runs at a limited number of fixed times each week – departing from Jerusalem on Saturday morning, departing from Jenin on Wednesday afternoons. With its Israeli registration plates, it passes through Hizma checkpoint, which is easier to get through as it is mainly used by Jewish settlers. The guards there sometimes make their passage difficult. Once they refused to let their bus pass for two months forcing them each time to go back through Qalandiya checkpoint, notorious for its long queues and turnstiles. In many cases, she has no option but to go through Qalandiya anyway as her classes are scheduled from Saturday to Tuesday. On those occasions, she often has to take multiple trips by *servis* (shared taxi) from her home to Qalandiya, from there to Ramallah and from Ramallah to AAUP, which is both exhausting and frustrating for her.

Aya travels by bus from the city of Taibe in the Triangle region. While Jabara checkpoint, which lies to the south of the city of Tulkarem, is closer to her home, the bus she takes travels up along the Israeli side of the border, stopping at other Arab towns and cities along the way before entering the West Bank through Jalama. The extent of internal restrictions inside the West Bank makes Jalama a more reliable route for their bus driver, she says. When Jalama is closed, as it often is during major holidays and political events, they have to go through Jabara anyway. This takes more time and is more of a hassle for the driver but she finds the journey itself less stressful than Jalama. The guards at Jabara barely look at you, she says. They wave you through relatively quickly, and while they sometimes stop you, at Jalama they like to 'flex their muscles', pulling the bus aside, forcing everyone off and subjecting them to random searches of all their bags and belongings as the mood takes them.

These experiences of cross-border travel reveal the swift 'cognitive appropriation of opportunities to realize projects' (Moret, 2018, p. 103) and the rapid development of new repertoires of knowledge needed to expand their action spaces. Siwar, for example, rarely ventured off campus until the start of her third year. Based in Bethlehem for the clinical practice element of her degree, her experiences of working and travelling across the West Bank were transformative for her, boosting her confidence to travel alone in the West Bank. This is just as well, she added, as she knows that most recent graduates need to travel far and wide in order to get work back in Israel. A sister of her friend from home who also studied OT at Jenin is now working in Beer Sheva. It is a problem, she says. There aren't many opportunities left in the north where most Palestinians live, so they often have to travel far from home to get the experience they need. She expects that it will be the same for her when she finishes. She's not looking forward to it but, she adds, you just have to get on with it.

When I met Siwar again three years later, in 2022, she had finally secured her first job as an occupational therapist at a clinic in the coastal city of Netanya after a two-year struggle to secure the necessary accreditation of her degree from the Israeli Ministry of Health. While clearly relieved to have secured a job doing what she loves at a clinic relatively close to home (just a 1-hour drive away), she references many of her classmates who have not been so 'lucky' and are still looking for work. Her experience speaks not only to the additional hurdles that many graduates face in securing employment and their future livelihoods in Israel but the high-stake and unpredictable nature of their efforts to pursue a higher education in the West Bank.

Conclusion

The mobility biographies briefly discussed here reveal the complex and 'defensively oriented' (Anthias, 2007, p. 47) mobilizing strategies deployed by Palestinian students to navigate not only a heavily securitized border but a settler-colonial mobility regime where their basic capacities and potentialities of movement are tightly restricted, controlled and increasingly denied. As mentioned at the start of this chapter, the number of Palestinian students enrolled at AAUP began to decline from 2019–20 (see Figure 7.1). The main explanation for this decline is the increasing frequency of border closures enforced by Israel's security apparatus. With the outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic in January 2020, Jalama checkpoint remained closed for 1.5 years (almost a year longer than other checkpoints) due to an alleged 'lapse in security coordination between Israel and the Palestinian Authority' (Shamir and Bolovsky, 2021). While the checkpoint eventually reopened, it continued to be closed on an irregular basis leading up until the tragic events of October 2023. Since then, Jalama checkpoint has remained permanently closed, effectively ending the cross-border mobility of Palestinian students. While AAUP swiftly switched to online teaching, the short- and long-term impacts of extended border closures upon Palestinian student mobility, higher education and employment remain incalculable.

What this tells us is that, in spite of the highly adaptative and creative nature of their struggles to access their basic rights to higher education and stable employment in their homeland, mobility capital is not something that Palestinian citizens of Israel can be considered to 'possess' (Moret, 2018, p. 103) either now or in the future. Instead, what the cross-border mobilities of these students impel us to recognize is the heavy and shifting burden placed on indigenous and minoritized communities to be continuously mobile in new and different ways in order to have any chance to access their basic rights, secure the future livelihoods for themselves and their families and defend their ability to remain in their homeland. It is in tracing these needs-based and defensively oriented (Anthias, 2007) patterns of mobility, and struggles for mobility justice more generally, that we can better recognize the shifting contours of settler-colonial mobility regimes and, crucially, take stock of the ongoing struggle for lives, livelihoods and futures that take place within them. The focus and direction of future research should orient itself accordingly.

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Between Borders and Barriers: Higher Education and the Experience of 'De-mobility' in the Gaza Strip

Mona Jebril

Introduction

This chapter explains how a structure of 'de-mobility' in the Gaza Strip has impacted the experiences of educationalists (academic staff and students in Education) at two of Gaza's universities. The chapter is based on sociological research which I conducted for my PhD degree at the University of Cambridge (2012–17). I use the term 'de-mobility' to refer to a state that is thwarting students and the academic staff at Gaza's universities from mobility, forcing them to be immobile, even at times when they can travel, and when the borders are physically open to movement. The structure of de-mobility in the Gaza Strip is coined as such to indicate that it is one of the many manifestations of the wider phenomenon of 'de-development', which, as Roy (1995) points out, has resulted from decades of Israeli occupation. Framing them mainly in economic terms, Roy (1987, p. 56) defines 'de-development' as 'a process which weakens the ability of an economy to grow and expand by preventing [them] from accessing and utilizing critical inputs needed to promote internal growth beyond a specific structural level'. Gaza's de-development is evident, in the increasing geopolitical and territorial fragmentation between the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and East Jerusalem, and in the economic isolation and enclavization of the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT). In Jebril (2018), I explored this de-development phenomenon on the level of Gaza's universities, establishing that academic work at these universities has been undermined by a simultaneous process of construction and destruction (see also Jebril, 2021a). At the time of writing, 'de-mobility' has been intensified for the besieged population in the Gaza Strip due to Israel's war on the Gaza Strip since 7 October 2023.

In order to grasp the depth of Israeli oppression on Palestinian academic life, understanding the experience of Gaza universities' academics and students is integral (New, 2001). That said, oppression may generate different responses from the oppressed, such as misrecognition, normalization, resistance or even conscious compliance (Swartz, 2013, p. 44; see also Prilleltensky and Gonick, 1996). Also, 'responses to oppression vary dramatically according to national, regional, cultural, and interpersonal context' (Prilleltensky, 2003, p. 197). That said, as Dong and Temple (2011) maintain, oppression is best measured in empirical research through its consequences.

This chapter presents, firstly, the author's own experience with the siege in Gaza; secondly, the research study's methodology and theoretical insights drawing on Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, and Bourdieu's work on 'symbolic violence'; and thirdly, the findings, including a note on the Israel's war on the Gaza Strip and its devastating consequences for Palestinian mobility.

Personal reflections: An educational astronaut

When I was doing my *Tawjihi*[1] exams in Gaza, I thought I was determined to become an astronaut, but this firm determination proved to be meaningless, as it was not possible to achieve this in the Gaza context. To my surprise, I have become an educationalist.

Studying for an MSc in Higher Education in Oxford in 2005–6 was an enlightening experience. This was the first time I had left Gaza in fourteen years and my first time travelling alone. But at the time of my travel, the Gaza-Egypt Rafah border was closed. I heard it may re-open at an unpredictable time, so I camped for two days with members of my family near the crossing. When it opened, there was chaos, many people waiting, packed buses, much anxiety and little chance of being able to cross. I asked a police officer for help, who, perhaps in sympathy, threw my luggage on top of one of those buses. There were only eleven buses available, and that was the second last one, so I feared that if I did not get on it, I would lose the opportunity to go to Oxford, perhaps for the whole year, if not forever. At the same time, the bus driver closed the bus door as it was ready to move. My luggage was on board, but I was still out. I panicked. I started knocking heavily on the bus door. When I entered, I was crying painfully, and I cried more when I remembered that this was happening on my way to the Principal Seat of Learning in England: the University of Oxford.

Upon my graduation, I returned to Gaza, but as a Palestinian, my journey back was not straightforward. The Gaza-Egypt Rafah border was closed for almost three weeks. The routine for me and other stuck Palestinians was to hear daily predictions that it would open within the next few hours. We kept packing, travelling across the Sinai desert, waiting at the crossing for several hours in the midday heat, but finally having to return to a village called Al Arish in Egypt in anticipation of an opening date soon. When the border opened, I entered Gaza after twelve hours of humiliation at the checkpoint. This experience affected me as I became very reluctant to consider travelling from the Gaza Strip, unless I were to undertake a big life project, such as a PhD in Cambridge. I realized later how lucky I had been to enter Gaza at all; the siege on the Gaza Strip was tightened immediately afterwards for two consecutive years. My Oxford degree helped me while in Gaza to progress my career from teaching at public schools, to a lectureship at two of Gaza's universities.

After five years in Gaza, it has been immensely exciting that I was awarded a Gates Cambridge Scholarship and go on a journey that I did not know would ever be possible again: my PhD in Cambridge. I felt extremely grateful, but also privileged since in 2012, I was the first ever Gates scholar to be chosen from the Gaza Strip for this highly competitive global scholarship (I am still the only one, twelve years later). In studying for my PhD at Cambridge, I felt as if I was an astronaut since I found myself in a similar binary situation as that of the Chris Hadfield, who has logged several hours in space. As an astronaut, Hadfield mentions that he had to live with the attitude that once he is on earth, he 'might never get [again] to space – and then, [… if he] did get there, [he] might never go back [to earth]' (Hadfield, 2013, p. 40). Similarly, due to the continued siege on Gaza, I had one of two choices: either to be in Gaza or out of it. I have not been back to Gaza at all during that period, and until now, for fear of being locked in, due to sudden enclosure or a war, that could have affected my PhD study, or my subsequent job contracts and UK immigration status. Half-jokingly, and out of resilience, I visualized myself as an educational astronaut – this seemed to fulfil my initial professional ambition. I obtained my British citizenship this year, but still could not visit home due to Israel's war on the Gaza Strip which, at the time of writing, continues with unprecedented brutality that is changing both the actual topography and demography of the Gaza Strip and its universities, erasing the home that I once knew. I, therefore, remain an astronaut in space, for the time being. Nonetheless, this reflexive account on my experience with the

siege has enriched my research, giving me insight into real-world challenges of 'de-mobility' in the Gaza Strip.

The research study

Much research has been conducted on borders (and barriers) at the current time of increased securitization (Newman, 2006a). But 'if we really want to know what borders mean to people, then we need to listen to their personal and group narratives' (Newman, 2006a,154). Taking the qualitative approach, I conducted thirty-six in-depth semi-structured interviews with educationalists (twenty-one students and fifteen academic staff) from two of Gaza's universities, via Skype and phone from Cambridge.

Although there is nowadays sufficient recognition of complex power and knowledge relations that cast doubt on claims of 'objectivity', given my outsider-insider positionality, I included a reflexive account and conducted a self-interview. I employed supporting activities such as a literature review, and a review of the two universities' websites and staff CVs. A snowballing method of sampling was used for recruiting the student participants, and purposeful sampling for academics since their CVs were available online. I started an aide memoir on Scrivener. The transcribed data was analysed thematically using MAXQDA. I took a social constructionist perspective to analysis, which, Crotty (1998) points out as one which encourages creativity in interpretation.

Regarding ethics, I developed a risk assessment form, and a safe storage system. This included anonymizing the two universities as UA and UB. I use pseudonyms for participants' names as follows: I refer to academic staff as 'Ms/Mr + [name]+ UA/UB [University name as Surname]', and to students as: '[name] + UA/UB [University name as Surname]'. Mr Ashraf UB is a male academic from the UB university, and Dalal UA is a female student from the UA university.

The inductive data pointed towards the thoughts of two scholars: firstly, and mainly, those of Paulo Freire expressed in the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1996), and secondly, those of Pierre Bourdieu on symbolic power, violence and capital (Bourdieu, 1989, 1990). In order to give primacy to the Southern experience, I put the empirical data from the Gaza Strip at the centre of my analysis (Connell, 2007). For example, oppression in the Palestinian context varied in terms of its depth and power between the participants, and also operated on different levels (Jebril, 2018, 2021b). Therefore, in this chapter,

the following Freirean concepts (1996) are mentioned as landmarks of an oppressive experience: dehumanization, fear, fatalism and horizontal violence (1996). I also used indicators of domination from Bourdieu's sociological work on symbolic power, violence and capital, and how dispositions of the dominated towards symbolic power facilitate the 'misrecognition' and 'naturalization' of an oppressive experience.

A structure of de-mobility in the Gaza Strip: Past, present and future?

The past experience

Palestinian freedom of movement in the OPT has been restricted by the Israeli occupation since 1967. Among other things, mobility restrictions contributed to 'enframing' people's imagination about possibilities whereby occupation rules 'appear[ed] as something essentially law-like' (Mitchell, 1990, p. 571). A structure of de-mobility in the Gaza Strip created a system of inclusion and exclusion of Palestinians resulting in both symbolic and actual violence that dehumanized Palestinians.

Years of Egyptian 'tutelage' over Gaza normalized Palestinians pursuing their higher education in Egypt, which made the culture of Gaza's universities 'Egyptian at heart' (Anabtawi, 1986, p. 8). This continued until recently; for example, eight out of fifteen of the academic participants had studied for at least one of their higher education degrees in Egypt. Universities in the Gaza Strip were not established until 1978. Therefore young Palestinians sought scholarship opportunities offered by the Egyptian government. According to Ms Lamia, from UB, these Egyptian offers were only available for high-achieving students in the *Tawjihi* examination. Mr Zeyad (UB) explained that applying for the scholarships was a lengthy process which took up to one year. Sarcastically, students used to call this year the *sumud* (i.e. steadfastness) year. The restrictions on Palestinian mobility under occupation and the absence of local alternatives made students rationalize their pursuing of higher education abroad, as a nationalistic practice, that would strengthen their community in the future.

Although Gaza students could physically travel, their movement was curtailed by the many difficulties they encountered. Due to Israeli occupation of the Egyptian Sinai Peninsula (1967–82), the Gaza-Egypt border was not accessible. Students' inability to manage their own travel placed them, from the outset of

their higher education experiences, in a collective passive position. Mr Mehdi UA mentioned that the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) used to co-ordinate students' transfer to Egypt in groups. According to Mehdi UA and Lamia UB, these groups would be '*taken*' by the ICRC buses from a place called *Jawazat*[2] in Gaza, and only be '*set free*' in Egypt, each to go to his or her arranged university. Pennebaker, Mehl and Niederhoffer (2003, p. 547) explain that 'the words people use in their daily lives can reveal important aspects of their social and psychological worlds'. Using the passive voice, in this context, Mehdi implied a state of helplessness and compliance. However, Ms Lamia misrecognized this process as a generous practice, since, as a female, she preferred to be in arranged travel rather than do it on her own. Due to conditions of social and religious conservativism and the lack of safety for women under occupation, Gaza women were expected to travel with either a male guardian or a trusted group of other women travellers. Lamia rationalized the control over student travel as helpful because it provided some safety to females travelling alone, like herself, to cross the Sinai desert in groups, under ICRC supervision. But Mr Mehdi UA shared more compelling details of this ICRC arranged transfer, which revealed that, ironically, Gaza students were de-humanized by the very experience that was to bring them empowerment. Mehdi said:

> The Israelis used to cover the bus sides with blankets […], so that we don't look at Sinai and at their troops there. Israeli soldiers used to accompany us in the bus during our journey. The bus used to keep moving until we reach Suez Canal. [… Afterwards,] the Red Cross would take us and hand us to the Egyptians […]. We used to return to Gaza for the summer vacation in the same way.

Scholarships recipients were taken as if they were goods packed into buses to be exported to their universities. These members of academic staff, when they were students, had to follow the prescribed rules of the Israeli occupation and naturalized their compliance as a pre-requisite to higher education access. Even their ability to visit home depended on the availability of the ICRC buses. Palestinian students were simultaneously 'privileged and oppressed' (Dong and Temple, 2011).

The Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai Peninsula in 1982 did not significantly improve the movement conditions for Palestinians as their academic mobility continued to be restricted by risks, including arbitrary imprisonment, having their access to education future removed, becoming obliged to act as spies, being unable to return if they leave and the threat of sudden enclosures. For example,

after obtaining his master's, Mr Ashraf UB postponed his PhD study for fourteen years. He said:

> We did not have any [postgraduate studies] in the Gaza Strip. If I wanted to go outside Gaza, a permission was needed. To get that permission, I would have been required to meet the Israeli intelligence. But the Israeli Intelligence used to blackmail the students [who are less than thirty-five years old] so that they accept to co-operate with it […]. They would allow the student the first, and the second year and when he is about to graduate, they would call him and drag him to such matter.

For Mr Ashraf, a travel permit was only a form of false generosity by Israel, since it entailed several dangers and therefore was used as a method of oppression. Palestinian students were granted exit permits by Israel on the condition that they would not return to the Gaza Strip for at least five years. After 1985, the unpredictability of the situation on the Gaza-Egypt border made Mr Majid UB decide not to study for a BA in Egypt. Majid explained: '*I did not like to undergo adventures beyond my purpose.*' Both Ashraf's and Majid's choices of when and where to go for higher education were influenced by their conscious (and unconscious) calculations of the possibilities and limitations, in an occupied social order.

Even after the Peace Process 1993, Palestinian students faced mobility restrictions and de-humanization in their travel. Shortly afterwards, checkpoints and numerous other administrative and legal obstacles became the everyday reality for Palestinians in the OPT including the Gaza Strip (World Bank, 2010). For Mr Zeyad UB, crossing the border was full of '*suffering*'. Mr Omar UB, who finished his PhD in 2004, reported that leaving Gaza for the first time ever to go to Egypt was '*bad, bad, very bad*'. On the border, Omar was imprisoned in a cell for investigation for ten hours, anxious and humiliated. He became an object of negotiations between the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), Israelis and the Egyptian side to determine whether to release him or not. For him, his de-humanization came not only from Israelis but also horizontally from Egyptians and his own people, in this case the PNA officials on the border crossing who were themselves Palestinians, and therefore part of the oppressed community. As a student, exposed in his travels to 'humiliation, threat, and fright', Mr Omar was tortured not physically but psychologically (Kanninen et al., 2003, p. 98). Whenever he crossed the border afterwards, Omar would be asking for the mercy and protection of Allah.

Palestinians who studied in other Arab and foreign countries were not immune to these wider structures of de-mobility seen in the closures, restrictions, investigations and harassment at the borders. This caused academic staff, when they were students, to anticipate the difficulties and internalize travel as a risky action. Mr Zeyad, having been jailed (for political activism) at the border after finishing his BA in a neighbouring Arab country, did not attempt to visit home during his master's study in the United States. He mentioned: 'I did not try to go, […] I was afraid to go and not to come back' if the occupation prevented my travel or detained me again for any reason'. Zeyad's earlier experience dominated his actions long after he was jailed. Visiting home was associated with anxiety for almost all academics when they studied abroad. Their perception of risk was reinforced by the actual border restrictions. As such, they chose what worked for them practically within the limits of the possible.

Barriers have also been erected inside Palestine, between the different Palestinian cities and villages, and different areas of the Gaza Strip. Mr Zeyad UB explained:

> When I used to visit my family's home, there were barriers. It would take me three or four hours sometimes to reach my workplace, […]. One would reach [his work] tired. When I entered the lecture hall, I would find that the students were equally late, or have not come at all. For those who could come, it was not easy at all. […] There was not that much quality in education. Besides, the university's regulations were so often crossed over […,] there was no discipline, and no commitment.

Under the occupation, Mr Ashraf UB used to drive his Mercedes car after 8:00 pm to other cities, such as Ramallah, Hebron and even to Tel Aviv, and so he considered it a time of 'safety and security'. But he regretted that the first *Intifada* in 1987 brought danger to Palestinians. Since then, Israel prevented Palestinian mobility through surveillance technology such as magnet cards, military checkpoints and frequently closing the roads (World Bank, 2010). Containing the mobility of Palestinians within tightened restrictions had a deleterious impact on Palestinian economy and social life (World Bank, 2010). But Mr Ashraf misrecognized compliance with the occupation rules as rewarding because it granted him a relatively wider and safer mobility compared to after the Intifada.

With Israel's evacuation from Gaza settlements in 2005, Israel's physical barriers were removed from Gaza to be replaced with other forms of restrictions. Thus, Gaza became increasingly separated from the West Bank from the mid-1990s (World Bank, 2010). Ms Randa UA was directly affected by this situation. She was previously based in the Gaza Strip, but accepted a job offer in the West

Bank and commuted between both. However, during one of her visits to the Gaza Strip, she was prevented from re-entering the West Bank, and consequently lost her job. For Ms Randa UA, this dramatic consequence was a result of fate as she explained that it was her destiny bringing her back to reside in the Gaza Strip. Partly, this concurs with Freire (1996, p. 94), who asserts that 'if individuals are caught up in and are unable to separate themselves from [their] limit situations, their theme in reference to these situations is fatalism, and the task implied by the theme is the lack of a task'. I say partly because the limit situation that Ms Randa UA encountered was not something she could do anything about as an individual since this separation between Gaza and the West Bank was imposed by the Israeli occupation.

The present experience (from 2012 onwards): 'De-mobility' continued

Ms Etaf UB described the Egyptian Border in 2012 as '*torturous*'. Etaf stated, 'They shake you with torture, torture, torture until you start to feel as if they were guarding paradise [from Palestinians] with these borders.' Experiencing a life caught between borders, barriers, roadblocks and checkpoints for fifty-five years, Mr Omar UB made an anguished cry for freedom:

> We are oppressed people, and we live the oppression every day. We are locked in from all sides. I am not allowed even to visit Israel. Suppose I have relatives in Lydda (Lod), and I want to visit them. Why am I not allowed to? I want to visit them with a formal passport and let them check me on the border if they want to [….]. It is my natural right to go out [of Gaza]. Isn't it? To go to America … to go to Australia, and to go to all the countries of the world. Why should this be a problem? I want to see the world, because the world exists …
>
> (Mr Omar UB)

Because oppression is de-humanizing, Omar called for human rights as he realized that Palestinians are being mistreated as an '*other*'. Newman (2006b, p. 148) explains that 'borders create (or reflect) difference and constitute the separation line not only between states and geographical spaces, but also between "us" and 'them, the "here" and "there", and the "insiders" and "outsiders" '. The continued siege and isolation of the Gaza Strip, which is often described as an open-air prison, with conditions of severe restrictions on mobility for Palestinians over decades, made Omar feel an insider to Gaza's sufferings and an outsider to the world. This feeling of Palestinian isolation and 'otherness' is persistent. For example, Edward Said maintains that Palestinians have always

been an '"other" and opposite, a flaw in the geometry of resettlement and exodus' (Said in Gregory, 1995, p. 450). Thus, after Al Nakbah (Catastrophe) of 1948, Palestinians became refugees, both in their own land and in neighbouring Arab countries such as Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, often having fewer rights and privileges than the host countries' citizens. The Palestinians in the OPT became subject to myriad challenges, *inter alia*, to their mobility, and those in the diaspora, despite the geographical distance, continued to share a history of occupation and displacement that made them insiders to a collective memory that is Palestinian and 'others' to the world. Palestinians who remained in the areas that became part of Israel were allowed to stay and were granted Israeli citizenship, eventually being called Arab-Israelis. However, these are among Israel's most marginalized minorities (Gantus, 2024).

Future experiences: Israel's war on the Gaza Strip and extreme 'de-mobility'

Since 7 October 2023, Israel is waging a war on the Gaza Strip, where approximately 2.3 million people live. In January 2024, the UN International Court of Justice stated that it was at least plausible that Israel was committing a genocide (International Court of Justice, 2024). With Israel's genocidal war on the Gaza Strip, 'Palestine's education and knowledge systems are being wiped out' (Desai, 2024). At the time of writing, Israel's occupation forces have damaged all twelve universities in Gaza (completely or partially), causing extreme losses to facilities, including libraries, laboratories and expensive technological equipment. Israel's forces also killed 'three presidents and nearly a hundred deans and professors' (Golshiri, 2024), in addition to the killing and the displacement of thousands of students and staff. Important documents have also been destroyed, and partnerships and projects have been put on hold temporarily or permanently. Also, 'numerous cultural heritage sites including libraries, archives and museums, have [been] destroyed, damaged and plundered' by the Israeli army (Desai, 2024).

Consequently, 'de-mobility' and its impact on knowledge and agency have reached unprecedented levels, exacerbating both the actual and the symbolic violence experienced by academic staff and students and their universities. Israel has intensified the restrictions on Palestinian movement between the different areas of the Gaza Strip, for example, causing the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians from their homes in the North to the Central and Southern areas of the Gaza Strip. With Israel's ongoing bombardment of the Gaza Strip, educationalists' mobility seems limited to

even smaller spaces (i.e. the tent, the house, the shelter, the garage, the hospital, the camp or the neighbouring areas). But since Israel has targeted all areas including the declared safe zones, people were forced to be displaced, multiple times. Their movement per se has become an oppressive experience, as it is associated with danger, humiliation, constant loss and repeated displacement. The closure of the Gaza-Egypt border at Rafah (the only possible land crossing for civilians in the Gaza Strip at this time) has been intensified, with entries and exists becoming conditional on very strict criteria. Gaza educationalists who were able to evacuate the war are now displaced, in Egypt or in other countries, separated from their families, and their close-knit community. At the time of writing, after Israel's invasion of the city of Rafah in May 2024, the Gaza-Egypt border crossing has been completely closed, preventing the possibility for civilian evacuation, including medical transfers which are rarely permitted, and blocking life-saving humanitarian assistance to the Gaza Strip. Several students in Gaza who are on international scholarships are currently stuck in these conditions, being unable to join their study places abroad, for an unspecified period. The livelihood and the education of the academic staff and students in the Gaza Strip, despite efforts for resilience, remain in a complete state of disruption. Whether inside or outside the Gaza Strip, educationalists at Gaza's universities are suffering the consequences of this war. The priority of educationalists for now seems survival.

Conclusion

A structure of 'de-mobility' in the Gaza Strip contributes to counterproductive dynamics at Gaza's universities, entrenching the wider 'de-development' in Gaza. This is manifested, for example, in wasted time and effort, frustrated plans, interrupted projects, restricted capacity for political, social and economic impact, and limitations on opportunities for knowledge and agency (Jebril, 2018). Limiting people's physical mobility seems to have simultaneously 'enframed' participants' imagination and actions within the oppressor's rules (Mitchell, 1990). Thus, 'the complexities of domination [entails no] opposition between a physical and mental form of power' (Mitchell, 1990, p. 573). By and large, however, geography and the extent to which mobility is possible remain, until this time, most central to the work of power and domination. Their impact, on both the author's personal experience and her research, is best recapped by quoting Edward Said, the late Palestinian-American scholar:

Palestinian life [became] scattered, discontinuous, marked by artificial and unsynchronized rhythms of disturbed time … [W]here no straight line leads from home to birthplace to school to maturity, all events are accidents, all progress is digression, all residence is exile.

(Said, 1998, pp. 20–1)

Acknowledgements

Notes

1   *Tawjihi* examination in Gaza is equivalent to A-levels in the UK, which is the examination at the end of second-level education.
2   *Jawazat* is an Arabic word which means 'passports'.

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Rethinking Mobilities of Academics At-Risk: Beyond the Humanitarian Turn

Daniel Leyton

Introduction

As the dominant field that explores and promotes academic mobilities, the internationalization agenda has brought forth representations that bind international academic mobilities to a global economy driven by competition, prestige and human capital frameworks in higher education. This understanding serves to reinforce universalized assumptions of individual autonomy, choice and freedom. However, these idealized frames reduce the understanding of academic mobility to an unquestioned imperative (Courtois and O'Keefe, 2024; Morley and Leyton, 2023). In the context of the experiences of academics at risk, this tendency has been reinforced by a grand narrative that overemphasizes the individual success of a select few exiled academics, downplaying the role of their social, economic and cultural capital, their affinity with Euro-Atlantic academic culture, and misrecognizing the structural violence that affect them (Tuori, 2022). These limitations ultimately gloss over the diverse and widespread struggles, inequalities and challenges faced by academics at risk.

In this chapter, I build upon Henderson's definitional politics (2020) to critically interrogate the humanitarian turn to academic mobility (Ergin et al., 2019; Streitwieser, 2019). This turn locates itself as the privileged and morally corrective internationalization to support the mobility for academics at risk. However, I argue that while the humanitarian expression of internationalization responds to emerging authoritarianism and related life-threatening conflicts that have sparked the mobilities of these academics, it ultimately aligns with hegemonic agendas. These include practices invested in maintaining global inequalities, often by contributing to the idealization of both mobility and

internationalization, and failing to recognize the salience of dispossession in the experiences of at-risk academics.

In what follows, after briefly contextualizing the mobilities of academics at risk, I develop a critique of the humanitarian turn in internationalization. Then, I propose an alternative analytic lens, dispossession, as discussed by Butler and Athanasiou (2013). This perspective is capable of better informing our understanding of the mobilities of academics at risk. Within this perspective, I examine the experiences of Venezuelan academics at risk who have moved to Chile. Reframing these mobilities as dispossession underscores the urgency of going beyond the humanitarian turn in internationalization and opens the space for considering supporting strategies beyond hegemonic interests and strategies that are functional to the preservation of global inequalities in higher education.

Contextualizing academics at risk mobilities: The roles of political and economic crisis

Forced migration of academics is not a new phenomenon. Its history can be traced back to the Russian Revolution (Dakhli et al., 2024). From this period onwards, several terms have been used to refer to academics and researchers whose lives and intellectual labour are at risk given the irruption of severe economic and political crisis, political persecution and war.

Several political and economic crises during the last decades have made visible the drama of thousands of academics being forced to flee from their countries, as well as the multiple actors facilitating their mobility to universities predominantly located in the Global North. In this section, I critically present these two related phenomena as core contextual axes of academics at risk mobilities.

The failed revolution and civil war in Syria led to more than 6.5 million refugees, an estimated 2,000 university professionals and more than 100,000 higher education students in exile (CARA, 2019).[1] The Israeli occupation and subsequent genocide on Palestinian territories and people have dramatically impacted the vital needs of Palestinians, but also significantly hinder the survival of critical epistemologies that make visible the effects of the occupation (Wind, 2024). Research has clearly shown how Israeli universities have participated in the systematic persecution, disqualification and subjugation of Palestinian academics and their critical knowledge in order to conceal the impact of the settler-colonial project (Wind, 2024). In this context, CARA (n.d) has stated

that the crisis in Gaza, alongside the Wars in Ukraine and Sudan, and the authoritarian theocratic regime in Afghanistan, have increased the numbers of academics seeking a safer academic life in the UK.

In Latin America, Venezuela's economic crisis and the related authoritarian turn have led to at least 7.7 million refugees and migrants, especially from 2015 onwards. Most have migrated to neighbouring countries including Colombia, Brazil and Chile (UNHCR, 2023). Venezuelan students in higher education have increased from 16,000 in the period 2011–13 to 32,000 in 2022.[2] While this data is undoubtedly incomplete, it is important to remind the reader that most young Venezuelan are excluded from higher education. As we will see below, during these years hundreds of academics have fled Venezuela to seek new opportunities in these countries. In this context, Scholars at Risk (hereafter SAR) (2024), a transnational network founded in 1999 aiming to protect academic freedom and support scholars whose lives and intellectual work are under threat, has reported a series of attacks on and persecution of academics and students in higher education institutions. Since 2015, SAR (2024) has documented fifty-five attacks by Venezuelan government agents on student protesters and university installations, and at least eight academics affected by prosecution, temporary detention and imprisonment, and loss of position through the nullification of academic appointments. Likewise, Ortega's dictatorship in Nicaragua deploys systematic attacks on universities, students and academics, especially on those involved in the defence of human rights (Bellanger et al., 2023). Authoritarian control over Nicaragua's higher education system intensified following the 2018 popular uprising led by university students (Bellanger et al., 2023). According to UNESCO (2023), migrant students in higher education from Nicaragua have almost doubled from 2,400 in 2011 to nearly 4,000 in 2022.[3] While the number of at-risk Nicaraguan academics forced to move to other countries is unknown, SAR (2024) has confirmed the forced closure and confiscation of assets of dozens of higher education institutions, and the arrest of several academics and students.

These concerning contexts extend also to formal democratic contexts. According to SAR (2024), in US universities there is a growing number of attacks on academics and students by state agents, by way of physical violence, imprisonment, prosecution, travel restrictions and loss of position. The United States is the country in the Americas with the highest registered number of these attacks. Against academics, the most common strategy employed is the termination of contract.

