

International Student Migration: Mapping the Field and New Research Agendas

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ABSTRACT

Despite rapid growth in the student component of global migration flows, the study of international student migration/mobility (ISM) is a relatively neglected field in migration research. This special issue helps to address this lacuna. This introductory paper highlights the contradictions between international students as ‘desired’ because of their internationalism and fee contributions, and as ‘unwanted’ because of the politics of migration control especially in the context of the securitisation of study in the post 9/11 scenario. It argues that interrogating the terms ‘international’ and ‘students’ is critical to addressing the slipperiness that underlies these contradictions. Focusing on students per se ignores their multiple roles, as family members, actual or potential workers, or perhaps refugees and asylum-seekers, while definitions of international students ignore the diversity of study that students undertake. After summarising the papers which follow, this paper concludes with an agenda for future research on ISM: greater theoretical insight drawing on the cognate field of mobility studies; more in-depth ethnographic research on mobile students which recognises their multiple roles in knowledge diffusion and social reproduction; further research on ISM datasets and quantitative surveys which employs statistical analysis; more attention paid to gender and race as they relate to ISM; and a stronger link to pedagogy and systems of higher education and knowledge production.

Keywords: international students; migration and mobility; theory; spatialities of knowledge; higher education

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INTRODUCTION

Recent decades have seen a considerable increase in the volume of international students worldwide; their numbers have been rising almost four times faster than total international migration (IOM, 2008: 105; also see Table 1). Students are solicited as desirable migrants because of the skills they bring and then subsequently develop in the countries into which they move. As a result, the last decade has seen a fine-tuning of migration policy in order to attract student migrants. However, despite the significance of students among the migrant population of many countries around the world, they remain the least studied of the major categories of migrants (Findlay, 2011). This special issue aims to address this gap.

Table 1: International mobile students at the tertiary level (ISCED 5 and 6)

In the last decade China and India have dominated inflows into many of the English-speaking countries while the US, UK, France and Australia remain important destination countries (Table 1). However, a closer look at UNESCO's data on international flows of students shows that almost all the countries for which data is available record an increase in the number of international students studying in their countries. In several cases increases in the last decade or so have been two- and three-fold. Other countries have seen much more dramatic rises: for instance, the international student population in the Czech Republic rose from 4,583 in 1999 to 30,624 in 2009, while in Malaysia in the same period the figures rose from 3,508 to 57,824. Very few countries have seen a fall in international student numbers; where this has occurred it can usually be related to conflicts. In some countries such as Germany and Portugal there was an increase in student numbers in the middle of the first decade of the twenty-first century but the numbers have fallen back although they still show growth compared to 1999-2000. These patterns were reversed in Sweden, where international student numbers dropped in the middle of the decade but have since risen. A much more fluctuating pattern can be noted for a handful of countries, such as Spain. The UNESCO data also shows that in some countries (the US, UK, Australia) long-distance migration prevails while for other countries, such as the Republic of South Africa, migration from other countries in Africa explains over three-quarters of student migrants. What is clear is that an increase in the number of students migrating internationally is a global phenomenon, although with important national, regional and temporal variations.

There are not only statistical variations in migration patterns, there are also diverse theoretical debates attempting to understand international student migration/mobility (henceforth ISM). Madge et al. (2009) summarise these debates through three broad strands of the literature on ISM. The first relates to the mobility of recent international students through the lens of migration literature (Findlay *et al.*, 2012), the second explores ISM as part of the overall mobility and globalisation of higher education (HE) (Sidhu, 2006), while the third focuses on the pedagogical questions raised by student mobility (Coate, 2009). Moreover, historical analyses of ISM abound (see for instance Lahiri, 2000); they highlight the constitutive role that international students have made to nationalist projects and to education in the twentieth century (Ock Park, 2004). Despite this wealth of knowledge, it is remarkable how so many of the standard textbooks on international migration either fail to mention student-migrants or dismiss the phenomenon in a few lines.¹ Publications by relevant organisations have recognised the importance of ISM: the 2001 version of the OECD's authoritative *Trends in International Migration* contained a chapter on student mobility across OECD countries (OECD, 2001: 93-117), and the International Organization of Migration's report on *World Migration* for 2008 likewise had a chapter on student migration which considered the phenomenon within the dual context of skilled migration and the internationalisation of higher education (IOM, 2008: 105-125). Noteworthy too is the recent book on migration by Michael Samers which makes a more detailed reference to international student migration than any of its predecessors (Samers, 2010: 26-30, 79-80, 164-168); even here, however, the treatment of students as migrants is limited compared to the much more detailed discussions and analyses of 'economic' migrants and refugees.