In all these cases, states and armed groups have significantly shrunk academic freedom, marginalizing critiques to governments and states and diminishing

universities and academics possibilities to strength or defend nations' democracy (SAR, 2024). In cases such as Venezuela, the economic conditions of scholarly life have also been dramatically diminished.

The humanitarian turn in academic mobility

Organizations and transnational networks, predominantly from the Anglo-Atlantic world, have re-emerged to facilitate the mobility of at-risk academics to safer environments, working closely with universities and academics. Notable examples include CARA, SAR, the Scholar Rescue Fund, the Philipp Schwartz Initiative and the Pause Programme. Supporting them are Anglo-Atlantic philanthropic liberal institutions, such as the Carnegie Corporation, Rockefeller Foundation and Alexander von Humboldt Foundation.

These organizations and their networks have been termed by Yarar (2024) 'academic humanitarianism' as their work is guided by academic rationales such as epistemic diversity and academic quality and humanitarian ones including human rights. According to Yarar (2024) while they significantly support academics at risk, they have tended to reproduce the devaluation of the knowledge of academics from the Global South by asserting the superiority of their institutions and knowledge system. For Dakhli et al. (2024) the humanitarian principles mobilizing these organizations reflect global ideological struggles, power relations, colonial legacies and the discursive stances of the rescuers. These stances, relations and legacies underpin the understanding of who is a good scholar at risk and worthy of being supported. Machikou (2024), from an Afrocentric view, goes further arguing that these programmes misrecognize vital risks beyond individualized immediate endangerment, thereby failing to address systemic dangers and oppressions.

Mobility rescue programmes are also limited by border regimes. Universities hosting refugee students and academics at risk often have to comply with border restrictions. In this vein, Yuonso and Schumann (2021) and Löhr (2022) have highlighted the tensions between the competitive and meritocratic principles of academic mobility, the nationalist and racist turns in the governance of migration, and academic humanitarian concerns. This, they argue, leads host universities to seek and select only the most talented candidates. Furthermore, Löhr (2022, p. 83) calls on universities to critically reflect 'upon the extent to which current programs enshrine, refashion, or disrupt previously established migration-related configurations'.

Although it is important to recognize the crucial role academic humanitarian networks play in supporting academics at risk, and ponder their limited possibilities to address systemic global inequalities in higher education, these critiques align with Fassin's (2012) groundbreaking work on contemporary humanitarianism. Fassin highlights a shift from addressing structural inequalities to focusing on individual suffering, alongside a complex intersection of solidarity, inequality and hegemony between countries, regions, institutions and individuals. This shift underscores the logic of humanitarianism. Furthermore, he emphasizes the diverse political uses of humanitarianism, which can serve to maintain dominance, assert exclusions, advance legitimacy or gloss over internal issues.

In these global scenarios, few initiatives have emerged from the Global South such as the 'Campus Centroamérica por la Libertad de Cátedra' at the Universidad de Costa Rica, which focuses on protecting academics at risk in Central America, and Science in Exile, a network dedicated to supporting at-risk academics in the Global South. Their scope, approach, the support they receive and their impact on safeguarding the lives of at-risk academics require further research, including the extent to which they are able to resist existing structural inequalities governing academic mobility and internationalization.

In the following two sections, I further discuss this critical analysis by centring on the forced internationalization discourse and the case of Venezuelan academics at risk who have been forced to move to Chile. I emphasize their experiences of dispossession as central for understanding their mobility within a context of South-South mobilities. Focusing on this specific case also contributes to expand the interest of academic mobilities of scholars under threats in their countries beyond the scope of mobilities from the Global South to the Global North.

The emergence of forced internationalization

Academic humanitarianism resonates with the humanist turn in the internationalization agenda (e.g. Ergin et al., 2019; Streitwieser, 2019). This agenda calls for a shift in the shaping of global higher education, placing humanistic values at its core to promote equality, dignity, diversity and human rights more broadly. According to Streitwieser (2019, p. 4), this involves understanding academic mobilities as forced rather than expressions of autonomous will, and

adopting a new sense of 'humanitarian responsibility' capable of generating innovative responses.

The concept of forced internationalization (Ergin et al., 2019) has been proposed as one such response. It is advocated both as an ethical reaction to forced displacement and as a form of soft power. In this latter sense, it presents opportunities such as strengthening human capital, fostering epistemic diversity, generating income by leveraging the entrepreneurial dispositions of new migrants and advancing regional and international hegemony (Axyonova et al., 2022; Ergin et al., 2019). As an expression of soft power, forced internationalization is a top-down approach rooted in countries' hegemonic aspirations, presenting both the attractiveness and dominance of their higher education systems to rescued academics, who are often positioned in subservient and devalued roles.

This use of soft power follows a similar trend in internationalization and international academic mobility led by dominant players. For instance, the UK International Education Strategy (UK Government, 2021) explicitly refers to soft power as a strategy for national advantage, aiming to assert global leadership in addressing global challenges and expanding market services through educational partnerships and collaboration. In this context, aligning humanitarian approaches toward academics at risk with soft power not only affirms dominance, thus naturalizing inequality and disqualifying these academics, but also instrumentalizes solidarity, human rights and epistemic diversity to further neocolonial and neoliberal agendas. In the specific context where the forced internationalization agenda was first proposed (Ergin et al., 2019), namely Syrian students and academics refugees hosted by the Turkish higher education system, the articulation between humanitarian and hegemonic geopolitical rationales allows for a win-win narrative of internationalization. This is a narrative that undermines a necessary critique of the increasing repressive Turkish state apparatus targeting universities and academics (Doğan and Selenica, 2022). Internationalization, through the forced internationalization agenda, is able to extend its ambitions towards the humanitarian field without challenging the inequalities that sustain global higher education. It enacts a sanctioned ignorance that conceals the rising authoritarianism affecting all academics including those at risk by displacing critical theoretical frameworks which better elaborate academic mobilities in conditions of deep political-economic crisis and unliveable vulnerability.

Critically rethinking forced internationalization, Axyonova et al. (2022) argue that it creates opportunities for academics at risk to creatively intervene in the knowledge production of host countries. In this context, Axyonova et al.

(2022) conceive of these academics at risk mobilities as third-space producers and agents capable of creating spaces that disrupt colonial and neoliberal notions of excellence, relevance and usefulness, thus contributing 'to reducing the existing global inequalities in knowledge production' (p. 22). However, they caution that an emphasis on agency and third space does not disrupt the global inequality upon which academic mobilities are based (p. 22). While this interpretation is more optimistic, it is situated within the context of South-North mobilities, implicitly revealing another limitation. Forced internationalization is a strategy that only makes sense within and rest on an unequal global higher education system in which the perspectives and interests of dominant players prevails.

In the following section, I focus on the forced mobilities to Chile of Venezuelan academics at risk. I examine their experiences of mobility through the lens of dispossession as conceptualized by Butler and Athanasiou (2013). Through this example, I aim to rethink the mobilities of academics at risk outside the frameworks of humanitarian internationalization, seeking to widen perspectives when addressing academic mobilities under high levels of precarity and danger.

Venezuelan academics at risk mobilities as dispossession

Butler and Athanasiou (2013) argue that dispossession encompasses both privative and relational dimensions. Although these dimensions overlap, they refer to different processes analytically. The privative dimension involves processes that harm individuals by imposing material (work) and political (citizenship) losses. The relational dimension renders individuals undesirable by imposing social norms that define who is considered valuable and desirable within a community, and who is able to legitimately present herself as vulnerable and dependent. When academics at risk are excluded from the right to reclaim belonging, relational dispossession exacerbates privative dispossession: their material and political subjugation and precarity. For Butler and Athanasiou (2013, p. 18), the logic of dispossession is mapped onto 'particular bodies-in-place, through normative matrices but also through situated practices of raciality, gender, sexuality, intimacy, able-bodiedness, economy, and citizenship'.

The Venezuelan crisis has profoundly affected higher education and academics in Venezuela with an estimated 500,000 people, 30 per cent to 50 per cent of the academic body leaving the country (Gómez Gamboa and Dijk, 2022; Salcedo and Uzcátegui Pacheco, 2021). Severe deterioration in their material

conditions, alongside experiences of political persecution, diminished academic freedom and international sanctions that have further damaged the economy and contributed to authoritarian regression have combined to prompt their forced migration (Bull and Rosales, 2023; Hocevar et al., 2017; Scholars at Risk, 2020).

These conditions represent a significant epistemic dispossession of the nation's intellectual capacities at both individual and institutional levels. By epistemic dispossession, I refer to the material, political and relational destitution of the means to generate knowledge and engage in critical thinking within the academic community. Venezuelan universities have been stripped of their institutional capacity to challenge power structures and propose alternative recovery strategies. Joan Scott (2019) describes these critical capacities as elements of academic freedom, understood not as 'unfettered freedom of speech' but rather as the practice of 'truth seeking by credentialed scholars free of interference from external powers (states, administrators, trustees, philanthropists, business interests, lobbyists, politicians, political activists)' (p. 6). According to Scott, academic freedom and especially the right to challenge the abuses of power and share knowledge with subjugated groups are essential for maintaining democracy and the right to foster emancipatory knowledge.

In the case of at-risk Venezuelan academics in Chile, there are currently no policies or initiatives that recognize them as academics in highly vulnerable conditions. While the levels of academic freedom found in Chile constitute possibilities for regaining academic citizenship rights, these are restricted to the few who have been able to get a position as academics. According to Salcedo and Uzcátegui Pacheco (2021), prior to their mobility, at-risk Venezuelan academics were full-time academics actively participating in research groups, with an average of fifteen years of experience working in higher education. Nowadays, more than 60 per cent have been unable to continue their academic labour, having 'to redefine themselves professionally, embark on a new life project, and engage in other activities, many of which are radically different from their university roles' (Salcedo and Uzcátegui Pacheco, 2021, p. 123). The total redefinition of their biographical projects bears witness to multiple dispossessions involved in their mobilities.

The absence of support initiatives to academics at risk fosters a process of privative and relational dispossession in relation to their truncated academic lives. This dispossession process is further reinforced by restrictive employment policies at universities which heavily rely on the acquisition of residency rights and visas as preconditions to participate in the competitive calls for academic

positions (Gómez Gamboa and Dijk, 2022). This, in practice, bypasses the constitutional right to work that people have independent of their official residency status in Chile. Based on my own prior personal experience as an academic in one Chilean university having worked with migrant academics without residency rights, their work in universities, while protected by law, requires constant support from colleagues and struggles against the multiple bureaucracies in place. This includes enrolling and payment processes that assume residency rights as the default status in an academic job.

The experiences of Venezuelan academics are significantly shaped by Chile's high-intensity neoliberalism in higher education. Universities promote competitive and entrepreneurial academic identities through various mechanisms, such as monetary incentives for publishing in globally prestigious journals and competitive funding schemes closely tied to these publication circuits, as a means of financing research activities and universities themselves (Leyton and Sánchez, 2024, p. 254). This system has fostered an accelerated, internationalized and unequal academic environment, closely aligned with global neoliberal conceptions of academic labour and research that marginalize regional and local circuits of collaboration and knowledge circulation (Leyton and Sánchez, 2024). Such neoliberal structures reinforce the devaluation of academic practices and identities perceived as external to this globalized neoliberal framework. According to Gómez and Dijk (2022), these norms have had a profound impact on Venezuelan academics in Chile, not only by excluding many from core academic circuits but also by exposing those who do secure academic positions to fierce competition and xenophobia in Chilean universities. As Morley and Leyton (2023, pp 114–16) have argued, this precarious context has stifled their possibilities of contestation and complaint, steering them towards feelings of gratitude that conceal the cruelties of racialized and gendered forms of violence.

To elaborate, in Chile, Venezuelans are marked by a racialized status of exclusion and undesirability that significantly shapes the social meaning of migration. Since the late nineteenth century, migration has been associated with Chile's nation-building project, which has historically excluded Afro-descendant, indigenous and Caribbean groups who are seen as deviating from the idealized Chilean citizen, as imagined and measured by elites as white and European descendants (Correa Tellez, 2016). This stigmatizing perception reinforces the marginalization of Venezuelan academics as outsiders, distant from privileged representations of the international or global scholar. Like the experiences documented by Vatansever (2022) among exiled academics in

European universities, Venezuelan academics in Chile are positioned as surplus labour force within the academic job market.

While academic humanitarianism in the Global North has been criticized for reproducing global inequalities and perpetuating the precarity of Global South academics, in the Chilean context, universities, ministries and university associations have made no attempt to support these scholars. Most experiences of Venezuelan academics in Chile can be considered mobilities marked by dispossession, produced by the sanctioned ignorance of the state and higher education institutions. For the few who have continued in academia, their mobilities are characterized by regaining greater academic freedom while facing high levels of precarity and competition.

The use of dispossession as a critical and caring lens to rethink the experiences of mobilities of academics at risk helps to examine the various forms of loss, such as academic employment, means of knowledge production and citizenship, and the related forms of misrecognition, such as being undervalued as academics or being misrecognized as mobile subjects marked by multiple vulnerabilities. These forms of dispossession thwart opportunities to contest the normalizing institutional violence and abandonment that many Venezuelan academics at risk have faced.

Conclusion

My starting point in this chapter was the dominant internationalization agenda, which ties academic mobilities to the global economy of knowledge, competition, prestige and success. I argue that this, ultimately, leads to stereotypical understandings of academic mobilities and obstructs a more nuanced comprehension of the conditions, struggles and experiences of inequality that academics at risk face in their mobilities, especially within the Latin American context. Building upon the notion of definitional politics (Henderson, 2020), I further critiqued this agenda's recent calls for a humanitarian turn in internationalization, advocating a more capacious approach to addressing the challenges academics at risk face in exile or in danger, as well as their needs and contributions to knowledge in global higher education when moving across national borders.

By examining humanitarian discourse in internationalization and focusing on forced internationalization, I underscored its limitations in grasping the

academic mobilities of scholars at risk, particularly in Latin American South-South mobilities, where there is no clear-cut division between global centres and peripheries. In this regard, I contend that humanitarian internationalization has functioned as an extension of the dominant internationalization agenda. As such, it remains committed to idealizing internationalization as the primary framework for addressing academic mobilities as well as to the inevitability of an unequal global higher education landscape. This latter is an ontological assumption that has, perhaps inadvertently, privileges already dominant and hegemonic higher education actors and their interests when proposing strategies and support for displaced academics.

In particular, the forced internationalization model accepts and reproduces values and related frameworks of the scholarly enterprise and institutions that devalue, misrecognize and necessarily position academics at risk. These academics who come from more peripheral capitalist economies and higher education system are seen as subaltern and not legitimate vulnerable subjects who can participate in the reproduction of their academic lives and knowledge production practices.

By focusing on the experiences of at-risk Venezuelan academics in Chile through the lens of dispossession, I have challenged the idealized narratives of academic mobility and internationalization. This case underscores the need to reconsider the mobilities of scholars at risk from perspectives that are attentive to the loss of conditions necessary for the development of academic work, knowledge production and critique, and academic and political citizenship. It also pays attention to the structures and discourses leading to the misrecognition of at-risk academics as valuable yet vulnerable subjects. Without recognizing their vulnerabilities in the processes of mobility, normative notions of independency, autonomy and entrepreneurialism will gravitate against their academic lives.

By rethinking their mobilities through the notion of dispossession, I have made visible the reinforcement of dispossession experiences by the articulation of neoliberal and racist higher education arrangements in Chile. I have also highlighted the risks associated with the strategic conjunction of humanitarian rationales with national aspirations of hegemony, domination and meritocratic ideologies that are deeply embedded in neoliberal global values in higher education. These two axes, the neoliberal-racist assemblage and the awareness of the limits of the humanitarian turn, can be usefully mobilized to rethink alternatives for supporting the organization of at-risk academics themselves, as well as for crafting suitable institutional conditions and policies.

Notes

1   CARA stands for the Council for At-Risk Academics.
2   https://www.migrationdataportal.org/international-data?i=stud_
     out_&t=2007&cm49=862.
3   https://www.migrationdataportal.org/international-data?t=2021&i=stud_
     out_&cm49=558.

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From Academic Career to Nomadic Drift: Mobility and Labour Coercion

Aslı Vatansever

Introduction

Scholarship on academic mobility is vast in its theoretical, thematic and disciplinary diversity (Shen et al., 2022). Various aspects of mobility have so far been addressed, from the global and local dynamics affecting internationalization (Altbach, 2007; Fan et al., 2022; Jacob and Meek, 2013; Marginson, 2011;) to the geographic patterns of academic migration (Lee and Kuzhabekova, 2017; Luczaj and Holy-Luczaj, 2023; Puzo, 2022), and from the impacts of mobility on career progression and scientific production (Bäker, 2015; Cañibano et al., 2020) to its departmental and individual implications (Greek and Jönsmoen, 2020; Morley et al., 2018). Despite these theoretical and empirical advances, extant literature continues to adhere to a notion of mobility as a mostly choice-based career move. This appears largely in line with the liberal contractualist discourse that classifies wage-labour (and, by extension, the agents' related efforts on the labour market) as essentially free/voluntary. The predominant push/pull or motives/barriers discourse revolves around individual, institutional or national/regional factors that determine academic workers' mobility behaviour, whereby the structural rationale behind researcher mobility as a sectoral practice remains systematically unexamined (DAAD, 2023; Janger et al., 2022; Thorn and Holm-Nielsen, 2006). Few exceptions question 'the habitual role of mobility' as the predominant career script (Bauder, 2012; Bojica et al., 2022; Courtois and O'Keefe, 2024), or focus on the demand side and explore the employers' motives in hiring international researchers (Cantwell and Taylor, 2015). Yet, the systemic function of mobility in terms of academic production relations remains unaddressed.

To address this gap, this chapter revisits the existing literature and data on academic mobility through the lens of Marxian political economy. The underlying

argument is that the academic career structure is undergoing a massive shift, proceeding along three vectors: complexification of qualification systems and de-standardization of career progression at the postdoc level (*randomization*), destabilization of the supply-demand-balance in academic labour markets (*precarization*), and increased geographic and institutional mobility of academic workforce (*nomadization*). The analysis in this chapter mainly centres on the 'nomadization' aspect and rethinks researcher mobility against the backdrop of this sectoral shift. To cover precarious mobility in all its forms, the MORE4-definition of 'forced/escape mobility' is adopted, which includes all types of mobility dictated by an impossibility of pursuing one's research in a given setting, be it due to lack of employment prospects or the threat of political execution (EC, 2021, p. 131). The imposition of 'escape mobility', that is, *nomadization*, is viewed here as a method of labour coercion, which is utilized when 'chosen' forms of mobility, such as 'exchange mobility' for the purpose of networking or 'expected mobility' for optional career boost, prove insufficient to persuade wider segments of the academic workforce into being mobile (EC, 2021, p. 132). The main aim is to go beyond a symptomatic analysis of motives and implications of mobility and to question its overall structural function as an integral practice of academic production relations.

This chapter rather aims at a conceptual advance than an empirical one and can be expected to contribute to three strands: first, by offering a holistic and critical framework for the analysis of researcher mobility, it expands the analytical toolbox of academic mobility studies. In turn, by applying the lens of labour coercion to the knowledge-producing industry which usually escapes the radar of Marxian political economy, it also broadens the utility of the notion of labour coercion and probes its salience for a sector traditionally characterized by consent and intrinsic motivation. Third, the three-tiered model of 'nomadization-randomization-precarization' offers a compact framework to analyse the ongoing transformation of the academic career structure and contributes to the growing academic career literature.

Analytical framework: Sectoral transformation and labour coercion in the academic industry

Over the last decades, an increasing number of core academic labour markets have witnessed a growing disequilibrium characterized by an oversupply of PhDs and either stagnating or steadily declining numbers of permanent vacancies due

to systematic public underfunding (Afonso, 2014; AFT, 2020; BMBF, 2021; DGB, 2020; EC, 2017; OECD, 2021; UCU, 2021). The labour market volatility that resulted in an upsloping trend of contingent employment and overdependence on third-party funding across research-intensive systems is described here as '*precarization*'. In response to this labour market contraction, qualification systems have been re-regulated in a way as to prolong and complexify the non-tenured postdoctoral career stage, introducing multifaceted competitive structures with partly opaque and/or clashing excellence criteria (Frølich et al., 2018, pp. 94–5; Musselin, 2018, p. 669; Vinkenburg et al., 2020, p. 2). The subsequent de-standardization of career progression and disarrangement of contemporary academic trajectories are dubbed '*randomization*'. Randomized careerscapes involve frequent positional, institutional and geographic mobility in search of better pay and/or research opportunities, in the hope of increasing one's chances for a future permanent position, or simply to be able to stay in the game given the lack of adequate vacancies in one's native labour market (DAAD, 2023; EC, 2021; Janger et al., 2022). This structural mechanism of creating an objectively qualified yet disposable workforce, which is conditioned to be highly flexible both in terms of its commitment to constantly move and willingness to eventually accept a series of unpromising temporary early-career positions below its qualifications, is defined here as '*nomadization*'. This chapter focuses on this last aspect and embeds it into the framework of labour coercion.

Labour coercion in the academic industry

Before applying it to the nomadization of academic workforce, some misconceptions about labour coercion need to be clarified. One of them pertains to the aforementioned contractualist understanding of free labour, which strictly limits labour coercion with the conditions of forced/slave labour where the threat of penalty often includes no less than deportation and/or physical harm (ILO, 2015; van der Linden and Rodriguez-Garcia, 2016). In this narrative, modern wage-labour, and most of all immaterial/intellectual work that relies on intrinsic motivation, is essentially accepted as consensual. In practice, however, two coercive dynamics may very well persist even in a legally free contractual employment situation: (a) the fundamental necessity to perform wage-labour for subsistence, regardless of whether one enjoys the content of a certain work or not, and (b) the mechanisms of extracting surplus-labour which – rooted in the wage-relation and guaranteed by the work contract itself – have the capacity to impose upon the workers less than ideal conditions (Marx [1890]2007,

pp. 181–3, pp. 198–200). Labour coercion should therefore be understood as a range of persuasive/obliging techniques within the social relations of work, with slavery (maximum coercion/minimum voluntariness) and high-skilled white-collar wage-work (minimum physical coercion/maximum voluntariness and maximum perceived incentive compatibility constraint) being its two ideal-typical poles.

In capitalism, the wage relation actually seals the position of the worker as 'the direct means of creating surplus-value' (Marx [1890]2007, p. 352). Thus, wages often tend to become a tool of obliging the workers and creating divisions among the workforce (Batista et al., 2024). Academia represents a particular case in point, as the academic workforce is segregated not only across traditional ranks of achievement but also along the lines of job security (permanent minority vs. temporarily employed majority) which may not necessarily be a direct result of the former. The division along job security carries multiple hidden – and not always objectively substantiated – implications of success, merit and professional standing (or the lack thereof), which further intensify the fault lines among the labour force. But more concretely, this multilayered segregation greatly predetermines both the material conditions of work (including salaries and social benefits) and the distribution of autonomy and decision-making capacity in the workplace. Thus, in the case of the academic industry, both the semi-feudal relations of dependency and the distribution of power are implanted in the very fabric of the contractual wage-relation, making the coercive element an inherent part of the academic labour process and turning the university into an 'extractive' enterprise (Buroway et al., 2023; Cruickshank, 2019; Ohm, 2022).

There are further dimensions of labour coercion in the context of wage-labour, which exceed the confines of the workplace and pertain to the structural parameters of the labour markets in general. One such coercive measure is to limit the workers' outside options, which has a wider structural bandwidth than workplace-specific practices of extraction and is exercised collectively by institutions (*producers*) and enforcement of employment law. Labour market policies play a particularly crucial role, as the efficiency or necessity of labour coercion depends on a general equilibrium of labour supply and demand. Perceived coercion is evidently higher when labour is abundant and 'outside' options are limited or virtually non-existent (Acemoglu and Wolitzky, 2009). Academia can be said to constitute a paradigmatic example in this regard, too. In the case of those who are excluded from the tenure-track and may be called random-track, the limitedness of outside options is particularly palpable. In a precarized labour market where temporary contracts are the norm, the traditionally primary outside option, that is, changing the employer for

the purpose of improving one's working conditions or employment situation, does not really offer an 'out', since institutional mobility is enforced by sectoral employment regulations and the resulting unstable employment situation itself. Theoretically, 'outside' options may then occur either within academia in the form of administrative positions or completely 'outside' in a different sector (cf. EC, 2021, p. 8). However, none of these pose a practicable choice in terms of career progression either, as the former entails significant de-qualification, while the potential overhead costs and psycho-emotional burden of the latter are likely to surpass its prospective benefits especially at mid- and late-career stages and in disciplines with no direct relevance to corporate sectors (cf. Janger et al., 2022).

Here, a third potential outside option could be brought forward, namely the option of relocating to another labour market, that is, geographic mobility. This option is subject to a conversion mechanism specific to the academic industry, whereby it has been transmuted into a structural labour coercion method that appears more like a way to secure reservation utility (i.e. reward expected from abstaining to stay in a certain labour market) than a 'gun' (i.e. overt punishment). At this point, the unique structure of the academic profession as a trans-institutional site of immaterial production requires us to rethink the principal-agent relationship in a way that the principal is not a single employer but virtually the academic industry itself. While coercion evidently increases capitalist productivity, it is socially inefficient and its maintenance expensive from a cost-cutting perspective. When labour is scarce and the value of effort increases, coercion appears necessary but costly, whereas 'setting up coercive and extractive institutions becomes more profitable when there are more numerous labourers to exploit' (Acemoglu and Wolitzky, 2009, pp. 3–4). Therefore, at the structural level, the ideal way to coerce the labour force without increasing the total production cost in a certain industry is to expand the reserve army of labour, while re-regulating the labour market in a way that outside options provide no real 'out'. In this constellation, the very search for outside options itself becomes a coercive mechanism, turning mobility into an involuntary (and often fruitless) search for outlets, as is the case with 'escape mobility' (EC, 2021). This corresponds to what is described in this chapter as *nomadization* and will be explained in the following.

Nomadization as a method of labour coercion

To understand *nomadization*, that is, the process of converting mobility from an outside option into a method of labour coercion, some idiosyncrasies of

the academic profession need to be outlined. First, academia is a sector where stable employment (especially in the form of tenure or permanency) reduces turnover and, thus, increases the workers' capacity to avoid pressures of competitive productivity immensely, due to which a productivity increase would require the use of 'guns'. Such methods are not only unusual for the knowledge producing industry but, as explained above, also socially inefficient and expensive. Second, as all commodities produced in the pursuit of capital accumulation, knowledge, too, needs to be circulated as widely as possible. But whereas the logic of capital accumulation is based on mere consumption of commodities, knowledge as a fictitious commodity follows its own logic of accumulation which is contradictory to that of capital: knowledge needs to circulate not only to be consumed but also in order to *accumulate* through transnational and transdisciplinary exchange (Shen et al., 2022, p. 1330; Vatansever, 2020, pp. 28–34). Third, a growing portion of the contemporary academic workforce is highly specialized and interacting within an increasingly monolingual virtual space with English as its lingua franca (Bennett, 2014), which theoretically makes it both scarce and potentially open to foreign labour markets. Under these circumstances, the most effective way to capsize the workers' exit strategies and limit their outside options is to translate this inherent transnationality of the labour process into the labour market. This entails the creation of a trans-national and trans-institutional virtual workplace with no 'outside' in the sense of more secure career advancement options. The formation of the European Higher Education/Research Area (henceforth EHEA or ERA) declaredly represents an attempt in this direction, as it integrates separate national academic labour markets within 'an open labour market' (EC, 2021, p. 137; Wihlborg, 2019, p. 147). In the meantime, labour scarcity is overcome by an excess PhD-supply, which only between 2013 and 2017 has increased by approximately 8 per cent across OECD countries (OECD, 2019).

These two simultaneous dynamics – upsurge in the global PhD-supply and the gradual integration of separate academic labour markets – effectively created an environment where labour is abundant and the 'outside' is eliminated through incorporation, as has been the case with the creation of the EHEA. The lack, or systematic limiting, of viable outside options can effectively 'compel workers to accept contracts they otherwise would not accept' (Trefler and Dippel, 2017). The efficiency of this specific mechanism of labour coercion can be seen in the way a remarkable percentage of the mid- and late-career academic workforce in the leading scientific countries of the Global North, especially in academic labour markets with exceptionally high shares of temporarily employed researchers

such Germany and the UK, consents to an institutionally and/or geographically nomadic career track along a series of dead-end temporary positions designed for early-career qualification (Vatansever and Kölemen, 2022, pp. 5–6).

What Courtois and O'Keefe (2024) aptly call the 'mobility imperative' serves to convince the workforce of the potential 'reservation utility' of a nomadic career (i.e. utility of not pursuing a sedentary career). It does so, first and foremost, by turning mobility into an 'independent indicator of excellence rather than a means to an end' – an exchange value – in itself (Ackers, 2008, p. 418). Nevertheless, this favourable 'career script' does not change the hard fact that, for a growing majority of the non-tenured labour force, institutional and geographic mobility also represents an unavoidable material necessity (Bojica et al., 2022, p. 1086). The dual character of mobility as both a coercive mechanism and a commodity manifests itself also in the way different types and directions of researcher migration hold different market values (Morley et al., 2018, p. 537). This logic of unequal valorization will be discussed in the following section.

Patterns and contradictions of nomadization

Several studies point to the inconsistency between the rhetorical centrality of mobility and the mobile/migrant academics' overwhelmingly 'liminal' positioning within global academia (Courtois and O'Keefe, 2024; Morley et al., 2018, pp. 543–6). This is mainly due to the hierarchies of the academic mobility market itself. Considering that 'academics […] are not only knowledge producers but also workers who are, like all migrants, embedded in employment relations', the market value of academic mobility is determined by various factors, including the mobile worker's career stage, credentials and direction of migration (Bauder, 2012, p. 83).

The valorization of mobilities is a complex process, affected by multiple factors that can be summarized as follows: (1) the motive of mobility (forced/ precarious/escape or voluntary/exchange/expected); (2) the position of the home academic system within international rankings (whether the mobile researcher comes from a high-ranked academic system/institution); (3) the position of the host academic environment in international rankings (whether the destination is a core or peripheral system); (4) the combination of 2 and 3 (a. mobility across peripheral systems; b. mobility across core systems; c. mobility from periphery to core; d. mobility from core to periphery). The first one pertains to employment status disparities among the mobile workforce; the points (2), (3) and (4) relate

to the asymmetrical 'geo-scientific imagination' with regard to the desirability of a destination (Bauder et al., 2018)

(1) The motive is decisive for the value of mobility to the extent it implies the agents' degree of vulnerability and outside options. Clearly, the exchange value (or the market return) of voluntary mobility geared towards networking or career-enhancement shall be higher than that of forced migration due to unemployment or political threat. According to the MORE4 survey of the EC, the main motives for European researchers to move outside of Europe involve the search for employment and career progression opportunities (EC, 2021, p. 129). This might suggest a slight prevalence of cases where mobility is a necessity than a choice, that is, *forced/escape mobility*, the overall share of which was in fact ca. 23 per cent by 2020 (EC, 2021, p. 132).

This still presents, however, a limited picture of the phenomenon of 'escape mobility'. A comprehensive view of escape mobility would also require the inclusion of the inbound displaced scholars within the EHEA or at least the EU, whose exact numbers are unknown, but the overall number of displaced scholars worldwide was estimated to be over 10,000 by 2017 (TWAS, 2017). While escape mobility due to lack of career prospects has a low market value in itself, displacement due to political threat has an even more adverse effect. On the one hand, political exile possesses a conjectural politico-symbolic value on which the candidates might capitalize through short-term risk scholarships for a fast entry into the host environment. On the other hand, the risk status itself turns into a 'quarantine zone' over time, the short-lived advantages of which expire as soon as the few risk scholarship options are exhausted (Vatansever, 2020).

This quarantine zone is particularly precarious and its precarity is sealed with a combination of immigration policies, labour market and social rights regulations, as well as unwritten academic prestige rules according to which a series of risk-scholarships in the CV is seen as a negative credential (Vatansever, 2022). Moreover, displaced scholars often find themselves pushed towards area studies and/or academic freedom discourses, regardless of whether these were originally within their research repertoire. This raises additional questions with regard to 'epistemic justice', as this positioning actually stems from 'stereotypes […] attached to particular social identities' and is based on an a priori assumption that scholars from peripheral systems lack certain 'markers of credibility' (Morley et al., 2018, p. 542).

The market value of a certain act of mobility is also determined by the respective positions of the countries of origin and destination within the international rankings, as well as by the relational hierarchy between these two locations. First of all, how a certain research area is perceived as a potential relocation option on

its own is related to the position of the country of origin within the international rankings (EC, 2021, pp. 8–9). But, in the last instance, the market value of a particular experience of mobility is determined less by the mere reputability of the destination than by the combination of origin and destination. Moreover, depending on this combination, the mobile labour in question is valued differently in different markets.

Inter-peripheral or inter-core mobility is usually viewed as a zero-sum game in terms of geo-scientific valorization/devaluation, with potential longer-term gains crystallizing in the form of social/cultural capital (cf. Bauder, 2012, p. 88). The real discrepancy occurs when world-systemic hierarchies come into play: mobility from core to periphery is typically seen as a downgrade in itself from the perspective of the core markets, whereas 'atypical migrants' relocating from the core to the periphery might enjoy a relative improvement in their working conditions or employment status in the peripheral receiving country (Luczaj and Holy-Luczaj, 2023; Puzo, 2022).