More-specialised texts on international student migration/mobility have also started to emerge over the last decade. Pioneering in this regard is Elizabeth Murphy-Lejeune's (2002) *Student Mobility and Narrative in Europe* – an ethnography of Erasmus students and language assistants. Other contributions include the general statistical and policy review of Gürüz (2008), several edited volumes with chapters of varying depth and significance (Bhandari and Laughlin, 2009; Byram and Dervin, 2008; de Wit *et al.*, 2008), and, most recently, a useful overview of the ISM field within the context of the internationalisation of higher education by Brooks and Waters (2011).

Despite this growing literature, much remains to be done, both regarding the theorisation of international student migration and in terms of contributing well-grounded empirical research. The papers in this special issue collectively aspire to advance knowledge

on both these fronts. In the rest of this introductory paper, we first map the field of ISM, looking particularly at some basic typologies and classifications. We do so because, as both the policies and the politics over the ‘authenticity’ of students who are migrating become increasingly troubled, definitions about who qualifies to be counted as international students matter. We then identify key issues for debate and summarise the papers that follow, highlighting their significant findings and connections. We round off by suggesting an agenda for future research.

MAPPING THE TERRAIN OF ISM

The phenomenon of ISM can be differentiated along a number of vectors which help us to comprehend the variety of types of movement. One terminological issue is whether to privilege ‘migration’ or ‘mobility’. The literature and the policy debate, certainly in Europe, tend increasingly to favour the latter term. *Mobility* highlights the movement involved in migration, rather than privileging the sending and receiving localities and their perspectives. In much of the literature it also implies a shorter time-frame for the movement, and a high probability of return, as in the Erasmus or Junior Year Abroad type of scheme. Longer-term moves, for an entire degree programme – three or four years – clearly fit the conventional statistical definition of international *migration* (often predicated on a move lasting at least one year), with a more open-ended likelihood of return to country of origin. By using the acronym ISM we sidestep this terminological dilemma, although on the whole we opt for the more flexible term mobility to describe different types of students’ international moves. Doing so also highlights the uncertainties of tenure that surrounds most migration projects.

The question of the length of the study-abroad period leads us into an important categorisation. This is the distinction between *credit mobility*, where the stay abroad (typically less than a year) is part of a programme of study which is only completed when the student returns to the home institution (eg. an Erasmus exchange); and *degree mobility* (also called *diploma* or *programme mobility*) where the student stays abroad for an entire programme of study such as a bachelor’s degree or doctorate. A third type of mobility, less formalised, involves various voluntary or mandatory schemes of shorter duration, such as summer schools and field-trips.

Another significant variable is *level of study* – diploma, undergraduate, master’s, PhD, etc. Moreover, academics who are researching or studying abroad can arguably be included in this continuum, since fieldwork, visits to archives, sabbaticals, secondments etc. all

comprise mobility experiences. These also vary across the years of study – many courses have a second or third year in which students are offered a study abroad programme. The extent to which these programmes require engagement with those in the ‘host country’ varies. Some programmes only offer a changed venue as curriculum and staff are brought over from the registering institution, in others only the student moves. The *subjects* studied can also influence the nature of ISM. In many countries science, technology, engineering and mathematics students (the so-called STEM subjects) are solicited, along with those doing business studies. Students of other subjects receive a more cautious welcome. Moreover, certain subjects require students to move, such as for fieldwork, or to use specialised equipment or libraries, while other subjects do not place the same demands on student mobility.