On the contrary, mobility from the periphery to the core is seen as an upgrade from the perspective of peripheral markets, whereby migrant labour is often devalued in the host labour markets, when prior achievements and local credentials are disregarded and the migrant scholars' formal status is precarized through citizenship/immigration policies (Bauder, 2012, p. 84). This is likely to apply more strongly to closed and precarious academic labour markets, such as Germany (Afonso, 2016). In fact, recent empirical studies point to the disadvantages migrant scholars face in terms of resources required for career advancement vis-à-vis their German counterparts (Gewinner, 2019, p. 503). The low share of foreign researchers in Germany with tenured professorships (6,8 per cent, with the majority coming from German-speaking countries like Austria and Switzerland) or permanent positions (18 per cent) can be seen as an example of the devaluation of peripheral mobile labour in closed and competitive core labour markets (DAAD et al., 2019, p. 122; DAAD, 2023, p. 92).

In lieu of conclusion

This chapter explored the structural function of precarious mobility as a coercive sectoral practice. Applied to the three-tiered model of sectoral transformation presented in this chapter, the framework of labour coercion provided a salient analytical tool. It brought to light not only the involuntary character of most of contemporary academic mobility but also the systemic logic behind the re-regulation of academic labour markets to force a growing

portion of the academic workforce into a nomadic trajectory. The chapter's main contribution to the analysis of mobility has thus been the depiction of how the creation of a disposable reserve army of PhD-holders and the simultaneous formation of an integrated transnational academic labour market have effectively contrived a labour market mechanism, where coercive nomadization could be promoted as an exchange value that generates reservation utility. By doing so, the chapter integrated the tradition of Marxian political economy into the agenda of academic labour and mobility analysis, on the one hand, and validated the utility of the concept of labour coercion in the context of academic work, on the other. Moreover, the unequal valorization of different mobility patterns has been discussed and briefly categorized. This can be seen as a preliminary attempt to outline the labour market manifestations of structural and discursive hierarchies between academic systems.

While the conceptual analysis presented here refined and validated existing concepts and proposed a new approach to existing data, it cannot, and indeed did not intend to, offer precise conclusions based on quantified facts. It rather provides a simplified yet concise explanation of a complex phenomenon from a structural labour market perspective. The framework propounded in this chapter might hopefully inspire future empirical studies to analyse academic labour markets and sectoral practices from a more holistic structural angle. It would be a substantial step towards a political economy of academic mobility, if, departing from this initial proposition, accurate tools could be developed for measuring the efficiency of mobility as a labour coercion method in terms of diminishing the total labour cost of the sector.

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Part Three

New and Emerging Patterns, Flows and Models of Mobilities and Immobilities in Higher Education

International Student Mobility in a Changing Global Environment: Key Issues and Trends

Hans de Wit, Philip G. Altbach and Lizhou Wang

Introduction

Although global student mobility is a significant factor in higher education in many countries and at the core of internationalization efforts, it is limited to a small and mainly elite sector of the global student population. Six million global students studying outside the borders of their countries represent a small proportion of the 254 million students pursuing higher education worldwide. Nevertheless, the mobility of learners, teachers and scholars has always been a key dimension of higher education. Historically, this can be traced back to the wandering students and scholars during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance in Europe, when Latin was the common academic language, and the Church held a more important role than the nation-state. Similarly, students from all over Asia came to study at Buddhist monasteries/universities such as Vikramashila, Nalanda and Odantapuri in Northern India.

Since then, the contexts of higher education have changed. In Europe, the nation took over the control of higher education from the Church. Latin was replaced by national languages, and English gradually emerged as the dominant language of research and, to some extent, international higher education. Western models of higher education began to lead much of the world, led by German and later United States' doctoral universities. For a long period, the absolute numbers of internationally mobile students and staff remained relatively limited.

The late twentieth century brought significant changes to higher education, mobility and internationalization. Reflecting the development of globalization, mobility expanded from being primarily within regions to more truly global patterns (Altbach et al., 2010). In its many diverse forms – including degree study, credit earning, branch campuses and others – mobility continues to

be a major aspect of international higher education. Notably, student and scholar mobility has become a mass enterprise, with more than six million students studying outside their countries in 2021 (The UNESCO Institute for Statistics, UIS, 2024). Furthermore, mobility patterns are shifting. While South-North movement remains primary at world level, new patterns and modes are emerging.[1] Research on international student mobility has significantly increased and diversified, investigating aspects such as international students' contributions to the promotion of soft power; their roles in labour markets in the host economy; campus internationalization; research mobility, including brain drain; and the interfaces between mobility and immigration, and mobility and social integration.

This chapter addresses key topics and trends in the research on international student mobility. It covers the changing mobility patterns and drivers, different types of mobility and other international developments and key issues. These include the rise of nationalism, populism and commodification of education, which has led to different policies and attitudes towards EMI, fees and study-migration policies. An increase in geopolitical tensions, the Russian invasion in Ukraine, the conflict in Gaza and knowledge security concerns between China and the Western world have all introduced new realities – and uncertainties – in affecting patterns of student mobility and internationalization.

Changing landscape of international student mobility

'Internationally mobile students' often refers to degree-mobile students who move to a foreign country for educational purposes and receive *a foreign tertiary/higher education degree* on a student visa. As noted, the predominant pattern of degree mobility at world level has been from the Global South to the Global North, although there is also significant degree mobility within the Global North, in particular within Europe, and from the United States to Europe as well as the reverse. Initially, the South to North flow consisted largely of small numbers of elites from colonies to the imperial countries. This movement increased significantly after independence, for example students travelling to the UK and France. This kind of mobility extended also to other key Anglophone countries, including the United States, Canada and Australia, which have maintained a dominant destination position. On the supply side the fastest growth in outgoing students has been from Global South countries. From 1995 to 2010, the main sending countries worldwide were China, India and Malaysia.

Gradually, the traditional South-to-North mobility dynamics shifted. While South-to-North and, to some extent, North-to-North mobility remain numerically dominant, there is a trend towards multipolarity and intra-regional student mobility. According to Van Mol et al. (2024), the past fifteen years have witnessed a challenge to the hegemony of the Anglo-Saxon and Western countries, with new educational hubs gaining prominence. A more diverse set of countries now exert greater relative influence in the overall student mobility network (Glass and Cruz, 2023). Intra-regional mobility can be seen in many examples. For China: the top senders are neighbours South Korea, Thailand and Pakistan. For Russia, the top senders are nearby Kazakhstan, China and Uzbekistan. Likewise, South Korea and Japan have become top study destinations for students from Vietnam, Indonesia and Malaysia (Sharma, 2024). For Argentina, all the top sending countries are also from South America: Brazil, Peru, Colombia, Paraguay and Bolivia.

In addition, graduate and doctoral levels of North-North mobility continue to grow, especially within Europe, and also primarily short-term credit mobility that is part of the home degree.

Explaining the changing mobility patterns

Macro-level drivers for international mobility

In the dynamic landscape of international higher education, macro-level factors, beyond the control of individual countries, higher education institutions (HEIs) and students, wield significant influence in changing mobility patterns. Two pivotal developments in the twentieth century – the massification of higher education and the rise of the knowledge economy – underpinned the dramatic increase in international student mobility, especially degree mobility. Students from the Global South and their sponsors, mostly families, but also governments, sought educational opportunities in foreign countries due to there being insufficient quality higher education at home. When the opportunities abroad were superior and the supply larger than domestic ones, and when the social, economic and labour market outcomes appeared relatively favourable for returning graduates, societies with a growing middle-class base pursued opportunity abroad.

In many sending countries the enhancement in higher education quality, along with economic development, played and continues to play an important role. Initially, the improvement in quality affected the undergraduate level

and gradually extended to post-graduate and professional fields. For example, in East Asian countries, such as Japan and South Korea, the national higher education systems have now achieved excellent quality and become attractive study destinations for international students.

Economic and financial considerations

Another global factor shaping the mobility landscape is the increasing commodification of education, especially in Anglophone countries. There international education is often regarded as an export commodity. Institutions charge higher tuition fees to international students than to their domestic counterparts. In addition to tuition and fees, international students directly contribute to the host country's economy through expenditures on accommodation, travel, and daily living expenses. Anglophone high-income countries have particularly benefited financially from this market. For example, in the academic year 2022–3, the over one million international students at US colleges and universities contributed more than $40 billion to the US economy and supported more than 368,000 jobs (NAFSA, 2023). For the UK, the figure for the total economic contribution was £41.9 billion in the 2021/2 academic year (Higher Education Policy Institute, 2023).

At the same time, high living and tuition costs, coupled with increased xenophobia in the Global North, have driven many students to pursue education in non-Western nations where tuition and living costs are less expensive (de Wit et al., 2022). These economic pull factors make the emerging study destinations attractive to many international students, especially those from middle-income and lower-income families.

Soft power and cultural influences

Many countries and institutions prioritize international student recruitment as a key target in their strategies for the internationalization of higher education because of the value they place on securing soft power, cross-border cultural influence and improved university rankings. The global position of the Anglophone countries is boosted by the presence of many high-ranking universities, the dominance of English as a lingua franca, the economic opportunities available in those countries and the pattern of investment in 'Whiteness' (Shahjahan and Edwards, 2022). Non-Anglophone nations often leverage linguistic, cultural, religious and historical affinities with sending countries to attract students (Ovchinnikova et al., 2023).

At the national level, countries utilize strategic policies and national agencies to promote international student recruitment and subsidize inward mobility. Activities and initiatives involve various national actors that aim to build a comprehensive ecosystem in supporting immigration regulation, university cooperation, language training and scholarships (Minaeva et al., 2022). Examples include the Indian government, which launched the Study in India flagship project in 2018 in collaboration with various government departments to enhance its global identity through international education initiatives. Similarly, the Education Plan in China's Belt and Road Initiative showcases the political and diplomatic motivations behind its internationalization strategy and international student recruitment. Agencies such as the German Academic Exchange Agency (DAAD), Campus France and the British Council all aim to contribute to their country's soft power through international student recruitment.

Many countries are in a more advantageous position to leverage the pull factors due to cultural connections and diasporas. For example, as noted, France draws international students from regions with historical colonial ties, including Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Senegal, Ivory Coast and Cameroon. In Russia, a significant portion of inbound degree-seeking students come from former Soviet nations, for example, in Central Asia, Belarus, Moldova and (until the Russian invasion in February 2022) Ukraine. Other nations, including China, India, Poland and Hungary, actively seek to attract the offspring of their diasporas (de Wit et al., 2022).

Demographic change, labour market and migration

For many countries in the Global North, significant demographic decline and the need for skilled labour have made it challenging to find sufficient talent domestically. Attracting talented international students, faculty and professionals as well as encouraging retention is often a crucial strategy for higher education in high-income and middle-income countries. Other rationales, such as the desire to create an international classroom environment, also drive international student recruitment and exchange (Weber et al., 2023).

Important in the abovementioned factors are the many ways in which migration and student mobility cross over. Education functions as a significant migration doorway for a large minority of the students moving from the Global South to the Anglophone countries. Tensions and controversies arise regarding international students' post-study options, labour market needs and immigration policies. These issues have not only driven major shifts in policy

on inward students in Australia, Canada and the UK but also affect issues of language, fees and student integration, as will be discussed.

The changing economic and political environment of individual countries and specific geographical regions can impact international mobility patterns. Evolving educational priorities in developing nations, and international aid initiatives that are designed to support educational advancement in lower-income countries, influence student flows.

In summary, there is a multitude of multifaceted and non-exclusive reasons for countries and institutions to attract international students to their countries. In relation to each case, it is necessary to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the social, economic, political and demographic contexts and circumstances (e.g. the country cases in de Wit et al., 2022).

Different types of mobility

In addition to international degree mobility, other mobility types, emerging quickly, should be considered. For each type of mobility, the related push and pull factors, the level of study, and the home and host context all vary greatly. Credit mobility remains primarily a North-to-North phenomenon, with no signs of a significant increase occurring. Certificate mobility, while a major industry, requires more data and research attention.

Credit mobility

Credit mobility refers to the student earning credits abroad as part of the home degree. In surveys by associations such as the International Association of University Presidents (IAUP, 2024) it is perceived as the most important dimension of internationalization and mobility. Credit-seeking students are observed to have different needs than degree mobility students (Perez-Encinas, et al., 2021). While some institutional data include them when reporting internationalization activities, many statistics do not report credit mobile students because of their fluid enrolment status and the difficulty of accessing data from foreign jurisdictions (Migration Data Portal, n.d.).

Credit mobility remains primarily a phenomenon of the Global North, and principally of the United States and Continental Europe. In the United States these students are referred to as 'study-abroad' or 'exchange students'. Around 10 per cent of the undergraduates participate in study-abroad programmes.

According to Eurostat (2023), in Europe 9 per cent of EU graduates engaged in mobility abroad, far below the 20 per cent target. Elsewhere in both the North and the Global South, credit mobility is limited, often under the 1 per cent of the student population, and primarily driven by cross-border alliances of universities with minimal government support.

Certificate mobility

Students engaged in certificate programmes abroad, such as language training, summer programmes or intensive courses, can be categorized as engaged in international certificate mobility, a diverse and predominantly private sector initiative (Wang, 2022). While some of these programmes are organized by universities, a substantial proportion are facilitated by commercial and non-academic entities.

Digitalization, cross-border education delivery and joint degree development have created new forms of mobility, necessitating the development of new conceptual frameworks. These would need to include tech industry-sponsored programmes, online learning platforms, universities offering online degrees, micro-credentials, corporate universities, professional boot camps and many other short-term courses for skill and professional development. These alternative educational providers can offer students distinct advantages. They can align curricula with job market needs, provide comparatively affordable tuition, adopt a student-centred approach and offer career and networking opportunities along with flexible learning formats.

Certificate mobility is expanding in the Global South, reflecting a broader trend towards diversifying educational opportunities. The proliferation of these programmes highlights the demand for flexible, short-term educational experiences that can quickly adapt to changing labour market needs and technological advancements. However, the lack of regulation and standardization in this sector poses challenges in ensuring the quality and recognition of these credentials.

Virtual mobility and digitalization for non-mobile students

Among the vast non-mobile student group are those participating in international online programmes that fall into the category of virtual mobility aimed at enhancing the internationalization of the curriculum at home. Virtual mobility includes a wide range of modalities: international distance education

programmes leading to a degree or a certificate, blended learning models that combine online education with short-term mobility for the home degree programmes, Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), which may or may not lead to certification, and virtual exchange and collaborative online international learning (COIL) as components of home degrees. In particular, in the Global South, virtual exchange and COIL present affordable alternatives to physical mobility, constituting a more inclusive and less elitist alternative. However, there are challenges, such as limited access to digital infrastructure and inadequate internet bandwidth.

The Covid-19 pandemic accelerated the virtualization of student mobility, offering a glimpse into the potential sustainability of this alternative. This may be having a longer-term impact on the numbers and distribution of international student flows. Students participating in international online programmes or via a distance often experience limited intercultural learning: they have less opportunity for language-based immersion in classrooms and no opportunity for such immersion in the country of education itself. Online cross-border learning is often less satisfying than physically studying abroad (Huang et al., 2024; Wang, 2023). Nevertheless, although virtual student mobility cannot directly replicate the immersive experience, it has the potential to broaden access to international education by fostering interest in global learning and facilitating the creation of education networks and partnerships (O'Dowd, 2022).

Programme mobility

Programme mobility, known as transnational education (TNE), through its new patterns and models, affects international students' mobility. Programme mobility includes international branch campuses, franchise operations, articulation programmes, dual and joint degrees, online education, educational hubs and international universities. International branch campuses recruit most of their students in the host countries in which they are located, and students may take courses in the home country campuses as international students. The structures, ownerships, funding and regulations governing cross-border learning give rise to potential institutional uncertainties in this form of mobility (Wilkins, 2018). While some TNE programmes are reported to generate positive outcomes, there exist also challenges that hinder the sustainable operation and development of TNE (Tran et al., 2023) and have led to the closedown of some initiatives, such as the Yale-NUS College.

Forced mobility

Another form of mobility, best described as 'forced mobility' or 'mobility for survival', pertains to refugees who are compelled to leave their home countries and seek access to higher education in host countries. These students are of various ages. They hope to access or continue higher education either in large refugee camps, mostly located in neighbouring countries in the Global South, or in countries that accept them as asylum seekers, both in the South and the North. They may be counted in the categories of degree mobility or certificate mobility, depending on their circumstances and educational goals. For middle-aged adult refugees, training and retraining opportunities are often crucial.

Increasing geopolitical tensions, military conflicts over territory and national security concerns have resulted in changes in international student flows. Recent cases include the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the ongoing Israel-Gaza conflict. These conflicts have precipitated humanitarian crises, resulting in displaced populations, refugees and forced student mobility. Less visible conflicts, such as civil wars in Syria and, more recently, in Sudan, have also affected student mobility patterns. Geopolitical crises and habitat loss due to climate change, for example, in Syria, Afghanistan, Sudan, Myanmar, Venezuela, Nicaragua and the Sahel region in Africa, have significantly increased the incidence of forced mobility (Unangst et al., 2020).

Refugee students face unique challenges and needs, including legal, financial and linguistic barriers, which complicate their access to and success in higher education. Universities often lack resources to adequately accommodate the needs of students engaged in mobility for opportunity and, even more so, students engaged in mobility for survival. These individuals often face significant disruptions in their educational trajectories, necessitating the adaptation or updating of skills acquired in their home countries.

Key issues and trends in international student mobility

New phenomena, situations and themes have emerged in the study of international mobility: demographic changes, the impact of nationalism, geopolitical tensions, migration politics, national security concerns, problems of academic services (in particular housing shortages) and the role of English as a dominant language. As space constraints prevent an in-depth analysis of

all topics, we outline a few key issues and trends that are influencing and will influence the ongoing patterns of international student movement.

Nationalism and English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI)

Rising nationalist and populist movements worldwide are affecting international student mobility because of the impact on immigration policies, work-study opportunities and English language programme offerings, which are all important pull factors. Over the past few years anti-immigration sentiments appear to have become more influential globally. There has been Trump in the United States, Orbán in Hungary, Bolsonaro in Brazil and also the regimes in China, Egypt, India, Mexico, Russia and Tunisia. Issues of safety, Sinophobia and political polarization in the United States, coupled with national security concerns affecting exchange and research collaboration, have led to a decrease in the number of Chinese students attending US universities, and a dramatic decline of Americans studying in China. Similar challenges are evident in Australia, the UK and the European Union. In countries like the Netherlands and the UK, restrictive immigration policies have been implemented concerning work-study permissions and after-study stay periods for international students and their spouses. Conversely, the private sector demands a large quantity of skilled labour; industry often advocates for the capacity to recruit and retain international students and skilled immigrants.

The use of English as the language of instruction in non-Anglophone countries conflicts with nationalist sentiments but is an important pull factor for recruiting talented students. English Medium Instruction (EMI) refers to the use of the English language to teach academic subjects (other than English itself) in countries where the first language of most of the population is not English. Different positions and attitudes have been expressed towards teaching in English or adapting EMI programmes (Bradford et al., 2022). Key points of contestation include education programme quality, English proficiency levels among students and instructors, the impact on national languages and identity, and funding and sustainability (Salomone, 2022). For example, Denmark and the Netherlands have seen opposition to English-taught programmes due to nationalist concerns.

It awaits to be seen to what extent international students will be discouraged from pursuing education in these changing environments, and how long these countries can continue to restrict the international recruitment of students. Denmark already has started to reverse its anti-international student policy, due to shortages of skilled labour.

Varying policies on tuition fees

Cost of attendance, travel expenses and living costs are important factors influencing students' mobility decisions and patterns. Students from low-income and lower-middle-income countries and families find it more difficult to access education in countries with high tuition fees. In 1979 the UK introduced full-cost fees for international students and Australia announced a parallel policy in 1985. Over time HEIs in these countries saw reductions in government funding per domestic student and a growing dependence on international student fees. New Zealand and Canada later adopted the same strategy in order to subsidize the costs of domestic education and research. At the same time, the United States continued to charge full-cost fees in its private higher education sector and to out-of-state tuition in public institutions.

In continental Europe and Ireland, countries – in particular the Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark, Finland and, lately, Norway – credit mobility under the impetus of the ERASMUS programme was the more dominant approach to student mobility. At the turn of the century, these countries started charging full-cost fees to their international students and introducing EMI courses in many degree programmes. Other major student receiving European countries have adopted different tuition and fee policies. France, for instance, recently cancelled plans to introduce higher fees for international students as part of its new immigration policy, thereby strengthening its recruitment efforts, particularly in India and Africa, including English-speaking Africa. Whether international students are charged tuition fees, and how much they have to pay, as well as the availability of scholarships and financial assistance play a significant role in directing international student flow (de Wit et al., 2022).

Commodification and ethical concerns

The commodification of international higher education has led to several controversial issues in international student recruitment, resulting from the tension between having to generate income and concerns about the quality of academic and support services for local and international students; and also the relation between international education and serving the national labour market (de Wit and Altbach, 2024).

A large industry of for-profit and not-for-profit entities has emerged to support, guide and influence mobility Among these, student recruitment agents play a crucial yet controversial role, being used by both students searching for their perfect international study destination and HEIs hoping to gain international

tuition fee revenues (Nikula et al., 2023; Reisberg and Altbach, 2023). Increasing pressures on university finances have intensified reliance on agents. This has been associated with problems relating to unverified information provision, low levels of transparency and documentation fraud. There are risks here for both students' welfare and university reputation. The phenomenon of agents requires host countries and universities to develop strict policies and regulations (Minaeva et al., 2022; Nikula et al., 2023).

There are also problems in some countries, notably in South Asia and Nigeria, in the growth of a 'grey' industry which sells access to migration pathways and work-right opportunities via student visas into the countries of education. International student policy in UK and Australia periodically cracks down on this industry but it has not been eliminated.

Inadequate academic services for domestic and international students have become an important rationale for restricting total recruitment of international students in countries like Canada, Ireland and the Netherlands (de Wit et al., 2022). There can be problems in relation to infrastructure and accommodation that impact international student adaptation, well-being and educational experiences. In countries where the internationalization level is relatively low and integration with local society is limited, the effectiveness of international student education and the potential for more extensive soft power promotion become concerns (Wen et al., 2022).

Concluding remarks

In the words of Van Mol et al. (2024, p. 141), international student mobility is 'complex and multilayered'. It is influenced by a variety of changing contexts and related push and pull factors. There is no such archetype as '*the* international student', as there are different forms of student, stakeholder roles and motivations for mobility. In degree mobility, one can observe a gradual shift from a predominantly South-North movement towards a more diverse movement, with dominant sending countries, particularly in Asia, increasingly becoming receiving countries.

Revenue generation remains a dominant pull factor in the Anglophone higher education sector. Another key consideration is increasing the stay rate of international students so as to better meet skilled labour needs. At the same time, geopolitical tensions, national security concerns, and nationalist anti-immigration sentiments and policies are becoming important obstacles to

international student mobility. While international students and the revenues they generate are important in a few countries, perhaps more important to the global economy as a whole are patterns of high-skilled immigration related to student mobility. These patterns contribute to inequalities, impact remittances, influence scientific collaboration and invoke many other factors, affecting numerous countries.

Without question, broader issues of internationalization and the specific patterns and changes in global student mobility are key factors influencing higher education worldwide. As countries navigate these complex dynamics, the strategic management of international student flows and integration of skilled graduates into the labour market will be crucial for maximizing the benefits of global education and fostering international collaboration. Ultimately, understanding the evolving nature of international student mobility is essential for policymakers and educators who seek to enhance the internationalization of higher education and address the broader challenges and opportunities it presents.

Note

1 In this chapter, we use the terms 'Global South' and 'Global North' as a simplified way to denote countries based on geography, socioeconomics, and politics. However, this North-South distinction has many limitations, and other terms are used. One common categorization is by income groups, as in the World Bank distinction between low-income, lower-middle-income, middle-income, upper-middle-income and high-income countries.

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The Contribution of Student Mobility to Graduate Employability in Southeast Asia: The Rising Attraction of Intra-regional Study in ASEAN

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Introduction

For the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), intra-regional student mobility is expected to serve the development of a common higher education space and promote regional awareness of ASEAN identity. In the past three decades, a number of mobility scholarship programmes have emerged such as the University Mobility in Asia and Pacific (UMAP), the ASEAN International Mobility for Students (AIMS), the ASEAN University Network (AUN) Student Exchange Programme and the EU-SHARE (European Union Support to Higher Education in ASEAN Region). Scholarships have engaged students in intra-regional cross-border studies. Despite being short-term, such programmes are seen as 'a potential opportunity for learning from contrast' that involves 'students' international understanding, abilities to reflect, personal confidence and maturity' (Pedersen, 2021, p. 293). These benefits may be useful for students' academic and general competencies, including employability in an increasingly global marketplace.

Despite this progress, there is little analysis of how short-term international student mobility (cultural exchange of two weeks duration, or a semester exchange) affects the employability of formerly mobile graduates in the ASEAN context. This chapter attempts to address this gap in literature. It explores the perceptions of mobile students and labour market representatives (LMRs) on the contributions of intra-ASEAN higher education student mobility to graduates'

employability in four ASEAN Member States (Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam) and three sectors (Engineering and Information and Communication Technology; Business, Social Science and Humanities; and Education). Using thematic analysis of data gathered in interviews with forty-three graduates and forty employers, we seek answers to the following questions:

1.   What are the career-related resources developed by intra-ASEAN higher education mobility programmes?
2.   What are the perceptions of labour market representatives in specific sectors regarding the career-related resources of participating graduates in intra-ASEAN higher education mobility?

The chapter continues with the description of conceptual framework and methodology before presenting the findings and concluding the chapter with discussion.

Literature review and conceptual framework

The concept of employability is highly fluid because it is not necessarily evidenced by real employment. Employability can be understood as 'a set of achievements – skills, understandings and personal attributes – that makes graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations' (Yorke, 2006, p. 4). This definition emphasizes an individual's abilities to meet the demands of the occupations. However, social resources, or social capitals, such as the networks, key contacts, relationships and activities related to creating and keeping ties with others are known to enhance or limit one's possibilities to secure a job (Tomlinson, 2017). Forms of social capital can also help students get a job through trusting and reciprocal relationships.

Sociological literature tends to treat employability not just as a question of skills development but as a contextual and relational phenomenon (Tran et al., 2021). From this perspective, there are three main groups of contextual determinants to one's employment success: (1) employability skills and attributes (personal competencies, basic transferable skills, qualifications, work knowledge and experience, and personal conditions); (2) household circumstances (care responsibilities, other family duties and access to resources); and (3) demand

factors (labour market, vacancy characteristics and employment policy). Employability, thus, is seen as an outcome of labour market conditions. Recently, researchers have also paid attention to the sustainability and meaningfulness of employment (job quality, personal growth, and satisfaction) as part of employability (Pham, 2021).

The mobility experience, regardless of its length, provides students with soft skills, including linguistic improvement, self-dependence, intercultural competence, problem-solving, teamwork, adaptability, creativity and global awareness, which are all perceived as contributing to employability (Lim et al., 2022a; Potts, 2021). These soft skills are also what employers expect their employees with international education experience to possess. Mobility is also believed to offer space for young people's self-development and realization of their potential and future redirection, and expansion of networks that will aid their transition to the labour market (Tran et al., 2021). In a study conducted in Europe by Bracht et al. (2006), more than 40 per cent of the employers surveyed report that internationally mobile graduates are likely to take over professional assignments demanding high levels of responsibility. Besides, in the increasingly globalizing economy where local companies target international markets, the skills and dispositions gained from education mobility make graduates a preferable cohort of recruits.

Despite these well-recognized benefits, graduates might be disadvantaged in navigating the home labour market. Local employers raise concerns about graduates' insufficient localized knowledge and their long-term commitment to local small or medium-sized companies (Singh and Fan, 2021). Importantly, non-mobile students now seek to gain similar attributes as their mobile counterparts through transnational education and the internationalization of curriculum. Thus, employers and human resources professionals are inclined to treat mobile and non-mobile graduates equally, as evidenced in a Vietnamese study by Pham and Saito, (2020).

In the current literature, only two studies focus on the employability outcomes of formerly intra-ASEAN mobile graduates. Both focused on students participating in the ASEAN International Mobility for Students (AIMS). Nordin et al.'s (2020) quantitative research involving 146 AIMS alumni reveals that acquiring transversal skills, such as better understanding of cultural differences, making new friends and being independent, scored the highest among the mobility benefits identified, while having job prospects both at home and abroad received the lowest. Ismail et al.'s (2020) mixed-methods study of students' AIMS

mobility experience concludes that positive staff-student relationships contribute to their development of personal qualities (such as resilience and adaptability) and social competencies such as building new relationships with others. The lacuna in the literature of intra-ASEAN mobility (with a few exceptions of Atherton et al., 2020; Chao, 2020) reveals an opportunity for the authors to focus on how short-term ISM experience within the region affects formerly mobile graduates' employability as perceived by employers and students themselves, given the interest in promoting regional education mobility of ASEAN for community building, labour mobility and harmonization of higher education.

In this study, employability is conceptualized as the interplay between graduates' developed resources, the labour market needs and expectations, and the biographical, educational and sociocultural contexts in which they operate. The conceptual framework in this study is depicted in Figure 12.1.

We acknowledge that employability, approached from this perspective, implies that the responsibility to be employable is shifted to individual graduates and students, while the role of institutions and the state, for example, might not be particularly evident here. However, this framework is utilized because, first, it serves to unravel the self-reported resources graduates acquired through engagement with short-term intra-regional mobility that could contribute to their employability. Second, it facilitates distinguishing the resources acquired by graduates and employers' institutionalized beliefs about the value of these resources with regard to the context of regional mobility.
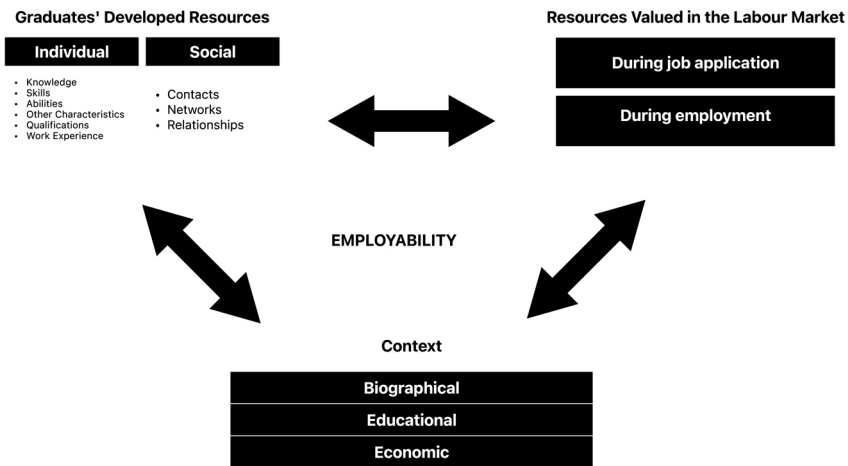

Figure 12.1 Conceptual framework of the study.

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative approach to study the employability outcomes of intra-ASEAN student mobility. To recruit participants, the research team used purposive sampling (Table 12.1). In total, there were forty-three graduates of intra-ASEAN mobility schemes (Table 12.2) and forty employers (represented by top- and middle-level management and human resource personnel) (Table 12.3). All students were engaged in short-term mobility (from a two-week culture exchange to a semester at most). They could only take two courses to study. Some students did not have many options because courses were taught in the local language which they did not speak. Prior to the interviews, a Participant Information Sheet and online consent form were sent to the participants. Individual semi-structured interviews were carried out remotely via Zoom/ Google Meet and email. With Thai and Vietnamese participants, interviews were

Table 12.1 Respondents' Eligibility Criteria

Graduates	Labour market representatives
From Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand or Vietnam; Spent time abroad as part of an intra-ASEAN exchange programme (e.g. SHARE, AIMS, AUN or UMAP); Was hosted by a university in another ASEAN country, and Completed a programme of study related to Business, Social Sciences and Humanities; Engineering and ICT; Education	Private enterprises, national or local government agencies, civil society organizations, think tanks, multilateral organizations; Works in the Business and Finance, Education, or Engineering and ICT sectors; Has a presence in either the ASEAN or any of the four country contexts, and A top or middle-level manager or a human resource professional who is knowledgeable about labour market needs and recruitment practices

Table 12.2 Number of Graduate Respondents by Country of Origin and Field of Study

	Business, social science and humanities	Education	Engineering and ICT	Total
Malaysia	7	1	2	10
The Philippines	6	0	2	8
Thailand	4	6	0	10
Vietnam	1	7	7	15
Total	18	14	11	43

Table 12.3 Number of Labour Market Representative Respondents by Type

	Cross-sectoral (government agencies and think tanks)	Employers			Total
		Education institutions	Engineering and IT	Other sectors	
Malaysia	3	1	2	2	8
The Philippines	4	0	5	3	12
Thailand	1	2	1	6	10
Vietnam	1	5	0	4	10
Total	9	8	8	15	40

conducted mostly in the local language and were translated by the interviewers. Meanwhile, interviews with those from Malaysia and the Philippines were in English. The data was then transcribed and analysed thematically (Braun and Clarke, 2014) by the researchers.