Experiences of mobility will vary according to level of study, subject of study, type of activity, and destination country. They will also differ based on where exactly study fits within people’s overall life trajectory and the environment within which this education is being provided. For instance, is the idea of study abroad linked to future career plans? Or is it seen more as an experience in and of itself, either academically or at the cultural/touristic level? To what extent is it driven or constrained by costs of study (fees, scholarships, costs of living etc.), or linked to the availability of courses and qualifications not available in the student’s home country? Are some students attracted by the prospect of studying at a ‘world-class’ university (Findlay *et al.*, 2012)? Or, finally, is an international move as a student intended as a prelude to immigration after the course has finished? For some students, the wish to convert a student visa into long-term or permanent residence – so-called ‘student switchers’ (Robertson, 2011) – may be a rational life migration strategy. As workers, family members, and with different citizenships, the social and legal identities of students may be full of contradictions and ensuing pressures. We return to these issues below.

The diversity of experiences gathered together under the term ‘international students’ suggests that we need to critically interrogate not only the term ‘student’ but also the word ‘international’. ‘International’ in the context of ISM is usually used to define migration across nation-states, and this is indeed how most authors in this special issue have interpreted it. However, the emergence of other spatial units such as ‘global cities’ in attracting students is becoming increasingly apparent (Raghuram, 2013). The international student population could also encompass students who are in-situ but enrolled in international colleges and universities; they get a degree accredited by an overseas university without the physical

mobility of going there. The expansion of education providers in international markets has led to a rapid growth in this transnational education franchising and the opening of overseas branch campuses, as Waters and Leung (2013) point out in their paper in this issue.

SOME KEY ISSUES

Exploring these different interpretations of ‘international’ and ‘students’ is imperative if we are to understand the diversity of experience amongst international students worldwide. Particularly in the two main global recruiters of international students – the US and the UK – we currently observe a contradictory tension between, on the one hand an educational policy which responds to the financial and academic desirability of attracting international students, and on the other hand, an immigration policy which, in the light of 9/11, 7/7, and increasing public pressures to reduce immigration, increasingly seeks to curtail inward student migration, after a period of rapid expansion during the 2000s. Students inhabit, and have to negotiate, this contradictory policy landscape.

On a European plane, boosting intra-European student mobility is part of a wider project of creating a shared sense of membership across European, especially EU, countries. Building a pan-European identity was seen as one way of eradicating the differences within Europe that led to the two world wars of the last century (Sigalors, 2010). Students are seen to have an important role to play in the project of developing this sense of Europeanness because they are often young, and can learn from each other how to develop a Europe that is closely-knit. Students also learn from living together but, as Van Mol (2013) suggests, success in achieving this aim of a shared identity around Europe varies according to a range of personal, economic and political factors. The effectiveness of intra-European mobility schemes in identity building thus can differ.

Moreover, as the memory of war recedes, the significance of education as an ‘export’ industry and a means of giving Europe and its educated elite a competitive edge in the global market for skills has also become more important (King, 2003). One example of this policy of creating economic advantage by attracting talented student migrants is offered by Mosneaga and Winther (2013). They describe how Denmark seeks to retain student migrants, but these authors also point out how personal factors intervene to either facilitate or compromise international students’ transition from study to work in Denmark. Whatever the rationale, it is clear is that (some) students have become desirable migrants for many states.

At the same time, international students are also becoming the targets of increasing suspicion. Attacks on them in many countries have been mounting in recent years. Like other types of migrant, they are simultaneously desired yet treated with disdain. Their mobility is continuously under interrogation: are they really students, or are they workers? To what extent is internationalism, or permanent residence abroad, the primary aim of this mobility? Or, conversely, are students international enough? Are family ties and controls preventing students from shifting their allegiances to the country in which they are studying? Do the students socialise within their own national groups or ethno-religious communities whilst abroad, or perhaps only interact with other international students rather than with students from the host country? And what are the challenges facing non-EU students in a landscape of increasingly dense exchanges amongst European students?