Findings

This section shares insights gathered from eighty-three interviews with graduates and LMRs. The discussion begins by exploring the perceived benefits of mobility experiences on the employability of graduates. Following this, the section presents an analysis of the perceptions of LMRs.

Contribution of mobility to employability through graduates' perspectives

Graduates' developed resources through mobility

The majority of the respondents considered their mobility experience had a significant or very significant impact on their careers as it enabled them to develop a range of resources that enhanced their personal and professional lives. The most highly cited benefit of mobility was the graduates' skills and confidence when communicating with others, mainly in English and also in the host country's language in some cases. As explained by the participants, when abroad, they used a foreign language in a range of academic and social contexts, leading to their enhanced language competence and confidence. Another developed

skill widely agreed among the respondents was intercultural competence understood as 'the ability to communicate effectively in cross-cultural situations and to relate appropriately in a variety of cultural contexts' (Bennett and Bennett, 2004, p. 149), which they attributed to both formal learning arrangements (e.g. by being with local and international classmates) and informal learning experiences (e.g. living with people from other nationalities). As many of the graduates' current jobs involve working with people from different cultures and backgrounds, intercultural competence has allowed them to either relate better with their colleagues or perform better at their jobs. According to G24 from the Philippines,

> During the mobility, I had to learn how to communicate with locals and peers who came from different parts of Asia. […] Learning from that experience has helped me come up with communication materials that cut through barriers and get the message across.
>
> (G24, the Philippines)

The graduates also reported that the mobility experience encouraged them to become autonomous, independent and adaptable to different situations and social contexts, which they reiterated were essential skills to survive and thrive in the world of work. One student from the Philippines reflected that 'there are times when we need to complete a task quickly with minimal guidelines. This is something that my mobility experience helped me with'.

Expansion of social networks and contacts

The mobility experience allowed graduates to enhance their social assets by developing a network of friends and acquaintances. Although not all graduates found it possible to maintain the network developed in the host country, these relationships can be considered 'weak ties' (Granovetter, 1983) which provided them with access to information and resources beyond those available in their own social circle. For example, G2 reported that it has become easy for her to initiate collaborative projects between her school and other alumni from her host country Cambodia, while G12 could invite international friends to teach English to her students. Other students also showed optimism towards how the network they created during their exchange could enable future professional opportunities and collaboration.

> I still connect and talk with my Korean friends; we are also sharing jobs as well, like if there are opportunities … I think my network is getting bigger and bigger.
>
> (G35, Malaysia)

> Actually, my career now is from my friends. She did share with me the vacancy available in the company, and I tried and was glad that I secured this job.
>
> (G37, Malaysia)

The networks, key contacts and relationships developed during the mobility time could enhance the graduates' possibilities of finding a job or even help create jobs among themselves. The analysis shows similarities with prior research in that the valuable social resources accumulated from the mobility experience increased students' chances in the labour market (Sisavath, 2021; Tomlinson, 2017), and highlights the potential strength of weak ties in graduates' employability through the circulation of useful information.

A gateway to new career horizons and interests

Another value of the mobility experience is that it helped some graduates expand their professional interests and horizons. By taking courses they were interested in outside of their major in the host institution, students could explore new academic horizons, alternative ways of learning, and a new possible career track, or consider entrepreneurial pursuits in some cases. As some students shared:

> There were some courses that mostly Indonesians attended, so I could learn how they studied, how they thought, and what made them think that way.
>
> (G18, Vietnam)

> My experience [at host university] made me more interested in agriculture which is very much in line with my values since food comes from agriculture first before anywhere else.
>
> (G1, Philippines)

For other students, the mobility experience provided them with professional clarity and affirmation of their career choice. An example is a student majoring English language teaching in Vietnam:

> During the exchange time, I found the motivation to study. I had a clearer picture of what I was learning and became more excited about it.
>
> (G22, Vietnam)

Due to the positive experience during the exchange programme, some graduates also engaged with further mobility in various forms (employment, workshops and conferences) or were inspired to further their studies overseas. For instance, G21 from Vietnam was inspired to explore opportunities for a master's programme scholarship abroad, while G1 from the Philippines 'kept going abroad because of invitations to events and competitions'.

Indirect career benefits

The findings suggest mobility's signalling effect (Spence, 1973), which refers to the assumptions employers make about the potential productivity of an employee based on certain signals that act as proxies for traits. Some of the graduates alluded to the positive signalling effect of their mobility:

> I applied for one of the international schools and the person who interviewed me was very amazed by my experience in Cambodia … they said, in that case, we believe you're so flexible, you can adapt.
>
> (G2, Malaysia)

> The person who hired me for my current job kept on asking me about my exchange. He got interested in the journalism courses that I took in Cambodia because it really mattered for the kind of content that their company produced.
>
> (G23, the Philippines)

For G33, a Malaysian graduate from the Creative Industry field, her conversational Bahasa Indonesia developed during her five-month-long mobility was highly valued by her then-employer looking into business expansion to Indonesia. Nevertheless, some of the respondents felt that the mobility experience led to more positive changes in their personal development rather than career enhancement. According to G5 from the Philippines, learning to live independently away from their family was their biggest achievement form the short-term mobility, while another student reflected in the interview that 'one semester of mobility is too short to create more significant changes in my career, although it opened new realities and new ways of thinking that would definitely inform my decisions in the future' (G27, the Philippines). Interviews with some graduates also suggest that employers were more focused on job-specific skills and knowledge since 'recruiters tend to focus more on my technical skills and not my soft skills' as recalled by G3 from Malaysia, or because 'they already had a fixed set of questions that they planned to ask each candidate' according to G28 in Thailand.

Overall, while some graduates perceived their study abroad having little to no impact during the interview process, many respondents alluded that their intra-ASEAN mobility experience enabled them to develop valuable attributes for job performance, expand professional contacts, open new career horizons and interests, and facilitate their personal and professional development. They also believed that the mobility experience could convey the message to employers that they were, to an extent, outstanding, responsible, able to overcome challenges and adaptive to the work environment. This was expected to create a competitive

edge for them compared with non-mobile counterparts in the labour market and incentivize employers to hire them.

Contribution of mobility to employability as perceived by labour market representatives

This section presents the analysis of LMRs' perceptions on how the mobility experience in general and the intra-ASEAN mobility in particular impacted graduates' employability and employment prospects.

Employees' resources demanded by employers

Interviews with forty LMRs show that the most commonly cited factor for recruitment was the potential employee's job-specific or technical knowledge, skills and abilities. Examples include computer programming and software development (Engineering and ICT), data analytics (Business, Social Sciences and Humanities) and teaching competencies (Education). For instance, an interviewee from the Philippines said: 'We could be talking about anybody from a top-tier university but if that person does not have the industry's required skills, say project management, then the candidate with needed skills from a lesser-known university would be chosen.'

Communication skills (oral and written), including language proficiency, were the second most-cited resource needed by employers. A range of soft skills including interpersonal skills, problem-solving, critical thinking and decision-making skills, and digital literacy, as well as qualities like adaptability and open-mindedness, commitment and passion for the job, and creativity, were also valued by the respondents.

> The jobs for which we hire require coordination skills … So I expect they can work well in teams and are able to coordinate.
>
> (L9, Vietnam)

> People from our country are naturally sensitive. Like when you reprimand an employee for not hitting targets, they get so emotional to the point that they become defensive. But I've seen the difference with those who were exposed overseas and worked with foreigners who don't take things personally.
>
> (L13, the Philippines)

Employers' view of student mobility

Findings from the study suggest that employers value a number of desirable skills and characteristics that mobile graduates demonstrated. Some employers

in the Business and Education sectors acknowledged the advantage of previous mobility experience when specific languages were required in the role. They tended to view employees with international education experience as proactive in seeking opportunities and life experiences, eager to learn, and motivated to 'prove themselves'. Nevertheless, only twenty-two out of the forty LMRs interviewed reported being familiar with intra-ASEAN student mobility schemes. This points to the need to build these programmes' brand and visibility and enhance ASEAN mobile graduates' attractiveness to employers.

Having a culturally diverse clientele also made ASEAN-mobile graduates valuable for employers, especially those who were interested in expanding their presence to other countries in Southeast Asia. The findings remind us of other recent studies (Singh and Fan, 2021; Tran et al., 2021) in which organizations in booming economies that plan to scale their operations globally or in specific regions like the Indo-Pacific area and Asian countries prefer to hire people with existing connections in targeted areas. An employer in Vietnam said in the interview:

> We have clients who are Laotian and Cambodian teachers and they are very eager to learn … So applicants with ASEAN experience will be ideal for us, especially when we want to expand in the ASEAN region.
>
> (L10, Vietnam)

Additionally, international education experiences were also valued in situations where the skill set or domain knowledge required for the job was not inherently available in the local context. This is where the graduate's mobility destination became a consideration – as the excerpts below reveal – especially when it indicated the candidate's potential suitability for the role:

> I look out for specific countries like Malaysia whose government seriously invests in their game development industry or Singapore which has established schools that excel in computer science and have students looking to make it in the tech world […] If the opportunity arises, I would like to recruit graduates who have relevant study experience/time in the above-mentioned ASEAN countries.
>
> (L36, the Philippines)

Despite the benefits outlined above, most employers would evaluate mobility alongside other criteria in their recruitment process, which made mobility a desirable yet insufficient factor in recruitment. Employers stressed that they would assess the totality of the candidate's skills, mindset and attitudes against the demands of the role. This pattern was especially notable among employers from Engineering and ICT and Business and Finance that tended to have business beyond the national scale, where technical and job-specific skills were

crucial in the types of job roles they hire for. This research reveals that mobility's signalling effect was somewhat stronger for business and administration graduates compared to their counterparts in other fields. Additionally, certain job roles and resource limitations would prompt a preference for non-mobile graduates, and employers adhered to a set of hiring principles that reflected their organization's values and mission, in which cases mobility became a minor consideration. Therefore, it was necessary to demonstrate a good fit between the candidate and the organization. According to L28 from Thailand:

> It depends on each job position. We tend to look for candidates that graduated from local universities. This has to do with the budget for hiring.
>
> (L28, Thailand)

Meanwhile, some employers were more likely to see the value of academic mobility when it was coupled with practical experience in the host country. For instance, according to L18, the ASEAN Head of Customer Solution Management in the ICT sector:

> If you study for six months abroad and when I read your resume and it says well, in the first month he worked as an engineer in a start-up and in the second month he did a weekly training in the local university on encoding, let's say. Wow. He went there to a new country. So that's raising the bar. This shows there is something more than just being there.
>
> (L18, ASEAN employer)

The data analysis shows that employers' hiring decisions were based on graduates' values and personal qualities as much as on their potential to perform the job. In this study, LMRs highly regarded the value of integrating work-based learning into international study arrangements. This finding resonates with that from previous research about the value that employers ascribe to an international internship experience compared to a purely academic mobility stay (van Mol, 2017).

Discussion and conclusion

Despite being a short-term exchange, the mobility experience in a neighbouring ASEAN country was seen as an opportunity to enrich students' educational experiences and left a positive impact on their employability. The intra-ASEAN mobile students were able to not only foster soft skills and disciplinary knowledge but also develop regional knowledge, and connections which in turn shaped their career directions and personal development.
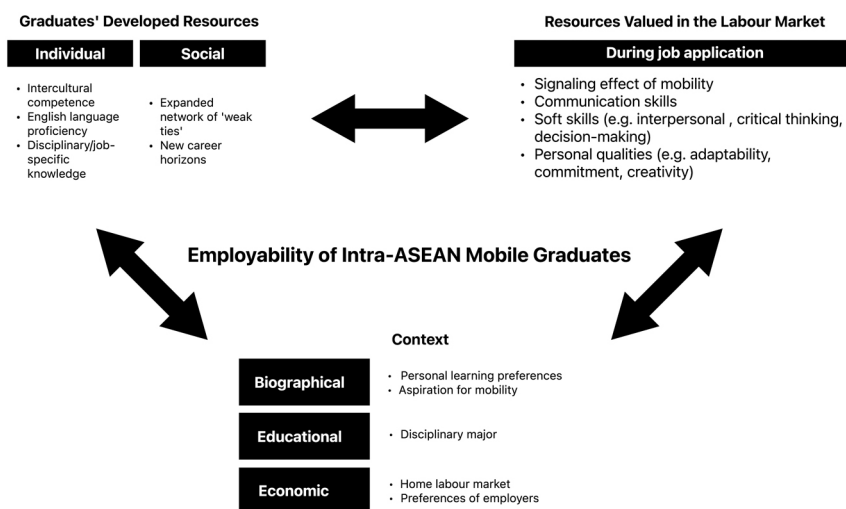
Graduates' Developed Resources

Individual	Social
• Intercultural competence • English language proficiency • Disciplinary/job-specific knowledge	• Expanded network of 'weak ties' • New career horizons

Resources Valued in the Labour Market

During job application

• Signaling effect of mobility
• Communication skills
• Soft skills (e.g. interpersonal , critical thinking, decision-making)
• Personal qualities (e.g. adaptability, commitment, creativity)

Employability of Intra-ASEAN Mobile Graduates

Context

Biographical	• Personal learning preferences • Aspiration for mobility
Educational	• Disciplinary major
Economic	• Home labour market • Preferences of employers

Figure 12.2 Intra-AESAN mobility graduates' employability.

Further, the mobility experience was regarded as valuable for those who wanted to work in international organizations. The findings of the study are visualized in Figure 12.2.

It is interesting to note that the LMRs generally had a positive view of mobility regardless of whether it took place within ASEAN or elsewhere. Employers tended to treat outward mobility as a credential signalling students' capacity, but consequently recruited those whose skills matched their needs. In other words, mobility did not always secure a favourable labour market positioning for formerly mobile graduates. We, however, acknowledge that employers' identification of employees' abilities or signals of their competence were susceptible to their multiple interpretations and dependent on the national contexts. For instance, graduates having high English language proficiency were greatly valued in Vietnam or Thailand where English is not an official language but their peers might not necessarily enjoy the same advantage in Malaysia and the Philippines.

It is worth noting that the majority of the graduates were working in their home countries. Nonetheless, some of them started to envision regional mobility for future career development and gained interest in the educational landscape in ASEAN rather than the usual Westward orientation. At the same time, some employers particularly valued regional experiences of their employees, seeing it as potential for business expansion within the region. This can be explained by the relatively recent mobility impetus in ASEAN and its (mainly) peripheral

position in global higher education being likely to generate a competitive advantage for students in the region (Lim et al., 2022b). Regional mobility, therefore, potentially offers wider possibilities for young people in the region to access and reap the benefits of education mobility. Nevertheless, while student regional mobility is expected to enhance the awareness of ASEAN identity, the concept of ASEAN identity was not strongly reflected in the participants' interviews. Their mobility experience enriched their educational journey and allowed them to deepen their knowledge about neighbouring countries but not particularly about seeing the region as one community. For the LMRs, promoting labour mobility within the region was not a particular priority, despite their plan of business expansion in ASEAN. The ASEAN vision of an intra-regionally mobile workforce therefore remains to be seen.

Despite these limitations, we believe that what is demonstrated in this research is a positive first step to engage graduates and employers in the ASEAN identity building project, especially given that there is some evidence of students enhancing their personal and professional networks, exposure to ASEAN countries and aspirations to move within the region. As such, the study highlights the need to embed the employability dimension into existing intra-ASEAN student mobility schemes and pursue more collaborative approaches and partnerships with industry and the wider community to enhance employers' awareness of the benefits of intra-ASEAN mobility in the labour market.

While most of the existing empirical studies on the labour market outcomes of international student mobility have been undertaken in Europe, this study contributes to the scholarship by expanding the literature of South-South student mobility. It suggests that regional destinations are increasingly attractive to students not only because of geographic proximity, shared language, and economic and political ties but also for their future employability in their home country and the region. With the rise of Asian higher education and various attempts to harmonize the higher education space in Southeast Asia, ASEAN countries will become a more attractive destination for students from within Southeast Asia and other regions who seek a receptive community through welcoming policies, diverse languages and cultures, and developing economies.

Acknowledgement

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Asian Models of International Universities: Contextualized Internationalization and Student Mobility beyond the Global North

Mayumi Ishikawa

Introduction

According to the Times Higher Education (THE) university rankings released early 2024, most international universities are characterized by a higher proportion of internationally mobile staff and students, high numbers of internationally co-authored journal articles and a strong international reputation. Enhancing the international dimension in higher education, or promoting internationalization, is increasingly accepted as a core value by institutional and policy stakeholders. This trend is driven by the perceived value of diversity, the collective effort to tackle global challenges and the desire to improve institutions' ranking positions. Ironically, leading international universities, as defined by global university rankings, are selected by monolithic measures that seem antithetical to the diversity agenda of internationalization that purports to foster creativity and innovation.

This chapter defies such a simplistic image of international universities to capture the diversity in higher education internationalization emerging outside of the Global North by examining Southeast Asian exemplars. The case study focuses on transnational undertakings such as Muslim global human resource development and alliance building, a branch campus from the People's Republic of China (hereafter China or PRC) providing higher education opportunities to ethnic Chinese at home and in the region, and bilateral cooperation in medical education between India and Malaysia. These initiatives reaffirm that the internationalization of higher education is not always about the mobility of students from the East to the West, or the Global South emulating leading

universities in the North. Universities around the world have developed different modes and practices of internationalization, suited to specific local and regional contexts, despite being under the thrall of the hegemonic West.

This study has three objectives. First, it draws attention to the often-overlooked significance of Asian international universities and student mobilities outside Global North. Of the three institutions studied, apart from the opening of Xiamen University Malaysia in 2016, South-to-South or pan-Islamic education agendas receive much less international recognition. However, they make a significant contribution to human capital and professional development at home and for students from less privileged countries and backgrounds.

Second, the study responds to the prevailing critique of 'Euro-American centralism' (Marginson, 2023; de Wit, 2013) in the conceptualization of internationalization in higher education. The undertakings and initiatives of three international universities demonstrate that internationalization is not necessarily 'a repetition of the old system by new players' (de Wit, 2011, 23 October).

Third, the case study captures the dynamics or changing faces of internationalization. Leaders' narratives demonstrate how Asian international universities navigate the constant changes in political climates and priorities, global economy and geopolitics, financial and socio-religious constraints, and societal expectations of humanitarian and environmental concerns. Consequently, the focus and the priorities of internationalization are readjusted, altering the flows and directions of mobility.

In the end, the study seeks the possibility of internationalization that resists and counteracts the standardizing power of globalization, typically seen in the prolific ranking regime and its metric-based identification of world-class models. The subsequent cases illustrate the resilience or potential alternative internationalization of cultural complexes by leveraging regional, ethno-cultural or religious commonalities.

Contested internationalization

Internationalization in higher education is said to be experiencing an identity crisis, losing its positive value due to commercialization, competition and status building (Knight, 2012; Marginson, 2023). In this chapter, the term 'internationalization' is defined in a neutral, geospatial and political sense (cf. Marginson, 2007: 306), meaning 'territorially based exchanges across borders' and the 'intensification of relationships between nations' (Katzenstein, 2005,

pp. 13–17). This usage avoids the practitioner focus and 'paradoxically positive' connotations of earlier studies of internationalization (Bamberger and Morris, 2024, p. 130, 134). Also, a broader analytical framework is useful in analysing the internationalization strategies of ethnic communities, state actors and cultural complexes, capturing the evolving, dynamic nature of internationalization in three case institutions by highlighting the intensification of existing relations while permitting national practice differences (Katzenstein, 2005, pp. 13–17).

Postcolonial or decolonizing approaches provide a vantage point for the study of alternative constructions of internationalization (see Stein, 2019; Stein and de Andreotti, 2016; Bamberger and Morris, 2024). The historical reassessment of colonialism and its legacy, the dominant social imagery it creates and uneven power relations are particularly relevant for the Malaysian context. However, international universities in this study do not adhere to the West and other binary common in this strand of scholarship. Instead, locals leverage the plural society and multiculturalism, and legacies of colonialism, to extend international outreach opportunities.

In sum, this chapter analyses international universities and mobilities outside the Global North by paying attention to their dynamics without a West and other myopia. It also focuses on the agency of actors.

Locality of the study: Malaysia and three international universities

Malaysia has developed a reputation in the global higher education landscape through proactive and strategic internationalization policies and transnational partnerships. The country is rapidly emerging as a regional education hub (Cheng et al., 2013; Knight and Morshidi, 2011) and hosts the fourth largest number of international branch campuses in the world after China, the United Arab Emirates and Singapore (C-BERT, March 2023). In 2015, the country set a ten-year goal of hosting 250,000 international students by 2025 (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015). Malaysia leverages its advantages of socio-economic stability, wide usage of English and affordability. Furthermore, its Muslim-majority, multi-ethnic and multicultural social fabric, and Commonwealth ties (Graf, 2016) broaden the country's diversity profile.

Malaysia is a post-colonial modern nation-state emerged from the context of plural society (Furnivall, 1948), characterized by the existence of large-scale migrant communities, such as Chinese and Indian workers who migrated to the Malay world under British colonial rule (Shamsul, 2005). As of 2020, Malaysia

has a population of 32 million, of which 69 per cent are *bumiputras* (Muslim Malays and other indigenous Malaysians), 23 per cent Chinese and 7 per cent Indians and others.

The study sites are: (1) International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), a public, national university; (2) Xiamen University Malaysia (XMUM), the first overseas branch campus of a leading research university in China; and (3) Manipal University College Malaysia (MUCM), a provider of private medical education through bilateral India and Malaysian collaboration.

None of the three institutions fits the typical Global North to Global South export of expertise or mobility patterns from East to West. Their establishments were facilitated and brokered by respective ethnic communities in the host society. IIUM attracts Muslim students at home and abroad through English-language international education in a modern, pluralistic Muslim-majority country with a mix of secular and religious (Graf, 2016, p. 6). Geographical proximity and sociocultural ties with China and India, once considered a source of communal division and a destabilizing factor for social cohesion, are valued as 'cultural resources' to strengthen commercial engagements with their fast-growing economies (Sidhu and Christie, 2014, p. 305).

Methodology

This ethnographic study presents qualitative and contextualized accounts of three institutions. Such an approach is still lacking in survey-dependent academic mobility research (Tzanakou and Henderson, 2021). Although a total of fifty-one interviews with faculty, students, local experts and policymakers were conducted between November 2023 and March 2024, this chapter primarily draws on data from in-depth interviews with senior institutional leaders. Additionally, existing literature, web sources and other institutional resources are utilized. Except for Rector Dzulkifli Abdul Razak, IIUM, President Wang Ruifang, XMUM, and Vice-Chancellor Patrick Kee, MUCM, the identities of interviewees are not disclosed.

Challenges and opportunities: Views of institutional leaders

The three universities differ in size, organizational structure and history. One is public, while the other two are private. Despite these differences, all are international universities, premised on the mobility of people and knowledge

across borders, reflecting deepening relationships between nations outside of Global North. Strong international components are integral to their missions, visions and operations. Each university's opening was celebrated with high-profile events officiated by the prime ministers of Malaysia and their counterparts in India and China. Although their openings were spearheaded by particular ethnic groups in Malaysia, their students and faculty come from well beyond the respective ethnic communities they represent. The following provides an overview of internationalization, its challenges and opportunities, through the narratives of leaders.

Globally relevant, international Islamic education under pressure: International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM)

IIUM is a national university established in 1983 by the Malaysian government, co-sponsored by the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and states of Bangladesh, Egypt, Libya, Maldives, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Malaysia. By 2003–4, IIUM hosted 31 per cent of all international students and 38 per cent of international academic staff in Malaysian public institutions, capitalizing on its unique status (Kaur et al., 2008, 15).[1] IIUM is the only public institution in Malaysia where English is the medium of instruction alongside Arabic.

Now a comprehensive university with over 26,000 students and 1,800 academic staff across five campuses, IIUM offers courses ranging from Islamic studies, law and economics to science, engineering and medicine. Both Islamization of knowledge and internationalization are fundamental to its mission. The university integrates Islamic studies with all disciplines to bring 'Muslim world's knowledge to the world' and enhance the 'Islamic university's relevance to the world' (IIUM, 2024). In line with this mission, the university aims for an international staff and student ratio of 30 per cent.

By May 2024, IIUM had produced more than 116,000 alumni, with approximately 16 per cent being international from 134 countries and territories. About half are from Asia, 20 per cent each from Africa (43 countries) and the Middle East (16 countries), followed by Europe and Central Asia, and the Americas. The largest cohorts come from Indonesia, Bangladesh, Singapore, Thailand, Nigeria, India, Yemen, Somalia, China and Afghanistan. IIUM maintains a balanced diversity profile among Muslim populations worldwide, although representation from Muslim-minority, advanced nations is smaller, albeit not insignificant, except for Singapore. IIUM also accommodates Muslim students from conflict zones, with alumni comprising 340 from Bosnia and Herzegovina, 528 from Afghanistan, and 417 from Palestine (IIUM, 2024).

As a pioneer in international Islamic higher education, IIUM has significantly contributed to capacity building for Muslims in the South with the OIC (Kaur et al, 2008, p. 11). Its internationalization focuses on 'rebuild(ing) one's own nation of origin' rather than the host nation (Dzulkifli, 2021, p. xii).

The number of international students in 2024 is about 2,700 (IIUM, May 2024), down from around 7,000 in 2018, according to a senior faculty with over twenty years of experience. Similarly, international staff from around sixty countries have decreased to thirty-nine countries. Given IIUM's pivotal role in the internationalization of public higher education sector in Malaysia, this trend of becoming less international is a concern among institutional and government stakeholders.

Leaders and senior faculty cite declining financial contributions from both government and organizational sponsors and the difficulty in finding new sponsors as major constraints in accommodating international students from less developed countries and those in need. However, the underlining factor is not purely economic. One faculty member notes that many 'Gulf States and foundation sponsors now want to send their scholarship students to ranked institutions', diverting resources elsewhere. There also are more Islamic institutions and Islamic studies departments in Malaysia and internationally, offering increasing opportunities for Muslim students.

Rector Dzulkifli Abdul Razak, a veteran of higher education leadership, has been in his role since 2018. He is a vocal critic of world university rankings, publicly expressing his opinions in local newspaper columns and speeches. IIUM staff generally accept the Rector's anti-rankings position, supporting the management's decision not to aggressively pursue key performance indicators to move the institution up the rankings. However, some express concern about the reality of the ranked world of academia and the policymakers who oversee the positionings. Two senior faculty members, one local and one international, with experience in the university's international affairs, note:

> But if you are not ranked, you are marginalized. We do not participate in rankings, and we are out ….

> Saudi Arabia and Gulf region only send students to ranked institutions. Ministry of Higher Education is into rankings, too. In 2018, we were 330 in QS rankings, ranked 150 in Asia. We were almost there! We could have been there.

Instead, the Rector promotes the concept of 'communiversity'. A university-wide community engagement education programme to promote sustainability is implemented as a curriculum requirement for first-year students. As a result of its proactive approach to sustainability, IIUM was awarded the 2020

International Green Gown Award supported by the United Nations Environment Programme. This international recognition has been widely applauded on campus and in the wider society. Rector Dzulkifli advocates the evolving nature of internationalization at IIUM, extending support from Muslims in conflict and difficult circumstances to non-Muslims and even to non-human considerations of the environment and sustainability.

Whether the sustainability agenda can be an alternative to the determining power of rankings in the eyes of prospective students and sponsors remains to be seen. IIUM's internationalization and student mobility demonstrate the strength of balanced diversity and inclusion, as well as challenges of the dominant global reputational hierarchy. In a sense, they reflect the dilemma of contemporary globalized higher education in the Muslim world. It raises fundamental questions about who produces globally relevant Islamic knowledge and where the next generation of intellectual Muslim leaders will be educated (cf. Hanafi and Arvanitis, 2016).

'Integration of Chinese elements with English-language, international education': Xiamen University Malaysia (XMUM)

Officially opened in 2016, XMUM is the largest of all overseas university branch campuses in Malaysia and the first comprehensive offshore campus of a Chinese public university. Founded in 1921 by an overseas Chinese businessman, Tan Kah Kee, Xiamen University (XMU) established XMUM as a 'historic reciprocation' (XMUM, 2024; Cheng and Koh, 2022).

XMUM is unique in creating a reputable higher education pathway for ethnic Chinese communities in a country with a long-standing cautionary policy stance towards Chinese education (Koh, 2022). Its entry into Malaysia was facilitated at the highest level of the government and brokered by Malaysian-Chinese political and business elites. The university is expected to nurture talent for China's Belt and Road strategy and contribute to Malaysia's regional educational hub initiative (Koh, 2022). As such, its establishment responds to national, local and communal desire and is welcomed by ethnic Chinese in the region and the business sector, which needs highly skilled human resources. Consequently, XMUM has received financial support from local and international Chinese communities, while gaining the trust of local Chinese businesses, associations, organizations and citizens.

President Wang Ruifang, an XMU professor, has been in charge of the Malaysia campus's top management for the past thirteen years. He speaks candidly about his challenges and future plans.

> XMU made a choice. We were told by local officials: 'You rent or you build.' XMU took the project more seriously than simply renting a place. Rather than having a building as a branch (campus), we decided to become a university. We have an ambition to have an independent campus and create a multidisciplinary, research-intensive university.

From an initial intake of 200 students in 2016, the number of students is expected to reach 10,000 by 2027. The target student body balance is 60 per cent local, 20 per cent Chinese from PRC and 20 per cent international, excluding Malaysians and Chinese. XMUM's medium of instruction is English, except for Chinese Studies and Traditional Chinese Medicine. This decision was made by the Malaysian government rather than the home campus. As a result, most faculty are recruited locally and internationally rather than being despatched from XMU.

Despite initial scepticism about its financial viability and student numbers, XMUM is growing, with more students and faculty, and increased diversity, which President Wang says is not possible on the home campus. The university has a distinctively Chinese flair with large cohorts of ethnic-Chinese students from Malaysia, neighbouring countries such as Indonesia, and mainland China. XMUM can be described as the first comprehensive 'Chinese international university', where mainland Chinese students and those from other countries study together without one cohort dominating the other. According to President Wang, the university aims to increase international student numbers from 800 to 2,000 and expand the geographical areas from which students are recruited, targeting Indonesia, Bangladesh, Central Asia, the Middle East and East Africa.

XMUM is not for profit and allocates substantial proportions of its tuition revenues to scholarships. This helps diversify the student body and recruit qualified international students. In addition, they can recruit staff from a large pool of Chinese academics with degrees from universities overseas.

> We try to recruit PRC Chinese globally … In three years' time, we will have some diversity … by recruiting more expat academics. We have about 250 faculty members from Malaysia and China, as well as over 50 faculty members from another twenty-six countries. We like to make the faculty intercultural. In that regard, we have an advantage over the home university.

Thanks to the attention given to a pioneering Chinese overseas branch campus and its solid performance in the starting years, even during the Covid-19 pandemic, XMU and XMUM have become well-known in the higher education sector in China: 'XMU is not as famous as Peking or Tsinghua. With this

[XMUM] campus, XMU is [becoming] very famous in higher education sector in China.'

This recognition extends beyond China to the global higher education scene. It may lead to more qualified students from China applying to XMUM in the future. The university already admits 500 Gao Kao Yi Ben Sheng students each year from the home campus, who are classified as top level by the results of the national entrance examination. These students, 'whose overseas study plans used to include only the United States, Britain, Australia, and other western countries' (Jie, 2018), have 'plans for future career advancement' by leveraging their transnational education experiences. The life chances and mobility trajectories that these new-generation Chinese students will have after graduation may be compared to previous generations of jet-setting elites with Western degrees and flexible citizenship (Ong, 1999). The dynamics that these students create in Malaysia with local and regional ethnic Chinese students and those from beyond are worth further investigation.

Affordable, high-quality medical education through bilateral collaboration: Manipal University College Malaysia (MUCM)

Unlike the previous two institutions, MUCM specializes in medical courses and is smaller in size, albeit with a considerable social impact. Based on bilateral collaboration between India and Malaysia, MUCM is perceived by locals and stakeholders as an Indian education provider rather than an international university. Its internationalization policies and priorities have been adapted and reframed to suit the changing local and international environments.

Located in the state of Melaka, MUCM was established in 1997 as Melaka-Manipal Medical College (MMMC), offering twinning medical programmes. Preceding this, Manipal's home campus in India trained more than 2,700 doctors from Malaysia between 1953 and 1993 (Nagra, 2005, p. 451).