These are some of the exclusionary paradigms that can be deployed in studying student migration. As Francis Leo Collins (2009) points out, students are thus simultaneously negotiating inclusion and exclusion, and arguably these alternative positionalities are made possible, at least in part, by the 'slipperiness' of the term international students.

The articles in this collection aim to address some of this 'slipperiness' by focusing on the actual experiences of students. Students are recognised as complex individuals who are entangled in a wide set of social relations. They are simultaneously family members, workers and students (Geddie, 2013; Mosneaga and Winther, 2013). These multiple attachments that postgraduate students form are explored by Geddie (2013). She analyses education through the notion of transitions as graduation appears to mark a point of transition between study and a more open horizon of opportunities which offers many possibilities about where to study, what to study, and when. These choices become particularly important when the transition in study falls at a time when many women and men are also making decisions about partnering, parenting, caring for parents etc. and the family members involved in these relations are themselves stretched transnationally. Accommodating parenting and partnering with international study can pose a personal challenge for many postgraduate students. Hence, for both Mosneaga and Winther and for Geddie, decisions about international mobility always entangle the social and the pedagogic.

This contingent, dynamic notion of student subjects whose motivations cannot be pinned down to a few simplistic causative factors but are always influenced by a range of factors is also explored by Sören Carlson (2013). He argues that temporal conjunctures such

as serendipity and coincidence, but also a slowly developed culture of moving, are all aspects of dynamicity that are often under-recognised in the ISM literature. His paper, therefore, offers a critique of both the search for motivation at a fixed point in time and space as the basis for theorising student migration, and the desire to situate those motives in a fixed, knowable student identity.

In the same vein, Raghuram (2013) suggests that, instead of seeking to record the motivations of students, on the one hand, or of educators on the other, we need theories that see how both students and education providers are implicated (together) in producing international knowledge systems and how mobility is necessary to producing such systems. She thus explicitly aims to bring together theorisations of ISM with those of transnational education (cf. Brooks and Waters, 2011).

The inclusions and exclusions discussed above intersect with other social axes of power such as class, gender and race. Much of the research on ISM shows that the students who move generally belong to the middle and upper classes. This, for example, is the case with British students engaging in both credit and degree mobility (Findlay and King, 2010; HEFCE 2004, 2009; Waters and Brooks, 2010), and with Hong Kong students seeking education abroad (Waters, 2006). But Waters and Leung (2013) challenge this view. They ask: does it make a difference if it is not the students who move but the educational system? Their answer is that it depends on the system. They came across students in Hong Kong who were not upper-class; they were constrained to seek an 'international' education 'at home'. Moreover Hong Kong 'non-movers' were found to be denied class mobility because of the type of internationalism in play. The poor quality and level of teaching and the lack of exposure to the networks of international staff that were promised or anticipated also deny these international students the social mobility that they thought would be made possible through an international education. This is a stark warning at a time when there is a proliferation of education systems which use the international brand in order to market themselves, but do not offer much of what this brand is meant to signify to students who enrol. Such students never gain (quoting Carlson, 2013 and Murphy-Lejeune, 2002) 'mobility capital', a form of human capital that arises from previous experiences of living abroad and what was gained through this international stay.

Gender also inflects migration, including that of students. The role of gender in discriminating between men's and women's transnational familial relations, partnering and

decisions about migration is analysed by Geddie (2013). What is clear from her analysis is that whilst knowledge is often seen as disembodied (especially so in the STEM subjects), the bearers of these knowledges are nevertheless gendered, racialised and classed subjects. Moreover, the different hierarchies of power imbued in these categories will also affect what is done with that knowledge and where. We return to this important point in the conclusion.

THE PAPERS

The papers in this special issue make a contribution towards reconceptualising student migration. They offer, among other things, a new paradigm for researching ISM (Raghuram), and a nuancing of existing theories of transnationalism (Geddie) through a recognition of the dynamic and spatialised migrant subject (Carlson, Van Mol). They also point to the implications of the attachments that students have and make as they move through their lifecourse for policies on student migration, which are often posited around an imagined, individual, free-moving subject (Geddie, Mosneaga and Winther). Finally, the papers suggest that one implication of the immobilities that arise out of students' personal biographies is that they are constrained to seek international education in-situ (Waters and Leung)

Theoretically, several of the papers draw on Bourdieu's notion of habitus and his analysis of forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1986). For instance, Carlson highlights the ways in which mobility becomes part of students' habitus. He then brings together the work of Granovetter (1973) and Bourdieu (1986) to highlight both the differential role of strong and weak ties and the importance of structural embeddedness in producing a 'mobile habitus' of which international students become a part. Raghuram, on the other hand, draws on Knorr-Cetina (2007) to argue that the global is central to the epistemology of contemporary knowledge production. She then draws attention to how a Foucauldian analysis could go some way towards understanding the co-production of student subjectivities with that of the global spatial scale of knowledge. She is, thus, sympathetic to Carlson's argument that pre-migrant subjectivities matter (see also Pandurang, 2007).

Most of the papers draw on research based on qualitative methodologies – biographical narratives, semi-structured interviews and a longitudinal approach. These methodologies enrich the analysis of ISM as they offer the possibility of detailed analysis of student experiences, behaviours and attitudes. They give depth and complexity to student

subjectivities. However, as suggested in the introduction to this paper, analyses of patterns of mobility and how they vary over time are also essential in academic research. There are very few global overviews that analyse existing statistical data on student migration (see De Wit *et al.*, 2008; Gürüz, 2008), and those that exist become quickly out of date because of the volatility of some of the flows. A more sophisticated quantitative analysis of this data is also necessary if any kinds of causal relations are to be established. This methodological take is offered by Van Mol who (in addition to interviews) undertakes an online survey of exchange students in five different European countries – Austria, Belgium, Italy, Norway and Poland. In a field dominated by qualitative research in single-country settings, this cross-country comparison makes a valuable contribution. It highlights the *located* nature of the experiences of students moving within Europe.

The special issue begins with an exploration by Parvati Raghuram of the spatialities inherent in theories of migration and the place of ISM theories in this panoply. Push-pull theories, she argues, responded to ways of thinking about economic migration, especially at times when national labour markets were paramount. Meanwhile the emergence of theories of transnationalism can be seen as recognition of the spatialities – the co-presence across different countries – of the migrant's family life. If push-pull theories reflect the spatialities inherent in theorisations of labour markets and family life is the trigger for transnationalism, then what is the category for analysing student migration? Raghuram suggests that this category is *knowledge* and that spatialities of knowledge provide a useful way of conceptualising ISM. Knowledge, to be recognised as such, must have an international stretch, for it needs to move beyond narrow confines. It therefore requires the mobilities of people, ideas, institutions, books and so on. Students are entangled within these mobilities. However, students do not simply respond to the knowledge spatialities they are actively recruited into, they are essential to the production of such spatialities through their movement and indeed may reshape them through their own academic work, especially at graduate and post-doctoral levels. The take-home message is that migration theories should be crafted around the subjects and structures of migration and their inherent spatialities.

The meaning of internationalism is thrown into profile by Waters and Leung. Does internationalism mean a coming together of people from different countries, a mark of quality (cf. 'international' standards of research excellence or training), or simply an 'international' location? Focusing on *immobile* students in Hong Kong who are drawn into international education through transnational education providers, Waters and Leung argue that it is not

necessary for people to seek an international location; these territorial shifts are increasingly being achieved through the expansiveness of education institutions opening branch campuses in many parts of the world. The authors find, however, that the quality of education on offer often falls far short of the ‘international’ branding it proclaims, and students are denied access to the knowledge, networks and experiences that internationalism might suggest.