Today the university college primarily offers English-language Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS), Bachelor of Dental Surgery (BDS) as well as other health science degrees. As of January 2024, out of 1,762 students, approximately 14 per cent are international, primarily from India and Sri Lanka, Commonwealth countries with similar national medical licensing systems. About a third of full-time academic staff are from India.[2]

Since its inception, Manipal has produced more than 10,000 doctors. Close to 20 per cent of registered doctors in Malaysia are Manipal graduates, according to Vice-Chancellor Patrick Kee. Vice Chancellor Kee, who assumed his position

in 2022, brings years of experience in private higher education. The fact that the Manipal is the single largest contributor of doctors in Malaysia is often highlighted in the Manipal group websites and frequently mentioned in conversations with locals and stakeholders. The share of Manipal-trained doctors in Malaysia was presumably even higher before the opening of many private medical colleges in Malaysia since the 1990s (Lee, Wan et al., 2017, p. 1873–4). Thus, Manipal has a long track record of training medical doctors, addressing the acute shortage of medical professionals in Malaysia when medical degrees were offered in a limited number of public universities.

Upon being granted University College status, MUCM became an autonomous Malaysian private institution incorporated in Malaysia, but owned by Manipal, an Indian company.[3] MUCM can now confer its own MBBS and MDS degrees as well as postgraduate degree programmes. Students no longer need to spend their first study phase of two and a half years for pre-clinical training on Manipal Campus in India, a previous requirement for the five-year twinning programme leading to a medical degree conferred by Manipal Academy of Higher Education (MAHE).

Vice-Chancellor Kee clarifies that becoming autonomous and no longer requiring students to study in India was a strategic decision to achieve the university college status by meeting state regulatory requirements. By further enhancing academic and administrative capabilities, the institution eventually aims to acquire full university status. Students still have the option to study at MAHE India or other destinations overseas for clinical training as an elective, he adds. Manipal prides itself on giving students international expertise, unlike other more 'Malaysianized MBBS' programmes, according to a senior faculty with over twenty years of experience.

Moreover, the university college status enables MUCM to recruit students from India (The Times of India, 2021, 23 October). Previously, the Indian government did not recognize the twinning programme, and Manipal could not recruit students from there. Ironically, however, although the MUCM degree is now officially recognized in the country, Indian students are not currently allowed to do one-year internship training required for taking the medical exam there. Vice-Chancellor Kee states that MUCM devises 'Plan B' and supports students to pursue alternative pathways overseas such as preparatory courses for medical licensing exams in the United States or the United Kingdom. Manipal's international network of alumni includes those working in government and private hospitals who promote 'Manipal brand' and assist new graduates with placement and career consultation.

Regarding distinctive MUCM character, faculty interviewees consistently highlight its strength in education. Students keep up with the Indian faculty's English prowess and the pace and intensity of their lectures. This aspect is echoed also in student interviews. Thanks to its positive reputation and brand power, MUCM is increasingly 'gaining recognition from the government'.

MUCM has provided a pathway for non-Bumiputra students who are unable to gain admission to prestigious medical programmes in public universities. Since 2023, however, the institution has enrolled an increasing number of Malay students who receive government scholarships. If this trend continues, the university college will achieve a more balanced ethnic composition among its student body, with international students predominantly from India and other ethnic Indians of various nationalities. In a sense, MUCM is becoming mainstreamed in Malaysia.

In retrospect, post-independence Malaysia sent students to India to address the shortage of medical doctors. Manipal subsequently established a foreign outpost in Malaysia, where half of the required courses were offered locally. Now, as an autonomous Malaysian university college, MUCM enrols students from diverse ethnic and international communities, including Indian international students aspiring to become doctors with globally recognized qualifications. Some Malaysian students are also preparing for the qualifying exams to become globally mobile medical professionals. MUCM's student mobility is thus changing and partially reversing directions, preparing students to leverage their Malaysian qualifications for further cross-border mobility for career advancement.

Discussion and conclusion

The case study from Malaysia offers valuable insights into the diverse strategies and impacts of higher education internationalization and mobility trajectories emerging outside the Global North. The three institutions studied offer reputable, culturally engaged higher education that responds to ethno-religious sensitivities, while proactively cultivating ties with national and regional economic and professional networks. Their student and staff mobility reflects each institution's niche market and outreach through ethnic, cultural and religious ties, common social and educational frameworks, and growing higher education demands in neighbouring regions. By adopting distinctive, contextualized internationalization strategies, these Asian institutions enhance

their capacity to attract students from traditional and emerging localities. The findings illustrate that global academic flows are becoming increasingly multidimensional.

Interviews with institutional leaders highlight the evolving dynamics of internationalization within Malaysian higher education institutions. Rather than adhering to a single, standardized model, each institution adapts its internationalization strategy to meet the growing competition and challenges posed by shifting global and local contexts. This adaptability also shapes the patterns and directions of academic mobility. Such fluidity may be less likely to perpetuate hierarchical relationships between institutional partners, although further empirical evidence is needed to substantiate this claim.

Currently, Malaysia's transnational education market is dominated by providers from English-speaking, Western countries (Morshidi and Middlehurst, 2016). However, this case study shows that the country does more than merely indigenizing Western higher education models (Lee et al., 2017, p. 30–1). The institutions studied do not conform to the typical East-to-West mobility or knowledge transfer from North to South. While colonial legacies and global power asymmetries remain influential (Stein, 2019), as seen, for example, in dominant reputational hierarchies, these institutions have cultivated distinctive identities through internationalization, characterized by an incremental intensification of existing international relationships. Stakeholders in Malaysia exercise agency and use its post-independence plural society social structure, once considered a cultural baggage from colonial days, as an asset to integrate with global society. In addition, the use of English and similar frameworks of professional qualifications and higher education accreditation systems within the Commonwealth, although not elaborated upon in this chapter, demonstrates the strategic use of colonial legacy in postcolonial societies (Graf, 2016). Furthermore, while the support and trust of ethnoreligious, communal stakeholders remain critical for all institutions studied, they reach out beyond traditional territories.

Malaysia continues to be an ideal locality to observe uneven development in the global higher education landscape. It hosts a pioneering English-language international Islamic university outside the Middle East. A comprehensive Chinese international university opened its campus in a Muslim-majority country, rather than in a Chinese-dominant neighbour city state like Singapore. Similarly, a leading Indian international higher education provider, a rationally profit-seeking and market-evaluating corporate entity, established its foreign outposts in Malaysia alongside Dubai. The implications for local and global societies underscore the need to broaden internationalization discussions beyond Euro-American centrism and North-South binaries.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1   IIUM was established under the Company Act rather than the University and University College Act. This status gave the university greater freedom to recruit international undergraduate students and academic staff than other public institutions at the time (Kaur et al., 2008, p. 15).
2   Courtesy of the Office of the Registrar, MUCM.
3   MUCM is under Manipal Education and Medical Group (MEMG), which operates campuses in India, Dubai and Malaysia.

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Charting a New Course: International Education Destinations of Chinese International Students

Lihang Guan, Ka Ho Mok and Baohua Yu

Introduction

Chinese international students have significantly contributed to the tuition revenues of higher education institutions (Bound et al., 2020; Yu et al., 2021). However, the Covid-19-induced immobility has led to a low enrolment rate of full-tuition-paying overseas students, causing major layoffs and budget deficits in universities lacking strong internationalization strategies (Welch, 2022). This underscores the importance of international enrolments (Marginson and Xu, 2022).

Prior to the pandemic, 23.74 per cent of students from C9 Chinese universities intended to study overseas. This figure dropped to 11.49 per cent in 2020 due to prolonged lockdowns and border restrictions (Lin, 2020). This study employs the push and pull factors framework to examine how long-term lockdowns and border restrictions have altered students' attitudes towards international education and influenced new educational destination choices. Given that overseas study was suspended during the worldwide lockdowns, this investigation which draws on data gathered during the Covid pandemic focuses on students' perceptions rather than their actual behaviours.

Review of literature

Pull factors in choosing an international education destination

Pre-pandemic push and pull factors were identified as influencing destination selections by Chinese students (Bodycott, 2009; Yu, 2021). The push and pull

paradigm has been instrumental in understanding why Chinese students choose various countries or universities (Dimmock and Ong, 2010; Bray and Li, 2007). Push factors, such as social, political and economic trends, motivate students to study abroad (Lee, 2014). Pull factors also play a significant role in destination selection (Lee, 2017; Mazzarol et al., 2001). Despite recent challenges in China's growth, Chinese international students continue to pursue education abroad (Heng, 2020). This study examines the pull factors influencing their decisions.

Previous research has adapted and validated the push and pull factor paradigm (e.g. Chen, 2016; Cebolla-Boado et al., 2018). Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) identified host country knowledge, friend and relative recommendations, financial challenges and the environment as key factors influencing Chinese students' destination choices. In addition, Chinese students are drawn to countries and institutions with excellent educational standards, strong reputations, numerous income opportunities, developed living area, and immigration possibilities. These factors are included in the re-examination of pull factors in this study.

Chen (2016) found that Chinese students in Canada prefer (1) internationally recognized universities and locations, (2) countries with career and immigration options, and (3) schools recommended by friends and family. Cebolla-Boado et al. (2018) found that Chinese students' choices in Britain are influenced by pedagogical quality, cultural and language immersionand job prospects. These preferences are included in the re-examination of pull factors.

The impact of Covid-19 on cross-border education

The Covid-19 pandemic changed the planet to an unprecedented degree. Massive lockdowns, closure of non-essential facilities, disruptions to international travel and shipping significantly impacted the ways people live and work (World Trade Organization, 2020), resulting in global unemployment (Gruszczynski, 2020). International education institutions were also severely impacted. Unable to conduct face-to-face teaching, these entities hosted online virtual classrooms to combat international mobility restrictions (Evans et al., 2020). Subsequent studies (e.g. Franchi, 2020; Srinivasan, 2020) have considered such measures to be suboptimal for students at best.

The pandemic-related restrictions affected Chinese students' cross-border education choices. According to two major Chinese organizations that help Chinese students apply to international programmes, due to mobility issues in 2020, Chinese students applied to multiple destinations to avoid travel restrictions and social lockdowns (EIC Education, 2021). The pivotal role of family in shaping

personal decision-making processes in China has also been well-documented in the literature (e.g. Chen and Pan, 2014). Lee (2017) identified 'recommendations of family and friends' as a salient pull factor. Therefore, this chapter examines the following research questions:

1. What are the potential changes in students' assessment of pull factors?
2. What are the potential changes in parents' assessment of pull factors?
3. Are there any differences in assessment of pull factors between students and parents? If yes, what are they?

Methodology

Research design

This chapter employs a questionnaire constructed on the basis of established pull factors from extant research to ascertain the continued relevance of these factors in the destination selection process for Chinese international students and their parents. The survey instrument utilized a 7-point Likert scale (ranging from 1, indicating the least importance, to 7, signifying the utmost importance) to quantify the ordinal importance attributed to various factors by the respondents. The questionnaire was rendered in Chinese, with specialized terminology from the field translated into more universally understood categories to mitigate the potential for misinterpretation. For example, the term 'cost of overseas experiences' was decomposed into 'tuition cost' and 'living cost' to ensure comprehensive coverage of associated expenses. While Covid-19-induced safety concerns are not conventionally categorized as pull factors in the existing literature, they represent an unprecedented contextual factor that warrants a reassessment of the traditional pull factors. Consequently, this study excludes safety concerns from its re-examination of pull factors. Table 14.1 delineates the breakdown of specific terminologies for clarity.

Sampling and data analysis

The questionnaires were distributed via online survey platforms, study abroad organizations, and institutions' worldwide cooperation programs during the pandemic lockdown period. Through this combination, the research team collected 1,335 responses, with the majority obtained through agencies and university programmes (58.13 per cent and 36.03 per cent, respectively), where many prospective international students (and their parents) can be accessed. Of

Table 14.1 Pull Factors and Corresponding Subfactors

Pull factors	Subfactors	
The reputation of institutions and city	(1)	World ranking of institutions
	(2)	World ranking of majors
	(3)	Knowledge of the host city
	(4)	Knowledge of the host institution.
The employment and immigration opportunities	(1)	Overseas employment prospects
	(2)	Chinese employment prospects
	(3)	Immigration opportunities.
The economic development of the host country	(1)	Economic development of host country.
Recommendations of others	(1)	Recommendations of others.
Language in use	(2)	Tuition language
	(3)	Daily language.

the 236 parents of these participating students, most of them were aged between forty-seven and fifty-one, and the majority were females (83.90 per cent). The gender ratio of student respondents was 61 per cent female and 39 per cent male, which is similar to the gender ratio of overall Chinese international students (New Oriental, 2021). Of both genders, 398 wanted to study abroad for their bachelor's degrees, 565 wanted their master's and 91 wanted their doctorates.

The parent respondents were mainly parents of prospective bachelor's or master's students (133 and 49, or 72.28 per cent and 26.63 per cent, respectively), with only two parents having children aiming for doctoral international education.

After a quality check, ninety-seven responses were excluded from the mix due to incomplete responses in questionnaires, leaving 1,054 legitimate student surveys and 184 valid parent surveys, which were then statistically analysed with SPSS.

Findings

Important factors rated by students

More than half of the surveyed Chinese students prioritized 'tuition cost' (83.87 per cent), 'living cost' (69.55 per cent), 'language of instruction' (67.74 per cent)

Table 14.2 Pull Factors Considered by International Students

Pull factors	Frequency	Consideration ratio (per cent)
Tuition cost	884	83.87
Living cost	773	69.55
Language of instruction	714	67.74
Chinese employment prospects	578	54.84
Economic development of host country	516	48.95
World ranking of majors	510	48.39
World ranking of institutions	476	45.16
Daily language	442	41.94
Knowledge of host city	374	35.48
Knowledge of host institution	368	34.89
Recommendations of others	238	22.58
Overseas employment prospects	102	9.68
Immigration opportunities	34	3.23
Overall	5,969	566.30

and 'Chinese employment prospects' (54.84 per cent) as the principal factors influencing their destination choice. Additionally, they considered the 'economic development of the host country' (48.95 per cent), 'world rankings of majors' (48.39 per cent), 'world rankings of institutions' (45.16 per cent), 'daily language' (41.94 per cent), 'knowledge of the host city' (35.48 per cent), 'knowledge of the host institution' (34.89 per cent) and 'recommendations from others' (22.58 per cent). Conversely, 'overseas employment prospects' (9.68 per cent) and 'immigration opportunities' (3.23 per cent) were deemed less significant. These findings indicate a shift in students' considerations of pull factors since the pandemic. The corresponding descriptive statistics are presented in Table 14.2.

Important factors rated by parents

Data in Table 14.3 reveals a subtle divergence in the motivations between parents and students. Parents ranked 'tuition cost' (84.24 per cent), 'living cost' (68.48 per cent), 'language of instruction' (63.59 per cent), 'world ranking of institutions' (53.26 per cent), 'Chinese employment prospects' (51.63 per cent), 'recommendations of others' (47.28 per cent), 'economic development of the host country' (45.65 per cent), 'world ranking of majors' (39.13 per cent), 'daily

Table 14.3 Pull Factors Considered by Parents

Pull factors	Frequency	Consideration ratio (per cent)
Tuition cost	155	84.24
Living cost	126	68.48
Tuition language	117	63.59
World ranking of institutions	98	53.26
Chinese employment prospects	95	51.63
Recommendations of others	87	47.28
Economic development of host country	84	45.65
World ranking of majors	72	39.13
Daily language	50	27.17
Knowledge of host city	33	17.93
Knowledge of host institution	32	17.39
Overseas employment prospects	17	9.24
Immigration opportunities	3	1.63
Overall	969	526.62

language' (27.17 per cent), 'knowledge of the host city' (17.93 per cent), 'knowledge of the host institution' (17.39 per cent), 'overseas employment prospects' (9.24 per cent) and 'immigration opportunities' (1.63 per cent) in descending order of importance. Consequently, the findings suggest a transformation in the pull factors considered by students since the onset of the pandemic.

Differences in the significance pull factors between parents and students

Parents and students assign disparate values to pull factors, with some agreement on the importance of 'Living cost', 'Tuition language', 'World ranking of institutions', 'World ranking of majors' and 'Overseas employment prospects'. However, there are notable differences in the perceived significance of other factors. Consequently, we reject the third hypothesis, indicating a divergence in the contemplation of pull factors between students and parents post-pandemic. The data are depicted in Table 14.4.

Table 14.4 Comparison of Mean Difference of Pull Factors between Groups

Pull Factors	Students		Parents		Significance
	M	**SD**	**M**	**SD**	
Tuition cost	5.97	1.209	6.54	1.101	*P* < 0.001
Living cost	5.13	1.986	5.12	1.701	*P* = 0.935
Tuition language	5.03	1.849	4.91	1.934	*P* = 0.446
Chinese employment prospects	4.65	1.965	4.02	1.838	*P* < 0.001
World ranking of institutions	3.32	1.895	3.41	2.004	*P* = 0.561
World ranking of majors	3.23	1.895	3.11	1.256	*P* = 0.288
Daily language	3.09	1.895	2.17	1.715	*P* < 0.001
Knowledge of host city	2.97	2.002	5.15	1.939	*P* < 0.001
Knowledge of host institution	2.52	1.810	5.19	1.967	*P* < 0.001
Economic development of host country	2.45	1.889	4.48	1.913	*P* < 0.001
Recommendations of others	1.72	1.603	4.53	2.035	*P* < 0.001
Immigration opportunities	1.05	0.324	1.26	0.634	*P* < 0.001
Overseas employment prospects	1.02	0.271	1.01	0.104	*P* = 0.378
Overall					*P* < 0.01

Discussion

Certain factors have lost their significance

The Covid-19 pandemic led to a significant shift in the factors that influence Chinese international students' decisions on study destinations. Notably, the emphasis on employment and immigration opportunities in the host country has diminished. According to Wang (2023), there has been a substantial increase in the number of Chinese students returning to China after completing their foreign degrees, with 580,000 students returning in 2019, contributing to a total of over 4.23 million since 1978 (Wang, 2023). The percentage of returning Chinese international students reached 84.74 per cent in 2021, indicating a trend of prioritizing domestic opportunities over foreign employment and immigration. This trend was further supported by geopolitical tensions,

particularly between China and Western powers, which influenced students to return to China (Mok et al., 2022). Additionally, recommendations from friends and family, which were previously significant, became less influential. While 47.28 per cent of parents recognized the power of recommendations, only 22.58 per cent of students said they would consider them when choosing a study destination. This shift may be explained by changing power dynamics in Chinese families. Most Chinese households were patriarchal, with fathers making most decisions for their many children (Liu et al., 2025). In this situation, children had to consider their fathers' opinions before studying overseas. Since 1979, when the one-child policy took effect, children have gained authority in families (Liu et al., 2025). In some extreme cases, studies have argued that some Chinese parents would try to satisfy their children's every desire (Leung and Shek, 2018). Thus, Chinese parents are more inclined to support their children's destination choices, reducing the value of parent suggestions.

A combination of five to six factors is sufficient to determine the destination

The study identified that both prospective international students and their parents considered an average of five to six valued pull factors when selecting overseas higher education destinations. For students, these were tuition cost, living cost, language of instruction, Chinese employment prospects, world ranking of majors and world ranking of institutions. For parents, the influential factors were tuition cost, living cost, language of instruction, world ranking of institutions, Chinese employment prospects, and recommendations from others. Both students and parents identified five to six main pull factors, including language of instruction, worldwide educational assessments and Chinese employment opportunities. Chinese students and their stakeholders were seeking prestigious, affordable educational venues to gain a competitive edge in China's job market. The similarities in pull factors between students and parents are influenced by the Covid-19 pandemic. The financial crisis caused by the pandemic has heightened the importance of financial factors, particularly tuition costs, in determining study destinations. Study abroad costs have significantly increased in recent years, with some countries raising tuition fees by 41.2 per cent over the past decade (Alexander, 2021). Consequently, international students must reconsider their study destinations due to financial commitments. Chinese international students continue to prefer English-medium programmes, as they start learning English in the second or third grade and are required to study it for ten years

before college enrolment. However, the global shift towards English as the medium of instruction in multilingual universities (Dafouz and Smit, 2016) may reduce the perceived importance of English-speaking nations, as evidenced by the diminished significance of everyday language.

The potential lasting effects of Covid-19-induced immobility

Although the borders have reopened and the pandemic is no longer a fear of the majority of Chinese people, Covid-19 may have left a lasting impact over students' and parents' consideration of studying abroad destinations. First, students experienced quality online or hybrid education, which potentially increases their acceptance of distant learning (Huang et al., 2020). Second, health and safety concerns may have long-lasting effects. Covid-19 along with the outbreaks of other deadly diseases such as the Monkeypox and the Eastern Equine Encephalitis have become new concerns that pull students towards certain destinations over others (Li et al., 2023). Last but certainly not the least, the lockdown of Covid-19 triggered a worldwide economic downturn that reduced the disposable income of Chinese low- and mid-class families (Huang et al., 2020), which may make the financial considerations to be more significant than before. Thus, despite the end of the Covid-19-induced immobility, the findings of this study into pull factors have significance for further studies under the push and pull framework in shaping international student mobility decisions.

Covid-era mobilities and immobilities: Academic mobility of Chinese students

The Covid-19 pandemic has dramatically impacted global academic mobility, particularly for Chinese international students. The pandemic-induced immobility led to a significant decrease in the number of Chinese students choosing to study abroad, as highlighted by the study which notes a drop from 23.74 per cent of students from C9 Chinese universities intending to study overseas pre-pandemic to 11.49 per cent in 2020 due to prolonged lockdowns and border restrictions (Lin, 2020). This shift underscores the immobility experienced by students who were unable to physically move to their chosen destinations. However, the pandemic also prompted a re-evaluation of the criteria for selecting international education destinations, with the study indicating a notable transformation in the consideration of pull factors throughout the pandemic (Guan et al., 2023). The importance of overseas employment and

immigration prospects diminished, while financial considerations became increasingly significant, reflecting a shift towards prioritizing domestic opportunities and cost implications over international experiences.

The evolving landscape of academic mobility for Chinese students

The changing landscape of academic mobility for Chinese students post-Covid-19 is characterized by a reassessment of the traditional push and pull factors. Guan et al. (2023) revealed that Chinese students and their parents became more focused on financial aspects such as tuition and living costs, which were exacerbated by the economic downturn caused by the pandemic (Dhar, 2020). This aligns with the other observations that international students reconsidered their study destinations due to financial commitments, as study abroad costs significantly increased in recent years (Alexander, 2021). Additionally, the preference for English-medium programmes has remained high among Chinese students, yet the global shift towards English as the medium of instruction in multilingual universities (Dafouz and Smit, 2016) may reduce the perceived importance of English-speaking nations. This suggests that while the pandemic imposed immobility, it also catalysed a reconfiguration of academic mobility patterns, with Chinese students and their parents placing greater emphasis on factors that aligned with economic pragmatism and linguistic familiarity. The lasting effects of Covid-19-induced immobility, therefore, may yield lasting significance for further studies about international students under the push and pull framework, as the dynamics of academic mobility continue to evolve in response to global challenges (Guan et al., 2023).

Conclusion and implications

While numerous studies (e.g. Mok, 2022; Mok and Mok, 2023) have examined the destination decisions of students in higher education during Covid-19, the pull factors following this global pandemic have received less attention. The research aims to explore the shifts in the assessment of pull factors affecting Chinese international students' and their parents' decisions regarding study destinations in the pandemic period. It seeks to understand the changes in students' perceptions of what attracts them to certain destinations and how these have been influenced by the pandemic's impact on mobility. Additionally, the study compares these student assessments with those of their parents to

identify any differences in their evaluations of pull factors and the potential reasons behind these discrepancies, providing insights into the complex dynamics of study destination selection. Specifically, we have identified that some pull factors that had been significant to students and parents in the past, such as the employment and immigration opportunities in the host country, have lost their significance. Meanwhile, some financial factors have gained more importance when choosing the destinations due to the lasting economic influences of Covid-19. Comparing to studies that suggest Chinese international students value overseas employment and immigration before the pandemic (Ling and Tran, 2015), Chinese international students now view international higher education as an investment to their employment prospects in their home country, instead of a way for immigration. As international higher education, especially international student mobility, is increasingly affected by the impact of geo-politics, future research could critically examine how geo-political factors influence motivations and decisions when planning for overseas study (Mok, 2023; Tian and Zhang, 2024). Another major research focus could explore whether regionalization of higher education could have a positive influence on students in China and Asia choosing international study within Asia, a region with relatively good quality education and personal security, to avoid cultural and racial discrimination when studying abroad (Amoah, 2023; Yu and Wright, 2024).

This study acknowledges inherent limitations. The current analysis primarily focused on discerning the factors that draw Chinese international students to particular study destinations, rather than dissecting the underlying reasons for those pull factors. Future research should imperatively delve into the prioritization of these factors by students. The findings also suggest a shift in decision making intentions highlighting the substantial impact of the Covid-19 pandemic's immobility on the study destination selection by Chinese international students. This underscores an urgent need for empirical research that scrutinizes choice exercising within diverse real-world contexts, thereby enhancing our comprehension of the destination preferences of international students.

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Part Four

The Politics and Positioning of Mobilities and Immobilities in Higher Education

The Making of Bona Fide Foreign Students: Examining Academic Mobility through the Lens of National Interests

Rosalyn Eder

Introduction

Academic mobility stands as an expression of internationalization and features in national, regional and institutional strategies worldwide. The ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) recognizes academic mobility and linkages as crucial for realizing the benefits of successful regional economic integration. The *Roadmap on the ASEAN Higher Education Space 2025* (ASEAN, 2022) positions academic mobility as an instrument for developing a common ASEAN identity and people-to-people connectivity. It suggests that mobility participants can act as agents of change and contribute to achieving the shared ASEAN goals and aspirations. Notably, the European Union played a pivotal role in bolstering ASEAN's higher education framework through its SHARE (Support to Higher Education in the ASEAN Region) programme which underscored the importance of educational cooperation and student exchange in regional integration (ASEAN, 2022). The ASEAN perspective strongly aligns with the human capital discourse, which frames academic mobility as a catalyst for enhancing global competitiveness and socio-economic progress in the region. However, it is important to recognize that the human capital discourse is only one among multiple discourses. Given the various factors and contexts that influence academic mobility, the human capital lens alone is an insufficient framework for understanding its complexity.

Against this backdrop, academic mobility – here understood as students and staff mobility – gains particular significance within Philippine higher education reforms. The Commission on Higher Education (CHEd) in the Philippines acknowledges academic mobility as one of the cornerstones of its

internationalization agenda. In its main policy for internationalization of the Philippine higher education sector, academic mobility is a key strategic component.

In relation to inward mobility, the use of English in academic setting, familiarity with western culture, lower costs of tuition and affordable living standards are touted as pull factors for international students to study in the Philippines. As a result of CHEd's sustained efforts, the number of inbound students has steadily increased over the last decade (except in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic). In 2023, there were 24,520 students enrolled for a full year in a study programme in the country. This is a 198 per cent increase from the level in 2016 when there were 8,208 international students. Of these students, 77 per cent were enrolled in STEM subjects, mainly in health professions. The largest source country was India which sent 17,242 students, followed by China with 4,491 students. Nevertheless, international students comprised less than 1 per cent of the total students enrolled in higher education institutions in the Philippines for that year (Institute of International Education, 2024).

In terms of outbound mobility, there were 31,760 Filipino/a students in 2024, up from 8,492 in 2019 (+274 per cent) in Australia, and were 48,870 Filipino/a students in 2023, up from 7,730 in 2019 (+567 per cent) in Canada, with under 4,000 in the USA (ICEF Monitor, 2024, p. 1). Filipino/a students are attracted to Australia and Canada due to post-study work rights for international students. However, current policy changes in these countries are expected to negatively impact this mobility trend.

Academic mobility holds significant implications for both higher education stakeholders and policymakers, as a country's approach to global higher education often hinges on its foreign policies. This chapter contributes to research by examining how academic mobility intersects with discourses on national security. By analysing how the Philippines' internationalization policies construct the category of inbound 'bona fide foreign students', and how this is reflected in debates surrounding the presence of Chinese students in the northern part of the country, this chapter provides a nuanced understanding of inbound academic mobility that highlights the importance of considering the complex geopolitical issues a country navigates.

Conceptual framework

Public policy is a governmental declaration of goals and priorities regarding a specific issue, which may encompass a broad sector (e.g. education), a sub-sector

(e.g. higher education) or a focused topic (e.g. public university scholarships). Public policy is intrinsically linked to a nation's constitution and aspirations, while its feasibility is contingent upon practical considerations such as resource limitations, trade-offs and necessary remedial actions (UNESCO, 2013, p. 7). Public policy is a complex process; it reflects the actions, positions, deliberations and patterns of decisions by the state and political actors within broader social contexts (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010, p. 4). While debates persist regarding the concept of the 'nation state' and its authority, there is consensus that a 'nation' denotes the culture and history of a society within a defined territory, whereas a 'state' refers to the bureaucratic organization of that nation (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010, p. 13). Importantly, a state encompasses more than its government, but includes institutions like the executive, legislative and judicial branches, along with a bureaucracy. These institutions derive legitimacy and authority over public matters from legal or statutory foundations.

Education policy, according to Bell and Stevenson (2006), is the authoritative allocation of values to achieve political goals. Essentially, it reflects a continuous discursive struggle over what counts in defining the issues and framing the problems, the motivations for policy goals, responses and the criteria for evaluation (Fischer and Gottweis, 2012, p. 7). Central to the understanding of education policy in the Philippines is the concept of national interest. Like public policy, the term 'national interest' is often invoked in political debates to garner support. As a discourse, it reflects the power struggles between policy actors and requires examination to reveal its subjective nature: who prevails, who is silenced and what it deflects, obscures, aims to achieve and ultimately rejects.

Methodology

For this study, I adopt the argumentative turn in policy analysis, which views language as historically structured and socially constructed. Language is not merely a reflection of reality but actively shapes how reality is perceived and constructed (Fischer and Gottweis, 2012, p. 8); thus, language is part of the problem to be examined. Policy analysis in this sense recognizes 'human action as intermediated and embedded in symbolically rich social and cultural contexts' (Fischer, 2013, p. 105). Following Fischer (Fischer, 2013, p. 107), I take the policy arguments and their features as the unit of analysis, and emphasize dialectical understanding of how policy issues are framed.

I examine policy texts and documents that specifically pertain to academic mobility. These are CHEd Memorandum Order (CMO) 55 issued in 2016, which

is the official key policy document on internationalization of the Philippine higher education sector; Executive Order No. 285 (2000), issued by the Office of the President; the 1987 Philippine Constitution; Congress House Resolution nos. 1666 and 1703; and Proposed Senate Resolution 1001. I also examine documents that are generally referred to as relevant laws and regulations in CMO 55 but which are important in the interpretation and implementation of the policy.

Discussion and analysis

According to the 1987 Philippine Constitution:

The State shall promote the preferential use of Filipino labor.

(Article XII, Sec. 12)

The practice of all professions in the Philippines shall be limited to Filipino citizens, save in cases prescribed by law.

(Article XII, Sec. 14)

Educational institutions, other than those established by religious groups and mission boards, shall be owned solely by citizens of the Philippines or corporations or associations at least sixty percentum of the capital of which is owned by such citizens. The Congress may, however, require increased Filipino equity participation in all educational institutions.

(Article XIV, Section 4.2)

The control and administration of educational institutions shall be vested in citizens of the Philippines.

(Article XIV, Section 4.2)

No educational institution shall be established exclusively for aliens and no group of aliens shall comprise more than one-third of the enrollment in any school. The provisions of this subsection shall not apply to schools established for foreign diplomatic personnel and their dependents and, unless otherwise provided by law, for other foreign temporary residents.

(Article XIV, Section 4.2)

These protectionist provisions in the Constitution are rooted in the colonial experience, when access to education and practice of profession were limited to the elites. During Spanish rule (1565–1898), access to education beyond elementary levels was limited to children from Spanish families and local elites. Under US colonization (1899–1945), public higher education remained

underdeveloped. Instead of expanding the higher education system, the United States sponsored select high school graduates to study in the United States under the 'pensionado system', which primarily benefited the upper classes. Many graduates of this system eventually migrated to the United States, and those who returned to the Philippines took key positions in the government (Constantino, 2008, p. 310). Both colonial regimes largely restricted access to public office, reserving it for the colonizers themselves and a select group of local elites. Given this historical context, the Constitution protects the educational rights of Filipinos from foreign competition, making the Philippines one of the few countries with strict constitutional provisions on education (EDCOM2, 2024). Further, Article XIV, Sec. 4.1, of the Constitution also recognizes the complementary roles of public and private institutions in the education system. Saguin (2022, p. 477) argues that strong political clout, an underfunded public higher education system, and the 'softness of the state' allowed private higher education institutions to successfully engage in policy capture by lobbying to protect their interests through the constitution.