Several papers also provide a close-up view of the subject of ISM – the student. For instance, Sören Carlson’s narrative biographical research with international undergraduate and postgraduate students in Germany invokes a dynamic migrant subjectivity. He offers a quizzical look at the received wisdom on the phenomenon of student migration. The fact is that students do not come ready packaged with pre-set ideas, but alter their ideas about migration and their life-plans through the course of their study abroad. A wider implication arises here: is this dynamicity specific to students, and if so, what aspect of this is specific to students? Are the desirable outcomes of migration, and hence the motivation for migration, always shifting, and for all migrants? Or are students, because of their youthfulness, and/or because of their explicit acquisition of knowledge and a global perspective, more labile subjects, prone to alter their views on migration? How should migration theory take account of this dynamicity of migration aspirations and plans, particularly in light of existing theoretical obsession with causation and an identifiable interpretation of causality?

Carlson uses his empirical findings to offer a critique of migration studies that purely focus on ‘*why* students migrate’. Instead, he suggests the need to think about *how* students migrate. This shift signals a move from seeing decision-making as a one-off process to recognising the processual nature of how migration happens. He reminds us that it is not only the student-migrant subject who is growing and changing, but the world around is also transforming: education is being restructured, fees have been introduced or increased, and the number of years of study required for a degree has changed. Against the background of these dynamic institutionalised scripts, the order of events leading from school to university and beyond assumes a crucial structuring impact on the students’ pathways. It is also clear that the decisions about migration are never those of the migrant, or indeed their family, or their social network alone.

The ever-shifting nature of migration is also central to the paper by Ana Mosneaga and Lars Winther. Drawing on qualitative research with 43 science and technology postgraduate students in Denmark, they highlight how this shifting terrain is inherent in the

phase of life – the study-to-work transition – that many (international) students are in. They see education not only as a period of transition from study to work, but also a time of family formation, and hence of shifts in family structure. Transnationalism and student mobility thus have to map on to and intertwine with the challenges of this kind of life transitioning. As a result, the authors conclude, there are limits to the extent to which students can be retained as an instrument for economic development.

These conclusions are corroborated in the next paper, by Kate Geddie. Her analysis draws on 47 semi-structured interviews with international postgraduates in the STEM subjects at Imperial College London and the University of Toronto. Her results suggest that *family ties* are crucial in shaping postgraduates' present and future migration. She offers an interesting analysis of the varieties of transnational relations in which migrant students are involved, thus expanding the rather limited literature on student migration and transnationalism. She argues, like Mosneaga and Winther, that the migration of these individuals, who are often seen as highly desirable in the global competition for skills, is shaped by relationships with parents, siblings, partners and friends. Thus, although their mobility is often described through a productivist paradigm, the opportunities and constraints around social reproduction are also central in shaping these students' mobility.

While the shifting nature of student subjectivities is the concern for Carlson, it is the ability of mobility to fundamentally shift these subjectivities and create new identifications that is of concern to Christof Van Mol. Van Mol uses research in a range of countries to point out how, just like non-students (Pichler, 2008), identification with Europe varies across Europe among international students too. He does this through an analysis of the relationship between national and European identities. Sub-regional sensitivities mattered for Norwegian students, as an association with Nordic countries complicates European identity. By contrast, Belgian students internalise the weight of their country's prominent role in the European project. As the official capital of many of the institutions and instruments of Europe-wide governance, Belgium carries with it an agenda of integration that is reflected in Belgian students' survey responses and interview narratives. A similar identification and enthusiasm with Europe is seen in Poland, but here it relates to the relatively recent accession of this country to the EU (2004). Van Mol's research reminds us that Europe is a political, social and legal assemblage where the cultural weight of Europeanisation is varied – from memories of a shared past to a European project of building commonalities. Students traverse this

regionalised terrain through varied identifications, 'Europe' being only one of them. Moreover, identification with Europe changes over time and is unstable.