Notwithstanding, the 1987 Constitution serves as the foundation and justification for all CHEd policies, in particular the principles of foreign policy that 'upholds national interest and the non-diminution of national sovereignty', and conformity with aforementioned provisions of the 1987 Constitution, and other relevant policies (CHED, 2016, p. 1). With CMO 55, the CHEd aims to guide the sector's internationalization efforts while prioritizing national interest, security and identity. The Philippine government defines national security as 'a state or condition wherein the people's welfare, well-being, ways of life; government and its institutions; territorial integrity; sovereignty; and core values are protected and enhanced' (National Security Council, 2023, p. 7). Within the framework of the current administration's National Security Policy, protection is understood in relation to internal and external threats (National Security Council, 2023, pp. 12–15). These accounts demonstrate how the Constitution and national interests underpin and shape policy on the internationalization of higher education in the country. The stipulations in the Constitution limit the participation of the CHEd and Philippine higher education institutions to certain types of international activities, and present serious challenges to implementing the Transnational Education Act signed in 2021. More importantly, foreign policies and national security priorities shift from administration to administration. For example, the Duterte government demonstrated indifference to international laws, downplayed maritime territorial issues with China and sought partnership with Russia (Arugay, 2023). The current President Marcos Jr., on the other hand,

explicitly aligns with the United States and Japan, has renewed military defence ties with them and seeks economic relations from non-Chinese investors (Kurlantzick, 2024). These shifts in foreign policies impact how national interests – and by implication policy on academic mobility – are deliberated in the country.

Constructing the 'bona fide foreign student'

The CHEd (2016, p. Sec. 4.1.e) defines academic mobility as an activity that goes beyond the classic study exchange or study abroad programmes. In its definition, the CHEd underscores short-term mobility focusing on experiential learning and professional development, and highlights the temporary nature of academic mobility. In contrast to many countries that view academic mobility as potential source of workforce, the Philippines specifically excludes migration. However, CHEd's definition of mobility cannot be taken at face value. Depending on who is mobile, the policy directives move within the spectrum of openness and closeness of the higher education space (Marginson, 2022).

While outgoing student mobility is viewed as beneficial for developing the country's human capital and is encouraged within the framework of ASEAN integration and labour migration, inbound student mobility faces different measures (Eder, 2021). CHEd's policy guidelines underline the selection of 'bona-fide' international students with 'high academic potentials' and 'seriousness of purpose' (CHEd, 2016, p. 11). As mentioned, the Constitution limits the intake quota for international students. They are not allowed to take on paid work for the duration of their studies, except those classified as internships required by their program (CHEd, 2016, p. 13). This restriction is also based on the Philippine Immigration Act of 1940, as amended by RA 503 in 1950, which prohibits the admittance of persons seeking to perform manual labour, except under reciprocity agreements, or if the Professional Regulation Commission confirms that no Filipino can provide a specific skillset. However, outstanding graduate students in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) subjects or in key priority sectors can be offered teaching and research employment during their study. Otherwise, international students must leave the country after completing their programme.

The 'seriousness of purpose' of international students is a crucial criterion. The Executive Order (EO) 285, signed in 2000, governs the admission and residency of foreign students in the Philippines. The EO provides a systematic method for application, while recognizing the importance of 'openness and vigilance'

in determining bona fide foreign students (Official Gazette, 2000, p. para. 3) 'without compromising national security' (Official Gazette, 2000, p. para. 6). To ensure vigilance, higher education institutions authorized to admit international students must establish a foreign students unit for processing applications and for reporting to the following government agencies: Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), National Bureau of Investigation (NBI), National Intelligence Coordinating Agency (NICA) and Bureau of Immigration (BI). Authorized higher education institutions must also employ a permanent Liaison Officer accredited by the BI. Regular reporting includes enrolment status, attendance performance with emphasis on no-show, absences, transfers, dropouts, derogatory records and academic performance (Official Gazette, 2000, Section 1.d). For monitoring, the 'NICA and the NBI shall check, whenever necessary, the activities of foreign students brought to their attention which appear to be inimical to the security of the State' (Official Gazette, 2000, Section 1.e). Authorization to admit foreign students will be withdrawn if higher education institutions fail to comply to any provisions of the EO (Official Gazette, 2000, Section 1.b). The EO 285 also establishes the Inter-Agency Committee on Foreign Students (IACFS), with the CHEd as designated chairperson. In addition to the government agencies mentioned above, the Committee also includes the Department of Education (DepEd). The NICA coordinates all national intelligence activities in the country. The NBI handles high-profile cases considered to be of national interest. Any criminal complaints against foreign students are referred to the NBI for investigation and appropriate action. Suspicion alone is sufficient to initiate an investigation.

The logic that underlies EO 285 has its roots in the EO's previous iterations. For example, EO 721 (Official Gazette, 1981) emphasized the importance of admitting international students as part of the country's diplomatic relations. It noted the increasing number of students from democratic and communist countries in the Philippines and thus highlighted the need for stringent regulation, supervision and monitoring of entry of foreign students, and enhanced information collection about these students to ensure national security. I argue that this cautious approach stems from historical events, such as the First Quarter Storm of 1970, marked by student activism and state-sanctioned violence, and the Iranian Revolution of 1979, which elicited a series of political protests by anti-US, anti-Shah and pro-Islamic Iranian students studying at Philippine universities in Manila. These protests led to the investigation and deportation of thirty Iranians (Sevilla Jr., 2015, p. 105). These historical events influenced perceptions of foreign students in the country.

The policies discussed in this section construct the 'bona fide foreign student' – a foreign student who is financially capable, intellectually fit if not excellent, and a model of moral conduct. The composition of IACFS indicates the view that incoming foreign students do not only offer opportunities, but also challenges that need to be taken seriously. The policy prescriptions do not only limit who is an eligible inbound foreign student but also restrict the type of higher education institutions that can be authorized to accept incoming students: institutions that have at least level II accreditation status and which have established an international office or a similar unit specifically dedicated to academic mobility. More importantly, they require higher education institutions to keep their foreign students under surveillance. These infrastructures of surveillance are designed purely for administration, monitoring, and security purposes. They do not stipulate ethical recruitment practices, except in terms of providing administrative support throughout the visa application process. They lack provisions for auxiliary infrastructures, such as those needed to provide pastoral care. The restrictive policy limits the opportunities available to incoming foreign students and largely ignores their needs.

National security threat

Despite comprising less than 1 per cent of the total student population, the presence of foreign students in the country is central to current political debates. Media reports of more than 4,000 Chinese students concentrated in one province triggered a series of demands for investigations. This section thus examines the practical implications of the aforementioned policies on inbound student mobility and their role in driving legislative action.

On 20 March 2024, House Resolution (H.R.) No. 1666 was filed with the Committee on Justice in the House of Representatives to investigate, in aid of legislation, the 'surge of alleged Chinese students' enrolling in higher education institutions in Cagayan province, 'with the purpose of ensuring security' amidst the prevailing situation in the West Philippine Sea (H.R. 1666 2024, p. para. 1). In the document, the lawmaker argues that the increase is 'alarming', and claims that the Chinese students are supported by politicians who are staunch opponents of the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) with the United States. The request is further based on the following arguments:

> the persistent reports of concerned Cagayanos, the sudden influx of thousands
> of Chinese Nationals in the province in the guise of being students is very

unusual and their activities are highly suspicious and alarming, causing worry and concern among local townsfolk.

<div align="right">(HR 1666 2024, p. para. 4)</div>

with the prevailing situation in the West Philippine Sea, and in view of Cagayan's strategic geographical location, the increasing number of Chinese students in the province poses serious concern to the national security of the Philippines.

<div align="right">(HR 1666 2024, p. para 5)</div>

House Resolution No. 1703 followed on 30 April 2024. It sought to investigate the Bureau of Immigration in relation to the reported 'entry and influx of no less than 1,500 Chinese nationals' enrolled at a university in Cagayan province (H.R. 1703 2024, p. para. 2). Similarly, H.R. 1703 aims to impel the creation of legislation 'to ensure national security', and to 'preserve the reputation' of Philippine higher education institutions. H.R. 1703 is premised on previous cases of corruption filed against the Bureau of Immigration (BI) involving business scams and Chinese nationals, and the BI's potential role in issuing student visas and endorsing for enrolment of Chinese students in a university in the said province. In the Senate, Proposed Senate Resolution (P.S.R.) 1001 was passed on 23 April 2024, urging the Senate Committee on National Defense and Security, Peace, Unification and Reconciliation to investigate the policy, 'public safety' and 'national security' implications of foreigners using falsified documents to pose as Filipinos. The investigation was required to focus on the concentration of such individuals in areas critical to national defence. Inter alia with reports of criminal activities and increasing presence of 'large numbers of foreigner nationals' residing near critical locations, P.S.R. 1001 maintains that 'alarm has been raised by findings that there is a remarkable spike of Chinese enrollees in higher education institutions using questionable entry credentials', and mentions the ongoing investigations of the Armed Forces of the Philippines on the same issue (P.S.R. 1001 2024, p. para. 2). As the author of the resolution argues, the investigation is necessary 'to ensure that this [Chinese students] is not a smokescreen for more questionable Chinese citizens to enter the country, such as workers in illegal Philippine Offshore Gaming Operations' (Abarca, 2024, p. para. 4).

These investigations are taking place amidst ongoing tensions between the Philippines and China over the West Philippine Sea. The Cagayan province is located in the northern part of the Philippines facing Taiwan. The close proximity to Taiwan and the current political turmoil between Taiwan and China – a

potential flashpoint – add to the already nervous situation in the region. Due to its strategic location, Cagayan province hosts two military bases available for use by American troops in the Philippines, following the government's decision in April 2023 to increase the number of EDCA (Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement) sites. The EDCA with the United States facilitates large-scale joint military exercises (US Department of Defense, 2023). Concurrent with the investigations on the influx of Chinese students is a separate probe in Congress on former President Duterte's 'gentleman's deal' with China as regards China's naval operations in the contested maritime territory. Public sentiment against China intensifies as maritime conflicts between the Philippines and China escalate.

The Chinese embassy in Manila has decried the allegations against the Chinese students. Public opinion and policymakers are split on the issue, with Filipino-Chinese communities citing racism and Sinophobia as underlying reasons for the investigations. In news statements, lawmakers denied these allegations and cited the need to examine if the country's policies are sufficient to handle the challenges of internationalization and to raise red flags where safeguards from fraudulent intentions must be increased (Abarca, 2024). The Bureau of Immigration, on the other hand, claimed that CHEd's promotion of the Philippines as an educational hub helped increase the number of foreign students in the country (BI, 2024). In a statement, CHEd Chairman de Vera III clarifies that the Chinese students are enrolled in a private university authorized by law to accept foreign students. He also commits to leaving security matters to specialized agencies for investigation and action, and pledges CHEd's support for any necessary investigations. At the same time, the CHEd will continue to foster the internationalization of Philippine higher education and offer assistance to higher education institutions aligning with CHEd guidelines and national laws (CHEd, 2024). The congressional hearing on this issue is currently ongoing. The private university in question dismissed the allegations, confirming that there are only 486 Chinese students enrolled in their university (Ramirez-Cohen, 2024). Meanwhile, the DFA responded by increasing the requirements for Chinese nationals applying for a tourist visa (Department of Foreign Affairs, 2024).

The language used in the policy documents presented here reflects the emotions invoked by perceived threats to national security. The 'us' (Filipino/as) versus 'them' (Chinese) signifies power dynamics that represent the Filipino public/nation as vulnerable and the Chinese/China as the antagonist. Terms such as 'alarming', 'unusual', 'highly suspicious', 'worry', 'concern' and 'sudden spike' evoke fear and distrust. The addressees – the Congress Committee on

Justice and the Senate Committee on National Defense – as well as the references to major crimes emphasize an urgent call to action. The framing of the issues with the 'influx' of Chinese students illustrates how policymakers position their political agenda and legitimize their claims vis-à-vis the discourse on national security. It demonstrates how attitude towards and perception of foreign students are influenced by historical and prevailing geopolitical situation in the country and in the region. The security threats are real as far as the disputes in the West Philippine Sea and Northern Philippines and criminal activities of some Chinese nationals are concerned. On the one hand, the discourse constructs narratives distrusting and suspicious of foreign Chinese students. On the other hand, it highlights how these narratives justify and cast a yet another layer to the construction of the 'bona fide foreign student'.

Conclusions

Following media reports, the public discourse on the presence of Chinese students in the country now further conflates with problems of diploma mills, profiling of political personalities, illegal migration, money laundering, illegal gambling operations, corruption and military espionage. Now, every government has the right to define where its national interests lie and how to best protect and preserve them. However, the discourse in the Philippines reveals how policy actors instrumentalize the imperative of national interest to justify not only their own political standpoints but also the surveillance of incoming foreign students. Chinese students become proxy for the Chinese government and its actions. They serve as a projection canvas for deeper issues in the country, such as the dominance of lobby groups in higher education governance, the weak power of the CHEd in monitoring higher education institutions, ineffective immigration policies, shifting foreign policies and corruption within the government. The term 'bona fide foreign student' is not a neutral category but a discursive construct that renders foreign students immobile by limiting their academic and professional opportunities, subjecting them to constant surveillance and neglecting their individual needs. In political discourse, policy actors instrumentalize them as a scapegoat for national security anxieties.

It is still unclear how the ongoing investigations will impact the future of inward academic mobility in the Philippines. Currently, there are political attempts to revise the Constitution to allow foreign-owned institutions to operate in the country and local universities to recruit foreign faculty. The

push for constitutional revisions exposes a stark divide: while many university administrators see these proposals as opportunities for developing the country's educational infrastructure and human capital, many others argue that removing constitutional protections could undermine Filipinos/as' access to higher education and damage the reputation of Philippine institutions. Indeed, the Philippine higher education sector is in a liminal space between the country's past and future.

In this chapter, I discussed how the concept of the 'bona fide foreign student' is constructed in Philippine public policy through the lens of national interests, and illustrated how policies on inbound student mobility are implemented. At the macro level, the discourse surrounding Chinese students highlights the complex interplay between education policy (e.g. internationalization policies) and a country's geopolitical environment. This discourse also reflects the crises currently facing global higher education (e.g. threats to academic freedom, foreign interference, war between Ukraine and Russia, and between Israel and Palestine), and a country's responses to these crises. I acknowledge that the analysis presented here does not provide a complete view of the current policy issues in the Philippines, and the interpretation I offer is only one among many possibilities. The Philippine case study serves as a microcosm of the global struggle within higher education: balancing academic mobility and international exchanges with foreign policy priorities, such as national security concerns, and geopolitical conflicts.

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The Role of Agency in Cross-Border Student Mobility and Contributions to Home Countries

Yusuf Ikbal Oldac

Introduction

Cross-border student mobility denotes those who have moved from one country to another to pursue a degree education (OECD, 2017). Cross-border mobility is said to offer individuals the chance to pursue quality education overseas, fostering their skills, networks and civic values (Wang et al., 2024). Equipped with enhanced capabilities and experiences in a novel context, graduates of cross-border education are expected to have an increased potential to contribute to their home countries and society at large. However, the contribution of these graduates to their home countries is often overlooked in academic literature (Campbell, 2020; Tran and Vu, 2017).

Existing discussions on this topic are mostly framed within the context of brain drain, gain or circulation. These terms, including brain drain (Commander et al., 2004; Meyer and Brown, 2003), brain mobility (Kenway and Fahey, 2011; Teferra, 2005) and brain circulation (Olang, 2014; Tung, 2008), are used in literature to convey different but interrelated meanings. These studies often focus on the emigration of highly educated individuals from developing countries who have benefited from government-subsidized education (Marsh and Oyelere, 2018). When these individuals emigrate, their home countries are perceived to lose the investment made in their formation, as the returns are reaped by another country, and potential future tax revenue is lost (Marsh and Oyelere, 2018).

This study, however, does not view the contributions of cross-border education graduates within the brain drain, gain or circulation paradigms. Rather, the study challenges the assumptions of these models, such as the idea that internationally mobile students, can only contribute to their home country

by returning after completing their degrees abroad (Campbell, 2017) and the notion of losing a skilled workforce when these students do not return (Rizvi, 2005). The study highlights the role of international education graduates' agency when discussing their contributions. Graduates have the freedom to contribute to their home country and beyond it in the format they aspire to and are capable of as responsible agents (see Sen, 1985). More extended discussion on the role of agency is provided in a dedicated section later.

Diaspora literature also adds to discussions on the contributions of international education graduates. However, while diaspora groups' contributions to their home countries are well-documented (Beine et al., 2011; Taslakian et al., 2022), the focus of the literature is not specifically on international education graduates nor on academic mobilities.

A developing line of research in the scholarly literature has begun to explore the specific contributions of international education graduates to their home countries. This emerging line of research discusses and defines the contributions of international education graduates to their home countries in several forms, including influencing national policy (Campbell, 2017), enhancing bilateral diplomacy (Kent, 2018) and building the capacity of home country organizations (Kallick and Brown Murga, 2018; Perna et al., 2015). In this study, the concept of the contribution to the home country is defined broadly since it can take many forms, as the above-referenced studies indicate. A main criterion of the definition for contribution to the home country is that graduates should add value beyond individual benefits in the home country's society.

The contributions of international education graduates: Main narratives in the literature

Research on the contributions of international education graduates to their home countries has been framed around three main narratives (Campbell, 2018). First, the human capital approach is the most prevalent narrative (e.g. Campbell, 2017, 2020; Perna et al., 2015). While the original human capital theory discussed the benefits of higher education with a limited perspective focusing on individual benefits such as income (Becker, 1993), more recent research argued for extending attention beyond personal benefits, emphasizing societal contributions (McMahon, 2009). For example, Campbell (2017, 2020) has recurrently published this topic by building on McMahon's (1999, 2009) expanded human capital theory to argue that cross-border mobility graduates

enhance their capabilities, helping them better contribute to their communities at home.

Second, the human rights approach views cross-border education as a right and posits that contributions to the home country, while desirable, should not be obligatory (Campbell, 2018). This perspective is particularly relevant when examining scholarship providers' expectations. Some studies have examined the contributions of internationally educated individuals with this perspective (e.g. Lehr, 2008). However, this perspective is not as widely used as the human capital approach.

The third narrative centres on the human capabilities approach (Sen, 2000), which emphasizes the role of education in enhancing one's choices and freedoms. The enhanced agency of graduates can shed light on the societal contributions perceived and imagined by international education graduates. Scholarly research supports this approach by indicating that contribution to one's home country is not directly tied to physical return (Campbell, 2017) and, similarly, staying abroad does not mean non-contribution (Akçapar, 2009). The key factor is individual agency, which needs more exploration in this field (Tran and Vu, 2017).

Research centring on the third narrative is growing, with recent influential studies highlighting the need to focus on graduate agency in examining the contributions of international education graduates (Tran and Vu, 2017; Campbell, 2018). Thus, this study contributes to the third narrative by providing fresh empirical insights from Turkish graduates. The following section provides the context for Turkish students.

Turkish cross-border mobile students

Following the OECD definition (2017), cross-border student mobility denotes those who have moved from one country to another to pursue a degree for at least one year. This study uses the terms cross-border and international education with the same definition. The most recent data indicates that nearly 50,000 Turkish students participated in cross-border education in 2018 (UNESCO Institute of Statistics, 2022). Despite their significant presence, studies focussing on Turkish international students remain underrepresented in academic literature, and the existing studies on the internationalization of Turkish higher education overwhelmingly focus on the other international student groups attracted to Turkey (e.g. Gök and Gümüş 2018; Kondakci, 2011).

Turkish international students or graduates demonstrate similarities with and differences from students from other parts of the world. Like their international student peers, they cross borders for education, leave behind their existing networks to form new ones and encounter different societal values.

However, Turkish graduates also present specific characteristics that differentiate them from overall international education graduates. Originating from an upper-middle-income country (GDP per capita = 12,986$) located near high-income ones in the EU (GDP per capita average = 40,824$ according to World Bank, 2024), students from Turkey have higher means to go abroad for studying compared to lower-income sending countries and higher motivation being closely located (cf. Beine, 2008). This positions Turkey to be highly susceptible to international mobility and out-migration.

It is also important to note Turkey's political instability close to the data collection period (2019–20). The 2016 coup attempt led to more authoritarian and exclusionary politics (Nakanishi, 2016), and an economic decline in purchasing power followed (see World Bank, 2024). This situation created unfavourable factors that may lead to an increased motivation to move, particularly among highly educated individuals (Eurostat, 2022). These factors contribute to a specific outlook for Turkish young adults studying abroad, indicating the intrinsic value of studying Turkish graduates' contributions (Stake, 1996). Having said this, this study does not claim that Turkish students are a homogeneous group.

Analytical lens: Agency

This study employs an agential lens. Agency here refers to the limited but real capability of international education graduates to make independent choices and impose these on the world, going against the structures that shape or limit them. The present study's agential lens proposes an analytical separation between contributions discussions and mobility status. Graduates can exert their agency in finding ways to contribute from abroad or reject doing so even after returning home country.

The larger sociological discussions always pair any discussion of agency with external factors, usually framed as the structure (Archer, 2003; Giddens, 1991). The structure can be described as patterns of social relations, behaviours and beliefs. Structures can constrain the contributions of some while facilitating others. For example, states have a strong structuring effect on graduates

of cross-border education through their policies. In this study, structure predominantly appears as the highly politicized and exclusionary landscape of the home country, Turkey, for the self-funded cross-border education graduates.

In this paper, contributions to the home country are seen as a function of the aspirations and capabilities of cross-border education graduates. Graduates have the freedom to contribute to their home country and beyond it in the format they aspire to and are capable of as responsible agents (see Sen, 1985). After studying abroad, some graduates realize that staying abroad and, if need be, contributing from abroad is within their reach (Appadurai, 2004; de Haas, 2021). This situation indicates the importance of analytically separating mobility status when examining student contributions.

Methods

This study was designed as a qualitative study, drawing its data from semi-structured interviews. This section delineates the details of the methodological approach.

Participant recruitment

This study involved fifty recent Turkish international education graduates who studied in Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Germany and the UK. These countries were selected based on their popularity among Turkish students (UNESCO Institute of Statistics, 2018), historical/cultural links, political economy and the quality of their higher education institutions. The aim was not to compare individual country contexts but to provide a holistic view of the graduates' contributions to their home country after international mobility.

The participants were identified using a combination of snowballing and LinkedIn's search tool. They had a balanced distribution of return status (migrant graduate = 26, returnee graduate = 24) and gender (women = 20, men = 30, which is congruent with the total gender distribution of the Turkish cross-border student population), and they represented a broad range of study areas. The participants were all young adults, defined as between twenty and thirty-five years old (Armstrong, 2007), to ensure comparability of responses.

The study did not include Turkish government scholarship recipients due to their post-graduation work obligations in Turkey, which could significantly influence their perceptions of societal contributions. This focus on the self-funded

offers a fresh perspective, as most studies on home-country contributions focus on scholarship recipients.

Procedures of data collection and analysis

This research received ethical clearance from the University of Oxford. Participants' consent was obtained, and their data was anonymized.

The interviews were conducted between September 2019 and March 2020. They predominantly took place in person and lasted between fifty to seventy-five minutes. All interviews were conducted in Turkish, the native language of the participants and the author, and they were all transcribed. These interviews were part of a larger doctoral thesis (Oldac, 2021), which focused on Turkish international students' holistic formation and societal contributions. This chapter differs from the thesis and examines contributions to the home country after international education using an agency-structure lens.

Data were analysed using thematic analysis (Miles et al., 2019). The analysis was conducted in Turkish, and relevant excerpts were translated into English for publication. The data analysis involved inductive coding about the emergent patterns. Detailed findings from this thematic analysis are discussed in the following section.

Findings

This section presents the findings. It is organized under three key themes: refusal to contribute, 'better from abroad', and transnationalism and shifting allegiances.

Refusal to contribute

One significant theme from the interviews was the agential choice to reject the responsibility to contribute to the home country. Participants expressed various reasons for this decision, often questioning whether their home country, Turkey, deserved their efforts. For instance, Simge pondered, 'Should I provide this support to Turkey? Do I want Turkey to develop? … Does Turkey deserve it? What did Turkey give me in terms of education and social rights to deserve my contributions?' (Simge, Bulgaria, returnee graduate). Notice how she questioned whether her country had given her anything at all. When considering that primary, secondary and tertiary education provided by state institutions in

Turkey are freely provided, her doubts may not be entirely well-founded. However, she was not alone in voicing this view.

Participants generally showed good intentions towards Turkey but felt their efforts were unappreciated. Defne captured this sentiment: 'I would be happy to contribute to Turkey, but on the other hand, I do not see reciprocity for this. I have such positive feelings towards Turkey, but Turkey does not seem to have such positive feelings towards me' (Defne, Germany, migrant graduate). This perceived lack of reciprocity aligned with the structural factors discussed earlier, such as political instability and turmoil in the sending country, leading to an agential refusal to contribute to the home country.

Beyond the lack of reciprocity, some participants highlighted that contributing could be personally detrimental. Kemal, for example, stated: 'My contribution would mostly be in the field of sustainable energy. I want to do this, but Turkey doesn't want to get it, and you wear out after a while. You question: What am I working for? It will not respect you. It will denigrate you. People don't accept your lifestyle' (Kemal, UK, returnee graduate). Such feelings of being unappreciated led to burnout and a decrease in willingness to contribute.

Political, economic, social and cultural factors played a significant role in participants' agential rejection to contribute. Governmental policies were often cited as demotivating. Salih, for instance, equated contributing to the country with supporting the government, which he opposed: 'Why should I help the country that voted for this government?' (Salih, UK, migrant graduate). Political instability and exclusionary politics seem to push self-funded international education graduates like Salih away from becoming civic-minded citizen-subjects.

Furthermore, participants stressed they had no legal obligation to return and contribute since they were not government scholars. Onur articulated this situation well:

> Why don't you come back and contribute after studying abroad? Well, it's our own life, our own choice … We didn't study here with a government scholarship. We paid with the financial support our family gave or the income we earned by working while studying.
>
> (Onur, Bulgaria, migrant graduate)

In conclusion, while the home country's highly politicized and exclusionary landscape conditions international education graduate contributions, the agential decisions of these people are decisive on whether to make commitments to contribute to the home country after cross-border mobility. Regardless of

the study destination or return status, the interviews reveal a clear pattern that international education graduates can agentially reject making commitments to contribute to their home countries.

'Better from abroad'

This theme highlights the perspectives of participants who stayed in their host country post-graduation but intended to contribute to their home country. According to Kim and Bamberger (2021), this phenomenon reflects the separation of state and nation, where graduates' allegiance to their nation persists despite the governance of the current state.

The primary structural factors include inadequate opportunities and a restrictive atmosphere in Turkey. Yasar, a finance graduate residing in London, exemplifies this. He emphasized that his home country lacks significant investment banks, making his contributions more impactful from abroad:

> If I return, I won't contribute as much as I do from here. … My current company doesn't have any investment in Turkey yet. … Even if investing [in Turkey] becomes easier, somebody needs to tell potential sponsors about it. … 14 billion dollars a year enters [to Turkey in our area]. … Our average investment at once is a 1 billion turnover. If I do one project on such a scale in Turkey, that 14 billion will become 15 billion.
>
> (Yasar, UK, migrant graduate)

Yasar has decided to stay in the host society, where he obtained his international degree. By directing capital flows into Turkey from abroad, he claimed he could better contribute to Turkey's infrastructure development. Later in his interview, Yasar also discussed the increasingly not-so-attractive restrictive atmosphere in his home country, a sentiment shared by other participants. For instance, Zeynep conducts academic research on gender studies earlier in Turkey and now in Germany. She elaborated on the constraints she faced in Turkey:

> Turkey, Italy, and Greece – these have vast numbers of unemployed women, and some of them are not even considered unemployed.[1] … I can work here on this population of women who are not considered unemployed in Turkey. I do not have to return to Turkey to do it.
>
> (Zeynep, Germany, migrant graduate)

The contributions of cross-border education graduates take various forms, but they all support the main theme of this section, which is 'better from abroad'. For example, Ayten, a politics graduate from a UK university, conveyed how

she advises a member of Turkey's main opposition party from the UK. Also, Berke, who studied and stayed afterwards in Azerbaijan, contributes to his home country by doing business with and importing products from Turkey 'at the scale of millions of Turkish liras a year'.

These examples indicate a common belief among most participants: staying abroad allows them to contribute more effectively to their home country. The role of agency in this theme can be observed in two main aspects: (1) deciding and taking actions not to return and (2) autonomously committing to contribute to the home country from abroad. This way, the graduates distinguish between the state and the nation and demonstrate allegiance to the nation, though they may not be happy with the current state.

Transnationalism and shifting allegiances

Transnationalism here denotes the blurring of international students' belonging to any space as part of their agential navigation between the host and home countries. Rizvi (2005) notes that transnational self-transformations can occur during any cross-border education experience. However, the interview data suggest that the structural factors from Turkey are significantly accelerating these shifts in allegiance in cross-border mobility. Zeliha, a UK-based migrant graduate, exemplifies this. She no longer feels a direct connection to Turkey or any specific country. Instead, her allegiance lies with her ideals:

> There is no direct belonging to Turkey but to the ideals I created. This is not like any country or national unity border. If it is a country compatible with my ideals, I would gladly return, live there and work even for little money.
>
> (Zeliha, UK, migrant graduate)

Similarly, Rana, a returnee graduate from Azerbaijan, expresses a global, human-centred perspective rather than a country-based one:

> I am from here (Turkey), but it is questionable whether I feel I belong here … because my heart is broken in general. I saw that you could live more pleasantly. So, I want to create added value, but will this be country-based? No, it will be human-centred. The world is a global place.
>
> (Rana, Azerbaijan, returnee graduate)

These narratives highlight the visible shift in allegiance and the rise of transnationality among cross-border students. Even those who identified as world citizens before cross-border mobility, like Aysel, a UK returnee graduate, report an increased detachment from their home country:

> As a person who sees herself more like a world citizen, I think the world's issues concern me. Therefore, I choose my work accordingly. … I was never like a person who thought I should advance my country from one point to another, but studying abroad further lowered my perception that I am attached to one nation.

Briefly, the home country's structural hindering factors significantly impact international education graduates' contributions. These factors influence graduates' perceptions, leading to a decreased attachment to their home country and a shift in allegiance.

Conclusion and discussion

This study explored how graduates of cross-border education from Turkey navigate their decisions about contributing to their home country amid a situation where structural patterns in the home country are seen as unfavourable. Because these students have no formal obligation to return or serve in a specific way, the agential navigation of their efforts influences how they approach contributing to their home country. The findings highlighted three key themes: refusal to contribute, the notion of 'better from abroad', and transnationalism and shifting allegiances. These themes emphasize three possible ways the role of agency may play out in the contributions of international education.

Contrary to the traditional discussions in the brain drain or gain lines of literature, the findings of this study suggest that return status alone does not define a graduate's contribution. An analytical separation of contributions to the home country from return status is necessary for nuanced analyses. For example, some participants expressed a firm intent not to contribute to Turkey despite their physical return, while others believed their contributions would be more effective from abroad. This supports research that questions the simplistic equation of return status with contribution (e.g. Rizvi, 2005; Tung, 2008). While return status influences perceptions and the nature of contributions, individual agency is crucial. The findings show that agency plays a more substantial role in the contributions of international education graduates than previously acknowledged (Tran and Vu, 2017).

The substantial role of agency does not negate the imposed structural factors and the interplay between the former and the latter (see Archer, 2003; Giddens, 1991). As described earlier, structural factors are patterns of social relations, behaviours and beliefs which can constrain or demotivate the contributions of

international education graduates. The findings confirmed that the structural factors in this study's context predominantly appear as the highly politicized and exclusionary landscape of the home country, Turkey, for the self-funded cross-border education graduates. Such structural forces significantly influence graduate agential decisions in their contributions to Turkey. Participants expressed three main responses: (theme 1) agential position of rejecting contributions to their home country, (theme 2) believing they could contribute better from abroad due to their commitment to the nation but not the state (echoing Kim and Bamberger, 2021) and (theme 3) questioning their allegiance to the bordered entity called home country (Rizvi, 2005).

Recent developments in Turkey, especially alienating government policies and practices, are pushing away citizens who have graduated from an education degree abroad. Many participants highlighted Turkey's increasing restrictiveness (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2020; Freedom House, 2020) and declining economic attractiveness (World Bank, 2024) as deterrents to their contributions. Since international education graduates are highly educated and self-forming young adults with significant potential (cf Marginson, 2014), Turkey must re-engage this valuable demographic.

Additionally, transnationality and questioning a sense of belonging to one's home country emerged as a significant theme. While transnationality in international education is well-documented (Rizvi, 2005), the analysis suggests that the perceived structural factors expedite graduates' shift in allegiance and the development of transnational perspectives. The findings echo Rizvi's critique of brain drain literature (Rizvi, 2005), suggesting that contributions to the home country are deeply intertwined with social identities and the nation-state. Notably, although international education graduates motivated to contribute to overall humanity are desirable, those who specifically want to exclude their home country from this equation present a critical area for further research.

A significant proportion of participants, one in three, expressed feelings of exclusion within Turkey, indicating a need for more inclusive policies. Turkey stands to benefit from winning back these highly educated young adults, who have much to contribute. The key is to foster an inclusive policy environment that sends positive signals, as international education graduates are unlikely to contribute in an environment where they feel 'not accepted, respected and even denigrated' (see Kemal's quotation in the Findings section).

Unlike Turkish government scholarship recipients, the participants of this study are not bound by mandatory work commitments post-graduation. Therefore, softer approaches are recommended. The policy mechanisms in

Turkey should acknowledge the agency freedom of international education graduates and work towards ensuring their voluntary contributions. Creating promising domestic opportunities and a welcoming environment for cross-border education graduates is essential (see, for example, Marini and Yang, 2021). International education graduates, who tend to be highly skilled, have options and would not prefer to go back or contribute to a place they do not feel welcoming to them. Also, small gestures from Turkish embassies, such as sending gifts on national days or reaching out during crises like the Covid-19 pandemic, can help these young adults feel more connected to their home country.