AGENDA FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

We feel that this set of papers goes some way towards correcting the simplistic and reductionist images of the international student that percolate through current debates on ISM. Yet, this is still a nascent field, and there is much to be done. Taken collectively, the papers presented here convey two overarching messages. The first is the need to decentre the student as the object of study and instead recognise the multiple players who simultaneously invest in, and gain from, international student migration/mobility. The second is the appreciation that students are complex subjects who are much more than just students whose only function is life in higher education. They are simultaneously family members, citizens of a particular country, workers, and perhaps also refugees or asylum-seekers. It is at the intersection of these multiple spheres and positionalities that their lives are played out. As mentioned earlier in the paper, this multiplicity and hence the hybrid figure of the student-worker, or the student-refugee, who may also be a husband, wife, father or mother, or responsible for family members back home, needs further empirical investigation and theorisation. We need to move away from the simplistic image of the international student as a privileged individual from a relatively well-heeled background.

We feel therefore that there is a compelling need for further work, which might develop along several lines. The following are some suggestions.

First, there is enormous scope for ethnographic research with internationally mobile students. Murphy-Lejeune's (2002) path-breaking research into the lives of European Erasmus students has yet to be matched by other in-depth studies. There is a great need for similarly detailed ethnographic research with other types of student-migrants, for instance those who move from the global South to Europe, North America, Australia, and elsewhere, to document their complex lives in the academic, social, cultural and economic realms. Stimulated by some of the papers in this themed issue, which argue for a longitudinal approach, such studies could be biographical and multi-sited, following the students from their home countries to foreign universities and beyond. 'Beyond' could involve a return to the home country, staying on in the host country, a move to a 'new' country, or some sequenced combination of these.

Second, at the opposite end of the methodological spectrum, the availability of survey data (eg. from online questionnaires) and of secondary datasets on student mobility and international students invites statistical analysis. Of the papers in this issue, only Van Mol engages in quantitative analysis of his own reasonably large survey data. Parey and Waldinger (2011) have statistically correlated Erasmus mobility with labour market outcomes, and HEFCE (2004, 2009) have linked the Erasmus dataset with their own database on UK students in order to demonstrate that Erasmus students are positively selected socio-economically and academically, and that (not surprisingly) they obtain higher end-of-degree grades than their non-mobile peers. Of course, we acknowledge that such analyses run the risk of playing into over-rigid formulations of cause, effect and selectivity, but their statistical significance should not be overlooked, particularly if they can be triangulated, or indeed contrasted, with qualitative research.

A third, and most pressing requirement is the need to improve our theorisation of ISM. One step towards this would be to engage with reflections on mobility in cognate fields such as history and creative literature. For instance, the notion of the exilic intellectual may be borrowed from Edward Said for the potential it offers to rethinking the field of migration. According to Said, ‘exile for the intellectual in this metaphysical sense is restless, movement, constantly being unsettled, and unsettling others’ (1994: 34). The potential of international students to be exilic intellectuals underlies the work of Carlson but we still have some way to go in understanding how student migrants, through their presence and knowledge, make an impact on the knowledge of the places they come to – how they unsettle and recast others through their knowledge. Similarly, Raghuram’s spatial analysis, in the next paper in this issue, drills down into historical formations of knowledge production. Drawing this together with the rich resources documenting the long history of intellectual mobility would be an interesting project. It would highlight above all the contingency of the international. Sometimes mobility sparks a feeling of nationalism amongst students. As Madge *et al.* (2009) show, the growth of nationalist movements in the 1950s in the countries that are now seen to be part of the global South was fed by the mobility of students. These international students studied in imperial capitals, met, and were influenced by other prospective ‘freedom fighters’. They then returned to lead independence movements in their countries of birth. Hence, nationalism was firmly rooted in internationalism. Many also simultaneously developed a sense of internationalism – interest in socialist or green movements which spanned the globe. What will be the legacy of international mobility today – economically,

ideationally and socially? This more productive notion of knowledge holds the promise of bringing together the three strands of literature identified in the beginning of this paper.