Acknowledgements

Note

1   The participant explained that this situation is definition-related. For example, a woman who is not looking for a job is not categorized as 'unemployed'.

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International Academics and Researchers in Japan: Motivations, Roles and Contributions across Sectors

Futao Huang

Introduction

Over the past few decades, Japan has increasingly acknowledged the significant role that international academics and researchers play in enhancing its competitiveness across higher education, research, and industry (Akashi, 2009; Murakami, 2007, 2009). This recognition stems from a global trend where international collaboration and diversity in academic and research institutions are seen as critical elements for innovation and progress. The mobility of highly skilled talent is a key concept in global academic and research landscapes, playing a crucial role in this context.

This chapter provides a comprehensive comparative analysis of international professionals who hold foreign citizenship and are working in Japan's universities, research institutes and private companies. By exploring their demographic profiles, motivations, roles and contributions, this chapter underscores the importance of their roles and contributions in shaping the academic and research environment in Japan.

The study adopts a mixed-methods approach to provide a multifaceted view of the mobile international academic and research landscape in Japan. This methodology combines quantitative data from a national survey targeting full-time international academics at Japanese universities and qualitative insights from in-depth interviews with international researchers at both national research institutes and private companies. Including private companies as a focus highlights the diverse career trajectories and contributions of international

researchers beyond traditional academic settings. This comprehensive approach allows for a deeper understanding of the subtle yet significant differences and similarities among these professionals, thereby illuminating their unique contributions within different working environments in Japan.

Understanding the complexities of mobile international academics in the Japanese context

The globalization of higher education has led to a significant increase in the hiring of international academics, signifying a strategic shift towards diversity and the enhancement of human resources within academia (Altbach and Yudkevich, 2017; OECD, 2008). While the literature acknowledges the benefits of this trend, such as the enhanced mobility of highly skilled talent, it also addresses potential drawbacks, including brain drain concerns for developing countries (Beine et al., 2008). Factors influencing skilled workers' mobility include economic incentives and the quality of the research ecosystem (Heitor et al., 2014; OECD, 2008) as well as opportunities for research and professional growth (Baruffaldi and Landoni, 2016). Studies specific to geographic and cultural contexts reveal that the roles and challenges faced by international researchers in different contexts can vary significantly (Huang et al., 2019; Libaers, 2007; Luczaj, 2022).

In Japan, larger corporations frequently employ international researchers attracted by the country's advanced science and technology sectors (Murakami, 2007, 2009). However, Japan faces unique challenges in attracting and retaining global talent, including its traditional employment system, which often entails lifelong employment with a single company, seniority-based promotions, a strong emphasis on conformity and loyalty and restrictive immigration policies (Chen, 2022; Oishi, 2012). A study by Chen and Huang (2024) further examines the complex academic environments of Japanese higher education institutions shaped by neoliberalism, institutional internationalization and Japanese exclusionism. Additionally, recent research explores the roles, motivations and challenges international researchers in Japan and Korea face within their institutes (Kim et al., 2024). While international or foreign-born faculty are typically more academically productive than local faculty, as is the case in the United States (Kim, Wolf-Wendel, and Twombly, 2011), they sometimes experience lower pay and marginalization, in Japan and elsewhere (Brotherhood, et.al., 2020; Munene, 2014).

Research methods

This study employed a multi-method approach to comprehensively investigate international academics across three sectors in Japan. For the data collection concerning international full-time faculty or academics at Japanese universities, an initial phase involved sourcing data from public repositories to identify international faculty members across all Japanese universities. Subsequently, a pilot survey was conducted in early 2017, followed by a large-scale bilingual survey (in English and Japanese) which was distributed targeting full-time international faculty. Conducted in 2017, the survey achieved a response rate of 31.5 per cent, resulting in 1,285 valid responses. These responses were further refined to focus solely on full-time international faculty, resulting in a robust dataset comprising 1,233 respondents.

Additionally, semi-structured interviews were conducted with eighteen international researchers from selected public research institutions and fifteen international researchers from private companies. Information on participants from these institutions was collected from publicly available profiles published on their respective websites. Interviewees were selected based on considerations such as country of origin, gender, age, field of research and characteristics of their affiliated national research institutions. Due to the constraints imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic, the interviews were conducted remotely via platforms such as Zoom from October 2020 to July 2021, primarily in English.

For the interviews with participants from private companies, a snowball sampling technique was employed, reaching out to individuals through both private and public organizations as well as alumni networks. Various factors, including country of origin, gender, age, field of research and company size, were considered when inviting participants for interviews. Consent was obtained from all participants, and approval was received from the relevant ethical committee. We also implemented a pilot survey to test the clarity and reliability of the interview questions in early 2019. The interviews, conducted from September 2020 to January 2022, involved fifteen international researchers representing thirteen different companies. Depending on the participants' preferences and primary language of communication, interviews were conducted primarily in English, Chinese or Japanese. The survey and the interview questions aimed to gain insights into the motivations, experiences, contributions and challenges faced by these international researchers.

Data analysis and findings

International faculty members at Japanese universities

Demographic profiles: Illustrating mobility patterns

According to the survey results, the demographic analysis of international academics in Japanese universities shows significant diversity in backgrounds and national origins. By country of origin, the largest number of international faculty came from China (22.2 per cent), followed by the United States (18.8 per cent), Korea (13.2 per cent), the UK (8.2 per cent), Canada (4.8 per cent), Germany (3.8 per cent), Australia (2.8 per cent), France (1.8 per cent), Taiwan (1.7 per cent) and others (22.9 per cent), which includes more than a dozen countries and regions, but the number of those from any single country does not exceed 10 members. Due to the lower proportions of international faculty from Canada, Germany, Australia, France and Taiwan, the study categorizes the data of international faculty into five types: those from China, the United States, Korea, the UK and other countries and regions.

National statistics show that the number of full-time international faculty is 8,262 (4.5 per cent of all faculty) as of 2017 (MEXT, 2018). The gender distribution within this group shows a notable imbalance, with males comprising 75.6 per cent and females 24.4 per cent. International academics in Japan are distributed across various academic ranks, with 35.6 per cent as professors, 29.6 per cent as associate professors, 18.1 per cent as assistant professors and 13.6 per cent as lecturers. In contrast, the distribution of Japanese full-time faculty members is 37.5 per cent as professors, 23.6 per cent as associate professors, 22.8 per cent as assistant professors and 11.8 per cent (MEXT, 2018)..

Motivations for mobility

According to the survey, the motivations for international academics to join Japanese universities are multifaceted, reflecting various mobility patterns. Survey data reveals that factors such as the quality of research environments, specialized academic fields and existing institutional connections are significant draws. Notably, motivations vary by nationality; Chinese and Korean faculty are primarily driven by research opportunities, whereas American and British faculty are often placed in language teaching roles (Huang, 2019).

Expanded work roles and significant contributions

The survey indicates that international faculty members at Japanese universities are expected to handle responsibilities that their Japanese

counterparts might not, such as maintaining partnerships with universities in their home countries, organizing faculty development activities in their current universities, yielding high 'research productivity', enhancing the university's international standing and engaging in global activities. These expanded roles may be attributed to the universities' strategic emphasis on internationalization, where leveraging the networks and expertise of international faculty is seen as crucial for raising their global profile and fostering cross-border collaborations. Additionally, the unique perspectives and experiences of international faculty members make them valuable assets in navigating the challenges of a globally competitive academic environment. Furthermore, the data reveals that work roles vary by nationality, influencing focus areas such as research and teaching (Huang, 2018b; Huang and Chen, 2024). This diversity in roles highlights the complex and multifaceted contributions of international academics in Japanese universities but also raises questions about their effective utilization.

Comparison of academic productivity between international and local faculty

According to the survey (Figure 17.1), when comparing academic productivity, the survey indicates that while Japanese faculty generally have higher outputs in traditional metrics like publications and patents, international faculty excel in producing discussion papers and conference contributions, possibly due to their roles in promoting international engagement and to the fact that a large number of them coming from English-speaking countries are mainly tasked with language teaching for undergraduate students. This difference may suggest that international faculty contribute more to the discursive aspects of internationalization in Japan, such as conferences and collaborative dialogues, highlighting varied approaches to scholarly output and the construct of internationalization. Furthermore, different national groups show varying productivity strengths; for instance, Chinese faculty lead in several productivity metrics, South Korean faculty are notable in co-authoring scholarly books, and American faculty excel in single-author papers. These variations underscore the diverse capabilities international faculty bring to Japanese academia, enriching its scholarly output and innovation potential (Huang, 2018c, 2018d; Strauβ, and Boncori, 2020; Webber and Yang, 2014).
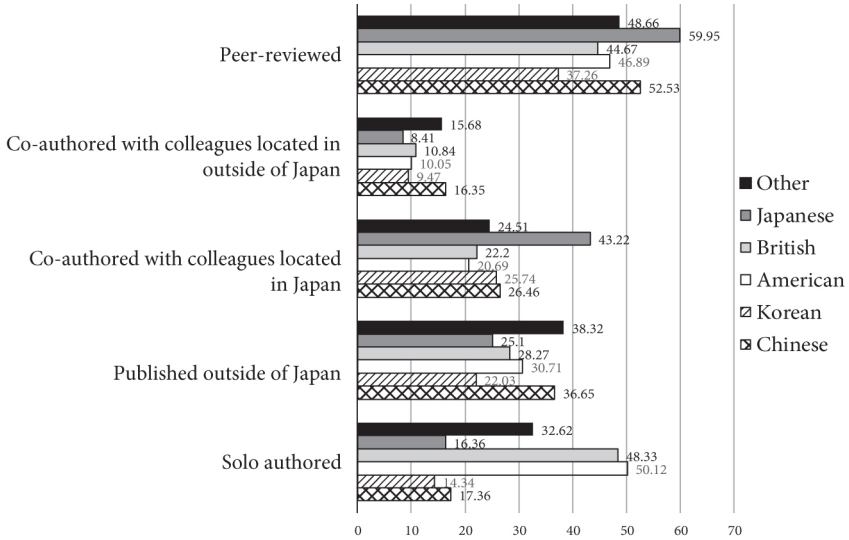
Figure 17.1 Comparison of overall productivity of Japanese and international faculty based on the survey.

International researchers at national research institutions in Japan

Demographic profiles: Significance and global influence

As no national data of international researchers working in Japanese public research institutions is publicly available, this part presents demographic profiles of international researchers from the websites of two public research institutions as examples. According to the SCImago Institutions Rankings (2019), Japanese public research institutions wield significant global influence, exemplified by RIKEN (National Research and Development Agency) ranking sixth. A prominent public research institution and the focus of our interviews, RIKEN boasts a total of 2,973 researchers, including both domestic and foreign personnel. Among them, 584 researchers hold tenured positions, while the remaining 2,389 are on fixed-term contracts. The institution hosts 822 international researchers, with 371 in tenured roles and 451 on fixed-term contracts. Geographically, the majority of these international researchers hail from Asia (495), followed by Europe (218), North America (58), the Middle East (21), Africa (15), Oceania (15) and Latin America (13). The significance of these demographics lies in the diversity and expertise these international researchers bring to Japan's research landscape. This diversity not only enhances the quality of research but also strengthens Japan's position in the global research arena, facilitating cross-cultural exchange and multidisciplinary approaches to scientific challenges.

Similarly, the National Institute for Material Science (NIMS, 2021), another prominent Japanese public research institute, employs 780 researchers, including both domestic and foreign staff. Among them, 383 researchers are on tenure-track positions, while 397 are on fixed-term contracts. The institution's focus on material science and energy accounts for its smaller research workforce compared to RIKEN. The institute hosts 255 international researchers, with 45 in tenured roles and 210 on fixed-term contracts.

Although no full information on their profiles is provided in other public research institutions, it appears the demographic analysis of international researchers at national research institutions in Japan reveals a vibrant and diverse community. Predominantly, these researchers come from high-calibre academic backgrounds, with a notable percentage holding doctoral degrees obtained either in Japan or internationally renowned institutions. Additionally, the gender distribution within these institutes highlights challenges in achieving gender parity, with a significant overrepresentation of male researchers. However, institutions focusing on humanities and social sciences report a more balanced gender ratio, reflecting disciplinary variances in gender diversity.

Motivations: Japan as an emerging contender in the global research landscape

Existing research reveals that international researchers are drawn to hosting countries or research institutes in many English-speaking countries due to their esteemed global reputation, state-of-the-art facilities and strong funding opportunities (Bauder, 2015; Pellens, 2012). These factors foster a research-oriented culture that promotes academic freedom and high-quality scientific inquiry. While Japan is not typically listed among the most attractive destinations, it is emerging as a significant contender in the global research landscape.

In reference to the key characteristics of international researchers in Japan's public research institutes, this study selected and interviewed eighteen international researchers employed in Japan's public research institutes to gain insights into their motivations, work roles, contributions and challenges. The sample was chosen to represent a diverse range of disciplines, career stages and countries of origin, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of international researchers in these institutes.

Results of interviews with the participants reveal that many researchers chose their current institutions because they are 'excellent research organizations', have a 'good match with their specialized field' and had conducted 'joint research before joining'. These motivations are critical as they highlight the importance of

pre-existing connections and the strategic choice of institutions that align with their research interests. For example, data from interviews with two researchers like A and D highlight the importance of Japan's research reputation and advanced resources in attracting top international talent. One participant from China (Science and Engineering, aged in his thirties) noted, 'The cutting-edge research facilities and collaborative environment here are unmatched, offering unique opportunities to work alongside some of the best minds in the field.' One participant from Thailand (Humanities and Social Sciences, aged in his sixties) added, 'Joining this institute was a strategic move to advance my research in a globally recognized setting.'

Work roles and contributions: Capitalizing on mobile international talent

International researchers are involved at various career stages, from postdoctoral fellows to senior scientists, and are engaged in high-impact research projects. They often conduct ground-breaking research, publish in prestigious journals and contribute to the development of innovative technologies and solutions. For example, one participant from China (Science and Engineering, aged in his forties) who is involved in advanced battery technology has significantly impacted Japan's technological advancements and global competitiveness in sustainable energy solutions. He shared: 'My work here not only pushes the frontiers of battery technology but also contributes to global efforts in sustainability.' A senior researcher from Laos (Humanities and Social Sciences, aged in their fifties) emphasized the expectations placed on them to build human networks and provide valuable insights to private companies and government bodies. He mentioned, 'My role extends beyond research; it's about leveraging my expertise to foster broader connections that benefit both the institute and the broader community.'

In short, the roles and expectations for international researchers at these institutes align closely with those at universities but are tailored to the specific needs of research institutions, focusing on research productivity and impact without the additional burden of teaching duties.

International researchers at Japanese private companies

Demographic profiles

As it is extremely difficult to identify the characteristics of international researchers employed in Japanese companies, this study can only describe

some of their features based on selected interviewees (Li and Huang, 2024). The majority of participants employed in private companies are in their thirties, and specialize in science and engineering, hold fixed-term positions and are of Chinese nationality. These researchers were employed in R&D departments of Japanese companies at the time of the interviews, possessing either a master's or doctoral degree and meeting the criteria for obtaining a Highly Skilled Foreign Professional visa. The participants hailed from various regions, including mainland China, Mongolia, the Philippines, Nepal and Taiwan, with ages ranging from twenty to forty years old. Gender distribution shows a predominance of male researchers, reflective of broader global tech industry trends, with ongoing efforts to enhance gender diversity. Japanese companies are actively working to attract more female researchers to create a more balanced and inclusive workforce.

Motivations

Interview data reveals varied motivations among incoming international researchers for joining Japanese companies, which include professional growth opportunities and access to cutting-edge research facilities (Huang, 2018c; Murakami, 2009). Economic considerations also play a crucial role, especially for researchers from countries with less favourable economic conditions, who view Japan as offering competitive salaries and stable employment opportunities. More details are provided below.

A male participant from Nepal, with a PhD in Information Science, employed by an information science company, stated, 'I chose this particular company because it presented a significant chance for me to acquire new technological knowledge. Moreover, the work environment, salary, and bonus structure are highly appealing.' A researcher from the Philippines highlighted, 'What captivates me the most is the international atmosphere within the company.' Apparently, the attractive salary, the conducive research environment and the company's concern for its employees all contribute to the cross-border mobility of researchers to Japanese companies. These statements underscore the complex mix of professional and economic factors that attract international talent to Japanese companies.

Enhancing global knowledge through international researchers in Japanese companies

International researchers significantly enhance the innovation output of Japanese companies by leading projects that develop new technologies and

refine existing products. For example, a male participant from China, with a PhD in Manufacturing, whose work in advancing solar energy technology aligns with global sustainability goals and significantly boosts his company's technological prowess. Like most Japanese employees, he was proud of his work that contributes to the global body of knowledge on sustainable energy solutions, demonstrating how localized research efforts can have far-reaching impacts. Further, a Chinese researcher in a pharmaceutical company noted, 'In my role, I am involved in the research and development of new drugs for specific diseases. The most crucial aspect of my work is reviewing research papers.' This highlights how international researchers contribute to knowledge building by advancing scientific understanding and creating new technologies that benefit the global community.

Discussion: Similarities and differences across academic and research sectors in Japan

Similarities in motivations and contributions

Motivations for joining Japanese institutions

International academics and researchers across universities, research institutes and private companies share common motivations for choosing to work in Japan. Predominantly, the quality of research environments, cutting-edge technology and the global reputation of Japanese institutions play significant roles in attracting these professionals. This is evident in the similar reasons cited by academics at universities and researchers at public research institutes and private companies, including the desire for professional growth, access to advanced resources and opportunities to collaborate with top-tier colleagues. These elements are consistent across different sectors, illustrating a unified appeal of Japanese institutions to international talent. The desire to work in prestigious and well-equipped environments, combined with the potential for significant professional advancement, underscores why many international researchers are drawn to Japan.

By addressing the professional needs and aspirations of international researchers, these institutions can better attract and retain top global talent. This not only enhances the institutions' research output and international collaborations but also strengthens their position as leading hubs of innovation and knowledge exchange. Furthermore, by leveraging the diverse skills and

perspectives of international academics, Japanese institutions can foster a more dynamic and globally competitive research environment, contributing to both national and international scientific progress.

Apparently, international academics and researchers in Japan are attracted by similar factors, such as the high quality of research environments, advanced technology and the global reputation of Japanese institutions. These motivations align with trends observed in other countries, where international faculty seek professional growth and access to top-tier research resources (Altbach and Yudkevich, 2007; OECD, 2008). The emphasis on research excellence and opportunities for collaboration is also seen in Western contexts, where international faculty contribute significantly to teaching, research, and innovation. However, Japan's focus on leveraging international researchers for global engagement adds a unique aspect to its internationalization strategy, differing from the more established patterns in the United States and Europe.

Contributions to research and innovation

Regardless of their sector, international professionals make substantial contributions to their respective fields, enhancing research output and fostering innovation. For instance, most of the survey respondents and interviewees emphasized that their work and research have not only contributed greatly to research outcomes in their settings but also demonstrated impacts on their fields. This integration of international talent into Japan's research ecosystem has been pivotal in advancing the country's scientific and technological frontiers.

Differences in roles and institutional impact

The roles and expectations vary significantly across different types of sectors. In universities, international faculty are often involved in both teaching and research, contributing to academic discourse and mentoring the next generation of scholars. This dual role underscores their integral part in both educational and research activities. In contrast, researchers at national institutes focus solely on advancing research without the burden of teaching, allowing them to concentrate on high-impact projects and innovative solutions. Those in private companies are primarily engaged in project-based work that directly influences product development and technological innovation, highlighting their contribution to the industrial and economic growth of Japan.

The role and expectations of international researchers are similar in Japan and in Western institutions, where international faculty also contribute to

both academic scholarship and student mentorship. However, the focus of researchers in Japan's national institutes on purely research-based roles, without teaching duties, contrasts with the more blended roles seen in many European and American research centres (Altbach and Yudkevich, 2007; OECD, 2008). In private companies, international researchers in Japan engage in project-based work that directly impacts product development and technological innovation, similar to trends in other high-tech economies, yet uniquely emphasizing Japan's strong ties between industry and applied research.

Concluding remarks: Insights and implications

Summary of findings

This comprehensive chapter sheds light on the multifaceted roles, contributions and experiences of international academics and researchers across Japan's higher education, national research institutions and private companies. Notable findings from this analysis include the following areas.

First, incoming international academics in Japan exhibit a rich diversity in nationality and academic disciplines, with a notable presence in specialized fields such as robotics, materials science and environmental studies, which align closely with Japan's strengths in these areas. This diversity enriches Japan's educational and research environments, fostering a multicultural academic culture that is tailored to the country's strategic focus on innovation and technological advancement. This distinctiveness highlights Japan's ability to attract talent in niche fields, contributing significantly to its global competitiveness and enhancing the unique character of its higher education landscape. Integrating this perspective throughout the chapter emphasizes how Japan's focus on specialized expertise shapes its approach to internationalization.

Second, the motivations driving international researchers to join Japanese institutions vary across sectors and nationalities, with many drawn by Japan's advanced research facilities and strong institutional reputations (Huang and Chen, 2021). This matches with recent literature highlighting several key factors influencing international academics' decisions to work in Japan. For example, Japan's significant investment in cutting-edge research infrastructure and funding, such as the ¥10-trillion university fund, is a major attraction (McNeill, 2023). Additionally, Japan's strong emphasis on cross-border and university-industry collaborations fosters innovation and provides researchers

with opportunities to engage in high-impact projects that bridge theoretical research and practical applications (Mascarenhas et al., 2024). The opportunity to work with leading experts in various fields and Japan's renowned institutional reputation further motivate international researchers (Dusdal and Powell, 2021). This underscores the importance of aligning recruitment strategies with the specific needs and aspirations of international talent.

Finally, international researchers contribute uniquely across different sectors. In universities, they enhance global activities and academic standing; in research institutes, they lead high-impact projects; and in private companies, they drive innovation and technological advancement. Their roles often extend beyond traditional academic and research duties, emphasizing the strategic importance of international talent in maintaining Japan's edge in a highly competitive global landscape.

Implications

The findings from this study suggest that Japan's approach to internationalization is characterized by a strategic focus on aligning the recruitment and retention of international talent with the country's strengths in research and innovation:

First, Japan's targeted recruitment practices reflect a need to attract talent that complements its advanced research environment, emphasizing fields where Japan is globally competitive, such as technology and engineering.

Second, Japan's emphasis on creating inclusive and supportive work environments, including cultural and language training, points to an awareness of the challenges international researchers face in adapting to its unique cultural context. However, the need for further integration efforts indicates that Japan's approach to internationalization still involves balancing cultural adaptation with the integration of diverse perspectives.

Third, the call for adjustments to immigration and employment policies highlights Japan's recognition of the bureaucratic hurdles that can impede international researchers. This reflects a willingness to adapt to global standards, though it remains an ongoing process as Japan seeks to balance national priorities with the needs of a global academic workforce.

Finally, Japan's focus on leveraging the skills and perspectives of international researchers to drive innovation suggests a recognition that diversity can be a catalyst for growth. Yet, this approach also underscores Japan's desire to harness global expertise in ways that align with its strategic goals, rather than adopting a more general or expansive model of internationalization seen in other countries.

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International Student Engagement and Support in Australia

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Introduction

International student mobility has evolved over the past four decades, leading to changing representations of international students. Prior to 1980s, international student mobility was often used as a mechanism of aid, leading to the positioning of international students as both aid recipients and actors of public diplomacy. The commercialization of international student mobility since the 1980s in Australia has resulted in international students being positioned as market subjects. International student mobility has also been used by countries such as Australia, Canada, Germany and New Zealand as a tool to tackle skills demands (Tran and Nguyen, 2022). The direct link between international education and migration was established in Australia in the 2000s, de-coupled around 2010s and then tweaked to serve the host government's economic and political agendas (Tan and Hugo, 2017). International education has also been used as a gatekeeping or filtering mechanism for meeting workforce needs. Recently, international student mobility has been increasingly politicized. In Australia, international students have increasingly become scapegoats in policy measures aimed to reduce net overseas migration and shift blame for the housing crisis.

Despite policy rhetoric, international students' needs and rights are largely ignored. Their critical role in knowledge mobility is therefore not fully capitalized on. In particular, the controversial government decision to cut international student numbers not only limits their physical mobility but also silences their voices and undermines their potential capability to contribute to cross-border knowledge building and exercise agency.

International student engagement in the host country is crucial to ensure their meaningful international education experiences. Effective engagement with international students is based on a holistic approach and understandings of how aspects of a cross-border student life are interlinked and interdependent on each other, including academic performance, connections with domestic students and communities, mental health and wellbeing, employment, accommodation, finance, life plans and aspirations. This chapter discusses international students' support needs and approaches to catering for them amid turbulent times.

Theoretical framework and methodology

The chapter adopts the capability approach by Amartya Sen (1992, 1999, 2009) and the issue of international education equality by Tannock (2018) as theoretical grounds to analyse interview data. Sen's capability approach (Ryan and Viete, 2009; Sen, 1992, 1999) argues that social arrangements should develop individuals' capabilities to expand their real opportunities and freedoms to make choices and achieve their valued beings (e.g. wellbeing) and doings (e.g. studying abroad). This approach informs our understanding of international students' needs for support while being in the host countries. Tannock (2018) argues that international students account for a large proportion of students and are important actors of international education connectedness, yet a vulnerable group. Sen's capability approach is complementary to Tannock's view on educational equality for international students as they allow us to see how the social arrangements or structural conditions may cause inequality and injustices and restrict international students' capability to engage and pursue their educational aspirations. In particular, the combined frameworks are helpful theoretical lenses to unpack the ways in which an unjust or ineffective support environment may inhibit international students' human development and engagement. As such, the frameworks contribute to shaping understandings of international student mobilities from equality and human development perspectives to ensure international students have the substantive opportunities to enhance their international student experiences.

This chapter draws on focus group interviews with thirty-three participants divided into five groups. Participants included students and graduates, staff from education providers, professional organizations and local community organizations. The participants were selected based on their lived experiences

as international students enrolled in Australian institutions (for international students and graduates) or involvement in supporting international students (for staff). Each focus group consisted of six to eight participants who were a mixture of international students, graduates and staff to allow for dynamic interactions and diverse perspectives. During focus group interviews, participants were asked questions to share their insights about (i) international students' needs for support, (ii) the structural barriers and challenges in support provision and (iii) how support services can be more effective.

The interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. The participants' names and their organizations are anonymized to protect their identities. The data was coded and analysed thematically, drawing on Sen's and Tannock's frameworks, with the help of NVivo version 10. We discuss our findings in relation to the key domains for international student support and the structural conditions inhibiting or enabling support provision.

Key support domains for international students

One persistent issue in international education is the lack of engagement with domestic students and local communities. Our study shows that it is challenging for international students to establish meaningful relationships with local people and domestic students and interactions tend to be superficial.

> And there's a tendency that we have to make a conscious effort to make local friends.
>
> (International student, focus group 3)

> I definitely feel that that segregation in the classroom between international students and domestic students is still very, very prevalent and that barrier hasn't been broken down very well, just despite my own personal efforts.
>
> (International student, focus group 3)

These comments echo the literature that highlights international students' desire to connect with domestic students and the wider local communities outside their institutions, as well as to learn and appreciate diverse cultures and languages (Blackmore et al., 2024; Pham and Tran, 2015; Rowan et al., 2021). Domestic students' lack of intercultural understandings and interests in connecting with international students and the lack of engagement opportunities and language skills appear to be among the main reasons for this disconnection. One student revealed:

> I think the reason why they always go to those co-nationals, to begin with, is the language barrier and the cultural barrier … it's so comfortable for us to stick with our own groups.
>
> (International student, focus group 2)

The above extract reveals that language and cultural barriers are interrelated and could lead to language-based or co-national segregation among international students. Meanwhile, local communities and domestic students often do not see the value in interacting with international students and have insufficient understanding about the important contributions of international students to the host community, as shown in this comment: 'But I think amongst local domestic students, that's not even crossing their minds … It's not a priority.' (International student, focus group 3). This presumed lack of interest may be compounded by the anti-migration and anti-international student sentiments that have been on the rise especially since Covid-19, resulting in international students being marginalized, othered and discriminated against in the local communities.

> One of the things that we have seen, particularly around COVID-19, [is] racism that is happening at the time, particularly [to] Asian and international [students] … So you need someone who understands racism, rather than someone who might not fully understand it.
>
> (Staff, focus group 1)

This is consistent with studies which report international students experiencing discrimination by real estate agents, landlords and local communities (Blackmore and Rahimi, 2019; Morris et al., 2020). Report of incidents of exclusion, hatred, discrimination, abuse and exploitation increased during Covid-19 (Berg and Farbenblum, 2019; Morris et al., 2020), with students from Africa, the Middle East and Asia particularly affected (Morris et al., 2020). In the classroom, international students can be stereotyped as passive learners who lack the abilities and skills to engage in learning activities (Tran, 2013). Notably, the entire international student cohort is often considered as a homogenous group despite their diversity (Leask, 2015; Tran, 2013; Tran and Vu, 2017). They can be labelled as 'permanent residency (PR) hunters' (Tran and Vu, 2017), even 'backdoor migrants' (Robertson, 2011) or seen as someone who takes away the places of domestic students and local people in universities, in the labour market and the rental market (Tran, 2020).

Discrimination and stereotyping can be seen as manifestations of inequality and injustice in international education where international students are

singled out or excluded from essential opportunities such as employment and accommodation (Tannock, 2018). Through the lens of Sen's capability approach, this can be framed as capability deprivation that restricts international students' freedoms to achieve their agency goal of engaging meaningfully with the local communities. Discrimination is also reportedly experienced by international students when it comes to employment, as illustrated in the extract below:

> My name is Vanessa [pseudonym] – it doesn't sound very Indian, so I get [job] interviews. I have friends who have traditional names and wouldn't be called.
>
> (International graduate, focus group 1)

Racial discrimination against international students in the workplace has been widely reported in the literature. Many employers underestimate their abilities and work rights and discriminate against them during the recruitment process, using language, temporary visa status, lack of experience or 'best fit' as excuses (Blackmore and Rahimi, 2019). This could be attributable to the deficit model that constructs international students as 'struggling foreigners' or someone 'less capable' than domestic students and people (Tannock, 2018, p. 193). In addition, international students do not enjoy the same rights, protection and principles of education equality and justice that apply to local citizens of their host or home countries (Tannock, 2018).

Another challenge facing international students in accessing work integrated learning (WIL) opportunities and finding jobs during and after their study is the lack of understanding about recruitment criteria and local practices, coupled with the unrealistic expectations about employment influenced by some agents. As the following staff working in a local council's student support hub commented,

> we're getting those agents that are saying, 'You can get a job as an architect when you arrive'. So we're going back to incorrect advice. I've had to explain to international students, 'The reality is you'll probably get a job in hospitality or something else.'
>
> (Staff, focus group 3)

This participant pointed to an important issue contributing to forming international students' unrealistic expectations which is the glamorized information provided by education agents for the purpose of recruitment. This is a result of marketization of international education where international students are considered as an 'income generating market commodity' (Tannock, 2018, p. 41).

Employment is among the top goals of international students, ranked second, after quality of education, in influencing international students' decision about their study destination (IDP Connect, 2023). However, workplace discrimination, temporary visa status, unfamiliarity with the host labour market and workplace culture, and unawareness of support services place international students at higher risks of exploitation, unfair treatment, underpayment, underemployment and under-skilling (Tran et al., 2022). In this context, support from institutions and local communities is critical to enhance international students' capabilities to access employment opportunities.

In relation to accommodation, international students currently encounter heightened difficulties. The lack of rental history in the host country places them at a disadvantage compared to local tenants in applying for rental accommodation. It is also often reported that international students lack awareness of tenancy rights and legal accountability associated with signing the tenancy agreement due to language barriers (Berg and Farbenblum, 2019; Morris et al., 2020). Data in our study shows that the situation is exacerbated by the increased prices, accommodation shortages and financial constraints, particularly post-Covid-19, which limit accommodation options available to international students and leads to distressing housing experiences:

> Especially with the inflation rising, I think there's no group being hit harder than international students … Their working hours are cut and now the fact that inflation is going through the roof in Australia is putting a lot of financial pressure on them … The rental market has gone up by 7 per cent across Victoria and that's putting a lot more pressure.
>
> (Staff, focus group 2)

Despite multiple factors leading to accommodation issues facing international students, and despite the fact they only make up 6.8 per cent to 7.2 per cent of the population in Australia (Evershed and Nicholas, 2024), they are unjustly blamed for a complex and longstanding problem of accommodation shortages in Australia (Stacey, 2024).

In academic settings, unfamiliarity with teaching and approaches and assessment requirements, and difficulties understanding lecturers' jargon and slang impact international students' comprehension of knowledge and engagement with classroom activities. As this participant remarks,

> a lot of Vietnamese and Chinese students find it quite difficult to get used to the autonomy that you have in your learning, because [in these countries], you're basically taught what you have to learn, you get a stack of homework and then

you just expect to finish it and that's it. Here, you basically learn at your own pace and it's your responsibility to keep up with the program.