A plea for gendered analysis is never out of place in migration studies. Whilst it is probably true to say that the accusation of wholesale gender-blindness by migration scholars no longer applies (King *et al.*, 2006), it is nevertheless the case that a gender lens remains under-used in certain types and formations of migration, such as transnationalism (Pessar and Mahler, 2003) and – most notably – student migration. Some of the papers in this set do include gendered insights into the dynamics of ISM, particularly where there are families and partnerships involved (Geddie, 2013), but a fully developed gendered exploration of ISM has yet to be rolled out. One possible framework is the ‘gendered geographies of power’ analysis proposed by Mahler and Pessar (2001). This is particularly appealing to a study of ISM because our emphasis on spatialities is congruent with Mahler and Pessar’s geographies of gendered power relations. The model builds on Doreen Massey’s notion of ‘power geometries’ (Massey, 1994: 146-156) resulting from the way that time-space compression impacts unevenly on people who are placed in different social locations in the world with respect to their agency to initiate, control, resist or be the victims of various globalising forces. Geographic scale also enters into the analysis in the way that power geometries can be expressed at the embodied micro-scale through family and society-level patriarchies up to national laws on migration which discriminate on the basis of gender. It is not hard to see how this framework can be applied to student movements, gendered through the patriarchal relations encoded in different national social formations, expressed through family decision-making on who is allowed to study abroad and who is not, and followed perhaps by the very different gendered regimes that students may experience as they mingle with students from all over the world when abroad.

One of the most significant issues facing international students in the previous decade has been an increasing racialisation of the discourses around their presence. They have become objects of suspicion and targets of racist attacks. This racialisation has, however, not excited much academic attention. It is an area that requires careful critical analysis.

Finally, although there is now some research on the relationship between pedagogy and ISM, the character of knowledge that is invoked in much of this literature is still relatively thin. There has been a rather surprising reluctance in ISM research to engage systematically with knowledge and study. There is scope for a much richer understanding of

the role of international students in producing and spreading knowledge, and of recasting this role in narratives of international student mobility (cf. Adorno, 2009). Ultimately, ‘international’ is a deeply relational term – one that links territories, places and nations in a range of relationships. The nature of the relationships that shape student mobility, and those that their migration in turn creates, are all open to be ‘done otherwise’. The question is how far can our research help in this endeavour?

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The papers in this special issue were first prepared, pre-circulated and discussed at a workshop organised at the Sussex Centre for Migration Research, University of Sussex, in May 2011. The workshop was funded by a networking grant from IMISCOE, an EU Network of Excellence on ‘International Migration, Integration and Social Cohesion in Europe’, whose support is gratefully acknowledged. Thanks also go to Jill Ahrens and Gunjan Sondhi, international doctoral students at Sussex, for their help in organising the workshop and formatting the papers for publication.

NOTE

¹ For instance Boyle *et al.* (1998) ; Brettell and Hollifield (2000) ; Castles and Miller (2009) ; Cohen (1995).

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Table 1: International mobile students at the tertiary level (ISCED 5 and 6): main host countries

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Australia	109,437	117,485	105,764	120,987	179,619	188,160	166,954	177,034	184,710	211,526	230,635	257,637	
Canada	28,116	32,466	36,450	42,711	49,572	59,067	65,001	69,126	68,520	92,881	93,476		
Germany	..	178,195	187,033	199,132	219,039	240,619	260,314	259,797	207,994	206,875	189,347	197,895	
France	..	130,952	137,085	147,402	165,437	221,567	237,587	236,518	247,510	246,612	243,436	249,143	
UK	209,554	232,540	222,936	225,722	227,273	255,233	300,056	318,399	330,078	351,470	341,791	368,968	
US	430,786	451,935	475,169	475,168	582,996	586,316	572,509	590,158	584,719	595,874	624,474	660,581	684,714

Source: UNESCO,UIS Statistics

<http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/>