(Domestic student and former international student, focus group 1)

This extract reinforces the points made in the literature that international students' approaches to learning and building knowledge do not always align with the academic conventions in host institutions (Liang and Schartner, 2022; Tran, 2013). The disparities in cultural and academic practices across systems suggest that it is important to familiarize international students with the teaching and learning approaches and conventions at their host institutions. According to Sen's capability approach, assisting them to achieve this is seen as a way of capability expansion in which teachers, institutions and peers play a central role.

These multiple challenges, accompanied by homesickness and isolation while being away from home and the regular support networks, increase international students' vulnerability to mental health issues. Natural disasters, wars, political turbulences or incidents happening in their home countries also have a great impact on their mental health. As remarked by a participant below, international students' mental health issues have increased in complexity:

for example mental health [and] employment, all that throughout the period of time and the complexity changed and also because the system changed as well. And over the years especially after Covid-19 the services become centralized or one-stop, everything mainstream and there's no more specialized support for international students and I think that also increases the complexity [for] international students as well.

(Staff, focus group 3)

Meanwhile, international students have limited or even no access to government subsidized support services, including mental health services, or feel hesitant to seek support, especially in relation to sensitive matters such as domestic violence and sexual and mental health issues. Reasons for not seeking support in mental health are usually centred on stigma around revealing mental health problems, lack of understanding about mental health support services or difficulties to pay for mental health care (Forbes-Mewett, 2019; Yee and Ryan, 2023).

The challenges facing international students discussed in this section are intertwined and usually happen simultaneously. Meanwhile, being a temporary resident in the host countries, they have limited or no access to government support services. Marginson (2012, p. 2) remarks that the 'non-citizen outsider status' of international students makes their living in the host countries 'uncertain, vulnerable and de-powered'. Sen states that 'a person's advantage in

terms of opportunities is judged to be lower than that of another if she has less capability – less real opportunity – to achieve those things that she has reason to value' (Sen, 2009, p. 231). From this lens, international students have constrained real opportunities to achieve positive experiences and well-being they wish to achieve. Tannock (2018) advocates for equality and justice for international students in international education, arguing that equality seems to stop at the border. This highlights the importance of support services dedicated for international students to enhance their capabilities and ensure that equality exist beyond the nation-state to apply to all student cohorts, international and domestic alike. However, the effectiveness and scalability of support services are impeded by several barriers, which will be examined in the next section.

Barriers to supporting international students

Support services are key to developing international students' real opportunities to engage with the host communities. According to a staff member, there is 'significant investment … in student support services from institutions' (Staff, focus group 1) to support international students in different aspects. Areas of support services provided by institutions usually include academic and learning skills, work-integrated learning and career orientation, mental health and well-being, and connection with domestic students. Despite this, there remain cultural and structural barriers that impact the success of the support programmes.

Lack of recognition, deficit framing and stereotyping towards international students

Data in our study shows that discrimination and mistreatment towards international students discussed in the previous section are attributed to the misconceptions, bias, misinformation or lack of understanding and recognition of international students' values and contributions, as commented below:

> I feel a lot of the locals still see these people as a source of cheap employment or you know just pay them less they won't complain because they are afraid their visa will be raised, they won't go to the police, their voices are silent, so just exploit them they need money. So it's important to understand that they are human beings who add value, who add contributions, who pay taxes and are equal.
>
> (International student, focus group 2)

This comment points to the issue of international students being treated as 'cash cows' and undervalued by the host communities, which is connected to a commercial approach to international education in major export countries (Robertson, 2011; Tannock, 2018) that may exacerbate tendencies to exploit migrant labour. Tran (2020) argues that international students contribute greatly to creating jobs and revenues for the host institutions, but also in ancillary services including tourism, hospitality, accommodation, transport, entertainment and retail. However, they are blamed for taking jobs away from local people. In addition to that, international students introduce differences in perspectives and knowledge approaches but these are often framed as deficiencies rather than a contribution to an enriched experience for domestic students and local communities (Tran, 2013). The blame is often placed on international students for the challenges they experience. Particularly, international students' language proficiency and cultural differences are most often considered as the reasons leading to their challenges in interacting with domestic students, while domestic students' intercultural competence and ability to speak a foreign language are not questioned (Tran, 2013).

Deficit framing and stereotyping lead to misconceptions about international students and overshadow the unique capabilities of international students and their contribution to the host communities. This impacts not only international students' sense of belonging to and trust in the host communities but also the approach and quality of support programmes. Bias in the delivery of support programmes can happen if staff unconsciously treat international students differently and fail to cater for their needs. It is argued that support services that are built on the deficit frame and stereotypes tend to focus on remedying surface problems rather than providing opportunities and resources to effectively enhance international students' experiences (Ryan and Viete, 2009). From a capability approach perspective, support services should be based on the understanding and recognition of international students' diverse contributions, skills and attributes to help them effectively engage in the academic, employment and social settings, which is seen as valued beings and doings.

Lack of understanding, knowledge and skills among staff

For staff involved with supporting international students, intercultural awareness is an important capability to help them unpack students' characteristics and help-seeking behaviour as well as identify cultural sensitivity in working with them. Staff understanding will ensure they adopt an appropriate approach to engage

and include international students in their support services across different areas. This is particularly important when it comes to mental health support services, as students with mental health issues are highly vulnerable and often feel more comfortable to share their problems with those who have an understanding about their cultures. However, our study indicates that teachers and staff may lack understanding or training in relation to intercultural awareness, especially with the replacement of experienced staff due to Covid-19 redundancy.

> in terms of the support within university, it has changed over the last few years. There are some universities that have reduced staff. There used to be a more personalized support for international students where you'd have a dedicated support person that would help you with everything. And now that those services have gone mainstream and they've gone into … a one-stop shop where you would go and then you might be referred to that person.
>
> (Staff, focus group 3)

This leads to the risk of support services being not culturally appropriate or personalized to address the needs of international students. The lack of tailored support ultimately leads to international students' reluctance to go to these services (Yee and Ryan, 2023). The capability approach (Sen, 1992) sees this as a constraint for international students' access to opportunities.

Lack of clear and consistent information

According to Sen's capability approach, access to support services is viewed as a core capability to ensure international students' well-being in the host country. However, our study finds that international students may lack awareness of available support services and help-seeking procedures. The lack of communication and consistent messaging from host governments, institutions, organizations and other stakeholders were reported to be a key inhibitor to students' lack of awareness.

> Because there is so much misinformation out there now about things like visa pathways and all of these different things.
>
> (Staff, focus group 5)

> That's also a good point about why people keep going back to their community and their trusted Facebook groups is because you're giving them the honest answer exactly. We're not giving them the media PR-filtered statement, like a glamorized one.
>
> (International student, focus group 2)

These participants point to an important issue, which is the misleading or 'glamourized' advice given to international students about what they should do when in need of support. The interview extracts also reveal how misinformation shapes international students' information-seeking behaviour. Apparently, trust is a key factor that motivates international students to seek support services. The capability approach indicates that resources are only capability inputs, and a person's ability to make good use of the resources depends on the 'conversion factors', including personal, socio-cultural, economic and institutional conditions (Sen, 1999). If we see available support programmes as valuable resources, then it is important to develop the conversion factors by ensuring clear, consistent and supportive information so that international students could capitalize on these programmes.

Lack of coordination and sustainability

In addition to the lack of clear and consistent information, international students' struggle to access support services is attributed to the lack of coordinated and sustainable support programmes. During Covid-19, support programmes for international students were provided by different stakeholders across the sector, especially state and local governments and community organizations, but on an ad hoc basis and with poor coordination, leading to duplication of programmes and gaps in certain areas, as indicated in the following extracts.

> we need more integration and coordination for sure within the institution and across institutions and other stakeholders.
>
> (Staff, focus group 2)

> I think one of the first steps is to map out what everyone is doing and look at whether we're replicating or it's, for me, it's a waste of resources and time, you know? And then from there, we should get everyone together. And you're willing to work together.
>
> (Staff, focus group 4)

It is crucial for international student support programmes to be sustainable, yet this requires continued funding and resources (Tran et al., 2022). However, our review of existing support services shows that many programmes, especially ones initiated by community groups and individuals, do not have long-term financial support. Project-based programmes can easily be concluded at the completion of the project. During Covid-19, a range of support initiatives were set up by governments and community organizations to support international students

under short-term funding, including food relief, emergency accommodation and mental health programmes. Many of these programmes no longer exist after the pandemic and are replaced by new programmes with similar models or purposes, which indicates a waste of financial and human resources. The lack of sustainable support programmes causes confusion, hesitance to seek help and lack of trust in support programmes among international students. From the capability approach's perspective (Sen, 1999), this restricts international students' engagement with support services and constrains their ability to gain meaningful educational, social and cultural experiences the host country.

Conclusion

Effective international student support needs to be centred in principles of educational equality and equity (Tannock, 2018) and move away from seeing international students from the deficit frame, or as cash cows and as scapegoats for complex and deeply rooted issues in the host country such as the accommodation crisis, rising costs and job shortages. From the lens of the capability approach (Sen, 1992, 1999, 2009), the host governments, institutions and communities have a crucial role to play in developing international students' capabilities that enable them to exercise agency, achieve positive study and life experiences and ensure equality for this cohort. Capabilities in Sen's capability approach do not refer exclusively to internal abilities such as knowledge and skills that individuals possess but the opportunities made available to them. Without capability expansion, there is a risk that while being physically in their host countries, international students remain excluded from local learning communities. In this regard, the issues we have identified jeopardize the cross-border mobility of knowledge.

First, it is crucial to create equal opportunities for international students to access international education, employment, accommodation and support services in the host country. One obvious indicator of inequality in international education is the much higher tuition fee international students are required to pay as compared to domestic students (Tannock, 2018). In addition, international students are entitled to the rights as learners, consumers, tenants, workers and human beings that should be advocated and protected by education providers, the government and other stakeholders in the host country. Access to opportunities and services to protect their rights is essential in accordance with capability approach. It is also important for institutions, governments

and related stakeholders to support factors mediating international students' ability to convert the opportunities and resources into positive outcomes. These factors may include engaging international students in co-designing services and creating favourable conditions for them to exercise agency and voices their opinions.

Another essential step is to raise the awareness of domestic students and the local communities about international students' valuable contributions to education, knowledge building and intercultural diversity in the host country (Tran, 2020). Education institutions and local community organizations should develop practical strategies and activities to help domestic students and the local communities recognize the values and contributions of international students. More needs to be done in the international education sector to play a leadership role in improving the narrative around international students, acknowledging their contributions to the culture, knowledge building and vibrancy of the local communities as learners, knowledge makers, employees, volunteers and valued community members. The rise of anti-immigrant sentiments should also be challenged.

Second, the research highlights the need for providing appropriate support services for international students to enhance their knowledge and skills to engage with learning, living and working in the host country. Empowering international students and fostering partnerships across stakeholders to support them are key to protect their rights while studying in the host country and address the structural barriers outlined in this chapter as capability deprivation, according to Sen's capability approach, that restricts international students' freedoms to pursue aspirations and contribute to transnational knowledge connections and innovation. A capability approach to enabling human development and social justice in international education (Sen, 2009; Tannock, 2018) is at the centre of efforts to create a supportive environment for international students to protect their well-being and freedoms to contribute to transnational knowledge building.

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Career Pathways to Academic Success: A Narrative Inquiry of Two Elite Overseas Returnees in China

Mei Li and Xiaohua Jiang

Introduction

Amidst intensified globalization and the internationalization of higher education, governments and universities worldwide prioritize the mobility of highly skilled talent to accelerate innovation and elevate their global standing. The landscape of higher education in China has also undergone significant transformation in recent years, driven by the nation's ambition to establish world-class universities and foster an innovation-based knowledge economy (Liu et al., 2019). A critical component of this transformation has been the reintegration of overseas-educated scholars, with the government strategically attracting back overseas Chinese talent to strengthen its science, technology and higher education sectors (Cao, 2008). One major initiative is the Thousand Talents Scheme (TTS) launched in 2008, aiming to recruit 2,000 leading individuals including academics, senior professionals and entrepreneurs, within five to ten years. Complementing the Thousand Talents Scheme, the government initiated the Young Thousand Talents (YTT) programme in late 2010 (Li et al., 2018). Both programmes seek to reverse the brain drain by providing attractive incentives for overseas Chinese scholars to return.

The Young Thousand Talents (YTT) programme targets exceptional young STEM scholars, offering a range of preferential policies to attract and retain top talent. These include a research grant of 1 to 3 million RMB over three years, an annual salary of approximately 400,000 RMB and the prestigious title of full professor. Furthermore, the programme supports the establishment of a research laboratory and the formation of a research team, as well as provisions

for family settlement. To be eligible for the YTT programme, applicants are ideally expected to be under the age of forty, possess a PhD from a reputable overseas university and have at least three years of research experience abroad (Shi et al., 2023). Empirical studies underscore the effectiveness of such policies in attracting overseas Chinese talents (Chen, 2017; Shi et al., 2023). Research by Shi and his colleagues (2023) shows that the YTT programme has successfully recruited and nurtured top-tier scientists, with YTT scholars surpassing their overseas counterparts in post-return publications, largely due to increased funding and access to larger research teams.

While China's policies for attracting overseas talent have been extensively studied at both governmental and institutional levels, the lived experiences of elite young scholars returning from abroad remain largely overlooked. This study examines the career trajectories of two returnees from the Young Thousand Talents programme, exploring their academic journeys within the Chinese academic environment through a narrative inquiry approach.

Theoretical underpinnings

The impact of international mobility on the career development of academic returnees can differ significantly across various countries and circumstances. While some studies have associated mobility with academic precarity, a substantial body of research indicates a generally positive influence on post-return career advancement (Jonkers and Tijssen, 2008; Li et al., 2018).

International mobility is believed to help academics accumulate 'transnational capital' (Rosen and Zweig, 2005), which encompasses several dimensions: transnational scientific human capital, social capital, identity capital and symbolic capital. Scientific social capital refers to a researcher's stock of professional ties, while scientific human capital means the stock of a researcher's scientific and technological knowledge and skills (Jonkers and Tijssen, 2008). Identity capital and symbolic capital signify the resources associated with someone's membership, prestige and social status (Bauder et al., 2016; Kim, 2017).

The transfer and conversion of transnational capital by academic returnees can enhance their post-return career development while also benefiting their colleagues and students through the sharing of these transnational social networks. However, international mobility may lead to a loss of national social capital, and not all academic returnees successfully convert their transnational capital into usable resources (Leung, 2013). This highlights the

complexities surrounding the integration of transnational experiences into local contexts – an area that remains underexplored in the literature on returnees.

By employing the theoretical framework of transnational capital, this chapter aims to offer a nuanced understanding of the career trajectories of elite overseas returnees in China. It will shed light on both the universal standards and culturally specific factors that contribute to early career returnees' experiences in the Chinese context.

Research methods

Narrative inquiry

This study adopts a narrative inquiry approach to describe and analyse the career experiences of overseas returnees. As a qualitative research approach centring on the examination of stories or narratives to comprehend human experiences, meanings and perspectives (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000), narrative inquiry has proven highly effective in exploring the professional careers and lives of academics (Polkinghorne, 1995). The research aims to uncover the underlying themes, patterns and meanings that shaped the participants' academic journeys.

The two participants, Dr Wang and Dr Zhang (pseudonyms), are professors at the School of E, University C, a leading research institution in China. The School of E is one of the earliest establishments of its kind in China and has garnered a reputation for excellence in its field. It attracts top international talents and teams, providing them with good platforms and facilities. Employing a scholar-centred management approach, the School of E cultivates an academic environment that values truth and freedom.

Case stories

This study is part of a research project on the career development of YTT scientists, which draws on CV analysis and in-depth interviews with twenty-two 'young talents'. Dr Wang and Dr Zhang were selected as research participants for this narrative inquiry because their characteristics enabled a pair-based comparison. They are colleagues at the same university with good foreign educational and working experiences in developed countries; both were designated YTT scientists, along with their remarkable academic achievements. They differ in gender, age, and length of time spent abroad (see Table 19.1).

Table 19.1 Basic Information of the Two Participants

Name	Dr Wang	Dr Zhang
Gender	Male	Female
Age	38	45
Academic Title	Professor, Ph.D. Supervisor	Professor, Ph.D. Supervisor
Broad discipline area	Energy	Energy
Administrative Leadership	Since 2024, Vice-Dean	2018–24, Vice-Dean Since 2024, Dean
Institution	University C: First-class disciplinary university	
Study experiences	2004–8: Bachelor's degree, China 2008–13: PhD, UK	1997–2004: Bachelor and Master's degree, China; 2004–10: PhD, US
Working experience	2013–15: post-doc, China, 2015–17: post-doc, UK 2017–Now: University C in China	2010–12: Research associate, US 2012–13: Research associate, US 2013–16: Senior scientist, US 2016–Now: University C in China
Year of Returning to China	2017	2016
Preferential policy	Thousand Youth Talent Program Scholar	Thousand Youth Talent Program Scholar

Dr Wang, a male professor, served as vice dean of the School of E. at University C. His career trajectory was shaped by his father, a PhD supervisor. He embarked on an academic journey that began with earning a bachelor's degree from Z University, a top Chinese research institution in 2008. He then pursued his PhD at the University of O in the UK from 2008 to 2013, working under the supervision of two distinguished foreign professors. After completing his PhD, Dr Wang conducted postdoctoral research at P University in China, where he worked under professor L, an Academician of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, until 2015. He continued his postdoctoral research at the University of K in the UK from 2015 to 2017. In February 2017, Dr Wang joined the School of E. at University C as a distinguished professor and PhD advisor. That same year, he was selected for the YTT programme.

Similarly, Dr Zhang, a female professor, held the position of dean at the School of E at University C. She earned her bachelor's and master's degrees from University-A, a leading university in China. She then received her PhD from the University of H (a top university in the United States) in 2010.

Her professional journey includes roles as a research associate at M University from 2010 to 2012, and at P University from 2012 to 2013 in the United States. She then worked as a senior scientist at H from 2013 to 2016 in the United States. In 2017, Dr Zhang joined University C as a Distinguished Professor. The following year, she was appointed deputy dean of the School of E.

Narratives of the two YTTs' career development in China

The career trajectories of Dr Wang and Dr Zhang at University C followed a similar pattern: first, the decision to return, followed by a transitional phase of integration into the institution and, finally, a period of growth focused on establishing their research reputations.

'To Return or not to Return?': Decision to come back

Dr Zhang's journey back to China from the United States was influenced by a period of indecision from 2014 to 2016, shaped by various push and pull factors. Among the pushing factors was Dr Zhang and her husband's inability to secure positions in the same city. On the other hand, the pulling factors mainly included the enticing resources offered by the YTT project to the couple, the unique 'Academician of the Chinese Academy of Sciences + Team Development Mode' recruitment model and ideal living conditions in China. Reflecting on her decision-making process, Dr Zhang shared:

> In 2013, a Chinese Professor at the University of M, where I was employed, informed me about University A's recruitment drive for young talents. Although I had limited contact with scholars in China, I decided to submit my resume upon his suggestion. His acquaintance with the dean of the School of Engineering at University A facilitated the process, leading to an interview invitation in A City. Initially, I was reluctant to attend due to my work commitments in the USA, but upon the dean's encouragement, I eventually participated in the interview for the YTT programme. After a brief trip to China for the interview, I returned to the US and resumed my work.

> When I received the offer in early 2014, I faced a difficult decision as I was well-settled in the US, and my children were already in school. However, by 2016, both my spouse and I had been awarded the YTT title, leading us to decide to return to China together. The challenge of finding suitable positions for two PhD holders in the same city in the US prompted our decision. Additionally,

> University C's appeal, with its renowned and charismatic academician, professor L, and its attractive resources, convinced us to make the move. Furthermore, the city where University C is located provides a very comfortable living environment.

Similarly, Dr Wang's decision to return to China was influenced by the supportive policy, resources and opportunities provided by University C. However, unlike Dr Zhang, who was initially uncertain about returning, Dr Wang was resolute from the start about his decision to come back. Firstly, as the only child in his family with a strong bond to his parents, returning to China held significant personal meaning for Dr Wang. Secondly, his relationship with Professor L, whom he regards as a mentor, has profoundly shaped his career choices. Reflecting on his journey, Dr Wang shared:

> I prefer the living and cultural environment in China and feel a deep emotional attachment to my family and mentor. I find the impersonal atmosphere abroad unappealing. My parents, both chemistry professors, ignited my interest in the field, and I greatly value their guidance. I also respect Professor L and his mentorship. After earning my PhD in 2013, I sought a postdoctoral fellowship with him due to our previous interactions. Following his advice, I completed a postdoc abroad in the UK before returning to China to apply for the YTT programme.

> My decision to join University C was greatly influenced by Professor L's recommendation. As a dual-appointed academician at both P University and University C, he encouraged me to establish a team at University C to continue his work. Considering the intense competition at P University, I quickly chose to come here. I am very pleased to collaborate with Professor L, as we share similar quick-tempered and decisive personalities. Moreover, University C offers excellent team services and seamless coordination, all of which contributed to my final decision.

'Building a strong research team': Transitional stage

Dr Wang: Navigating a fortunate journey

Building a research team and lab is crucial for early-career researchers. Dr Wang's academic journey has been notably smooth and fortunate in the transitional stage. As a Young Thousand Talents (YTT) scholar, he benefited not only from the resources available at University C but also from a supportive team by Professor L. Upon arrival, Dr Wang was pleasantly surprised by the spacious and well-resourced lab facilities. Unlike many of his peers in China who often have to build their teams and labs from scratch, he did not face such

challenges at University C. Also, with the support of Professor L., Dr Wang quickly transitioned into his role as an independent Principal Investigator (PI). His lab, though still in its early stages, was well-equipped and provided a solid foundation for his research. Besides, Dr Wang had minimal teaching responsibilities in the initial years, allowing him to focus on team-building and advancing his research agenda. As he explained,

> Typically, setting up a laboratory in China takes at least three years, but I've been fortunate. University C provided me with a spacious 70-square-meter lab and a separate office for students – far better conditions than other returning scholars have experienced at other universities. For instance, my senior at Fudan University has only a 30-square-meter lab. Additionally, I inherited a lab from Professor L. that was already 40 per cent complete, reducing the effort needed for construction. Lastly, my light teaching load during the first three years allowed me to focus on team-building and lab setup.

Dr Wang has embraced a range of research team-building strategies he learned from Professor L., focusing on both the development of research skills and the enhancement of interpersonal skills and work ethic. His approach includes guidance on effective interaction with supervisors and team members, establishing academic connections, presenting at conferences and maintaining a strong work ethic. As he reflects:

> My postdoc experience with Professor L. significantly enhanced my research skills and professional growth. Now, I lead a team of fifteen, including five postdocs, two PhD students and eight Master's students. Much of my management expertise comes from him. I believe effective research involves not only data analysis but also fostering team culture and emotional intelligence. Students must develop soft skills like presentation and communication, alongside a strong work ethic, as meaningful research requires dedication. In our first year, we published thirteen high-quality papers. I guide new students in literature research, oversee their experiments with minimal interference and follow up almost daily. Our meetings last four to five hours, with each student presenting for ten to twenty minutes, and all members participate. Students often work late, managing their own experiment schedules.

Dr Zhang: Forging new paths with resilience

Like Dr Wang, Dr Zhang received substantial support from University C, including a 70-square-meter lab, ample research funding, additional slots for Master's and doctoral students compared to non-YTT scholars and a limited teaching workload. However, Dr Zhang's integration into the domestic academia took a slightly different and more challenging path. Unlike Dr Wang, who found

it relatively easy to set up his lab by inheriting Professor L's initial laboratory, Dr Zhang had to build her lab from scratch as an independent effort. Without the immediate support of a senior mentor like Professor L., Dr Zhang had to navigate the complexities of laboratory setup and team building on her own. As she explained,

> I managed to build the lab relatively quickly, but it was still quite challenging. Starting from scratch in China involved many steps, from setting up the shared lab space to handling the water and electricity renovations. We secured the lab in 2017, and now, after a little over a year, our projects are progressing well. Overall, it's been a demanding effort, and everyone has worked very hard.

When building a research team, Dr Zhang employs a different approach compared to Dr Wang, who prefers the traditional Chinese 'master-apprentice system'. Dr Zhang aims to integrate Western methods with the Chinese context, meticulously overseeing her lab's renovation and advocating for her team's well-being while promoting collaboration. As she elaborated,

> I am quite satisfied with my current team. There are about a dozen people in total, including one post-doctor, three PhD candidates, and the rest are master candidates. Initially, I adopted a Western mentoring style, which is more democratic and free, reflecting how I was guided by my own mentors. However, I soon realized that this approach doesn't always fit well with the Eastern context. In China, it's crucial for mentors to provide clear direction for students' research and to foster a spirit of teamwork. […]. My goal is to create a supportive and collaborative atmosphere while also encouraging productivity, which is why I hold regular group meetings.

'Working hard and collaborating a lot': Striving phase

Dr Wang: The fast-rising climber

By 2024, Dr Wang has achieved remarkable success in his scientific career. He has published over 200 research papers in prestigious domestic and international journals. His work is very well cited; he serves on the editorial boards of several prestigious academic journals leads numerous major research projects and has received a prestigious national accolade in recognition for his research.

As a dedicated scholar, Dr Wang expertly balances a demanding work schedule with his hobby. He follows a rigorous routine, often working more than ten hours a day, but finds rejuvenation through sport. As he explains:

> I generally don't need much sleep. I usually go to bed around 11.00 pm or midnight and wake up around 6.00 or 7.00 am. I don't take naps during the day

and have always been a bit of a night owl, despite knowing it's not ideal for my health.

Dr Wang attributes much of his success to his collaboration with Professor L. and the advantages of the 'Academician of the Chinese Academy of Sciences + Team Development Model' at University C. This model significantly enhances the development and visibility of young scholars by guiding them towards promising research directions and fostering effective teamwork. In China, scholars need to focus on either national research priorities or international frontier and collaborate extensively within a team to compete with other teams for resources and recognition. Without mutual support, it is challenging to operate as a cohesive unit. As Dr Wang explains:

> Professor L. helps our faculty identify key research directions aligned with national strategic priorities and international academic frontier. I focus on areas where I have the strongest expertise [...]. Professor L. comes to University C every month, staying for a few days to a week. The entire college seizes the opportunity to seek his guidance during these visits. Professor L's guidance ensures that our work meets national needs, which is essential for securing research projects. Additionally, I collaborate extensively with Professor L and his team, discussing every paper, and his advice always elevates our work. I highly value the 'Academician+Team' model, which connects young scholars with top leaders, helping us secure resources like doctoral students and funding. While I occasionally collaborate with my former postdoc mentor, it is less frequent.

Furthermore, Dr Wang also appreciates the significant support provided by the Youth Thousand Talents (YTT) programme and University C. According to him, University C offers substantial resources to each YTT scholar, including a 1:1 match for research start-up funds and housing allowances. This means that for every amount allocated by the YTT programme, University C matches it with an equivalent sum, a benefit not extended to non-YTT scholars. Additionally, while regular faculty members can recruit two Master's students per year, those in the YTT programme can recruit three. Typically, faculty need to be promoted to full professor before becoming doctoral advisors, but YTT scholars are appointed as doctoral advisors from the outset and can admit one PhD student annually. Postdoctoral fellows who graduated from top 100 universities receive 300,000 RMB in annual funding, with 250,000 RMB provided by the university and the remaining 50,000 RMB by the advisor, which allows young professors to recruit helpful research assistants. As Dr Wang noted,

> Having a title like YTT scholar truly makes a difference. The support policies for YTT scholars are significantly better than for those not in the programme,

whether in terms of matching funds, the number of master's and doctoral students you can supervise, or the ease of collaborating with external researchers.

Additionally, Dr Wang dedicated himself to his research before transitioning into administrative roles. After building a solid academic reputation, he took on the role of vice dean, skilfully balancing administrative responsibilities with his research commitments. This strategic approach enabled him to advance his career while making valuable contributions to the academic community.

Dr Zhang: The resilient multitasker

Although Dr Zhang's research publications are somewhat less prominent compared to Dr Wang's achievements, they are still very successful. She has published dozens of academic papers as the first or corresponding author in leading journals. She serves as a youth editorial board member for two journals. She has been awarded research funding and has been appointed as the dean at the School of E at University C in 2024.

Zhang's journey is a testament to her resilience and adaptability. As a dedicated academic and mother, she meticulously balances her professional and personal responsibilities. Her day begins early, coordinating with her husband to manage their children's schedules before heading to her office. Despite her demanding workload, Dr Zhang often continues working late into the night after putting her children to bed. As she describes it:

> Every day feels like a workday for me. I wake up around 6:15, take my kids to school by 7:20 and arrive at the office before 8:30. After that, my family helps with the kids, and I focus entirely on work. I often return to the lab in the evenings, working until 11 or 12 at night. Since my kids go to bed by 9, I head back to the office afterward. Living across from the university makes this routine easier. Unlike men who can fully dedicate themselves to work, I've had to set more realistic goals due to family responsibilities.

Dr Zhang credits her multidisciplinary background as key to her academic success, particularly in publishing. While she emphasizes the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration, most of her partnership since returning to China have been limited to her institute at University C. Unlike Dr Wang, Dr Zhang feels that her academic development has been hindered by a lack of connections and access to influential platforms. She believes that strong mentors or benefactors are crucial for success in China, yet she expresses disapproval of this reliance on an ecosystem that prioritizes personal connections over merit.

Unlike Dr Wang, who prefers not to take on administrative leadership roles before achieving academic success, Dr Zhang willingly embraces such

responsibilities. She initially served as vice dean in charge of scientific research and later became dean. Although this role demands significant time and energy, she sees it as an extension of her commitment to improving the institute and supporting students. Balancing these duties with her research is challenging, as she mentioned,

> Professor L initially entrusted me with the role of vice dean, and I couldn't refuse. I also felt a strong sense of responsibility – anyone with a sense of duty and justice would want to improve the institute if they were in my position. However, the role requires a significant amount of time […]. This position has taken up a lot of my time and energy. It's been very draining, especially since my primary focus has always been on my professional work.

Discussion and conclusions

The narrative inquiry into the career pathways of Dr Wang and Dr Zhang, two prominent overseas returnees in China, reveals the intricate dynamics of individual agency, institutional support and national policies in shaping academic success for overseas returnees. Central to these narratives is the concept of transnational capital, which both leveraged to enhance their recruitment and achievements. They utilized their transnational research experiences and prestigious foreign degrees to bolster their symbolic capital upon return to China. While social capital, such as Dr Wang's connection with Professor L, helped them navigate the domestic academic landscape in establishing research directions and teams, their human capital, reflected in the skills and experiences gained abroad, was applied at University C. Additionally, the symbolic capital of being part of the YTT programme provided them with resources, institutional support and academic influence. The programme's preferential policies transformed these forms of capital into tangible achievements, such as research grants and leadership positions, facilitating their successful academic journey.

The decision-making phase highlighted the personal and professional factors influencing the return of elite scholars. Family considerations, mentor influence and the allure of national support programmes were central to their choices. This underscores the multifaceted nature of return decisions, which extend beyond economic incentives to include emotional and relational dimensions. In the transitional phase, Dr Wang's journey, supported by an established mentor, contrasts with Dr Zhang's more independent trailblazing. This dichotomy highlights the varying experiences of returnees, illustrating the importance of

domestic social capital in converting transnational capital into local academic success within the same supportive policy framework.

The striving phase is where the influence of transnational capital – encompassing human, social and symbolic capital – on career advancement becomes most apparent. Both scholars, having honed their research skills abroad, are able to transfer their human capital by mentoring their students and research teams, fostering academic growth. Furthermore, as Cao (2008) notes, China is a *guanxi* society, where career success often depends more on personal connections than on merit. For returnee scholars trained abroad, re-establishing new *guanxi* networks domestically can be particularly challenging (Leung, 2013). However, through utilizing the symbolic capital provided by the YTT programme, both scholars were able to quickly build domestic professional networks, secure funding opportunities and obtain leadership roles. In this way, the YTT programme mitigated the disadvantages often faced by returnees, offering a platform to bridge their transnational experiences with local academic success.

To conclude, the narratives indicate that while the YTT programme successfully attracts top-tier scientists, its effectiveness is mediated by the institutional context and individual circumstances. The programme provides valuable resources and prestige, but scholars must adeptly navigate and leverage these opportunities within their specific setting. The study also highlights culturally specific factors shaping returnees' careers, such as mentorship, personal connections and adaption to the domestic academic culture (Li and Xue, 2021). The career pathways of two YTT scholars underscore the dynamic interplay between individual aspirations, institutional environments and national policies. They highlight the importance of a supportive institutional ecosystem, the transformative potential of transnational capital and the need for a nuanced understanding of the factors that contribute to the academic success of overseas returnees. As China continues to invest in its knowledge economy and global talent pool, understanding these dynamics will be crucial for the effective integration and retention of elite returnees.

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