**Editorial**

**Educational mobilities and internationalised higher education: Critical perspectives**

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**Introduction**

Higher education is increasingly now established in ways that entail a crossing of national, linguistic, cultural and other boundaries (Brooks and Waters 2011; Yvonne Hébert and Abdi 2013). Recent years have seen significant expansion in the sector around transnational education and online learning, with students, academic staff, educational programmes and even institutions all increasingly mobile (Ullberg 2015). The association between a higher education institution and a specific locality has become more fluid than was previously the case. Deterritoralisation of higher education is further in evidence with the rise of private higher education, whether resulting from the growing role of multinational educational companies or global firms that offer educational services to their employees, customers or clients (Mundy 2005).

It is possible to view these crossings in relatively unproblematic terms, with educational mobility occurring in a similar fashion to a mobility that is understood primarily in terms of physical movement around the world. Indeed, the word ‘mobility’ implies a capacity to move freely and easily, based as it is on the Latin word *mobilitas* which refers to both rapidity and changeableness. Larsen (2016) has argued that dominant perspectives on internationalised higher education do see educational mobility as a relatively straightforward matter. Barnett (2016), futhermore, has observed that the existence of a common policy framework for higher education globally has facilitated the pursuit by universities of collaborative activity internationally, prediated as this framework is on such factors as a marketisation of higher education, a focus on student employability and increased usage of learning technology.

Viewing educational mobilities in such terms, however, glosses over associated exclusions, vulnerabilities and silencings. The introduction of the adjective ‘educational’ in front of the term ‘mobilities’ is a far from straightforward move. Of course, there has been critical work that addresses inequities associated with the internationalisation of higher education. Larsen (2016), for instance, brought together postfoundational, spatial, network and mobility approaches to explore the nature of internationalised higher education. It remains the case, though, that only a modest amount of critical work has addressed the implications for teaching more specifically. Existing research, for instance, attends to such areas as what is entailed in being a mobile academic (Fahey and Kenway 2010) or on theorising mobility primarily in relation to policy agendas (Gulson and Symes 2017).

The extent of the challenge that is entailed in pursuing social justice in the face of a dominant global paradigm, meanwhile, should not be underestimated – particularly in the absence of an extensive body of critical work. Lather (2002) has suggested in blunt terms that it is simply impossible to realise the drive for social justice within the field of schooling. There is no reason to think that higher education is any different, and that it would be more straightforward for those teaching in higher education to realise the canons of value to which they aspire in their turn. Lather (2002) argued that researchers and practitioners aspiring to social justice need to accept and work through experiences of impossibility, and to recognise that one can never fully attain one’s educational aspirations. Ellsworth (1997) highlighted the need to learn from experiences of failure and discontinuity, and to work through aporias that present themselves as one stuck place after another. According to Heidegger (2002) an aporia constitutes a specific kind of lack, namely an uncertainty about how to move forward even as one experiences a desire to progress.

It is thus particularly important to develop insights that help to address the uncertainties that are associated with agency in interationalised higher education. Clegg (2005) argued that structural change is always mediated by the agency of actors, and that a focus on the mundane is thus essential in theorising teaching in higher education. While a policy framework may effectively sideline ways in which people are excluded or treated unjustly, such considerations are harder to ignore when it comes to one’s own lived experience. Misiaszek (2018), in particular, has suggested that global neoliberal higher education results in embodied experience that is full of tensions. She argued that it is possible for a world-class university to adopt elevated language in portraying its engagement with internationalised higher education, but that the reality may well remain mundane and low-brow for those actually experiencing it. Clegg’s analysis built on the work of Archer (1996), work which recognises that socio-cultural structures are always animated by people. This suggests a central role for agency, which according to Archer (2003) is understood as human intentional action. A focus on mundane experience offers a route by which to problematise understanding of educational mobilities in internationalised higher education.

*The focus of the special issue*

This special issue of *Teaching in Higher Education* applies critical perspectives to the educational mobilities that characterise internationalised higher education. The articles in the issue cover long and short term study abroad, staff mobility, institutional mobility and other areas. In each case an international and intercultural dimension is integrated into the practices entailed, something that Knight (2004) identiifed as a key marker for internationalization. The articles draw on a range of theoretical perspectives, including those grounded in post-foundational theories (Marchart, 2007) and critical realism (Archer et al. 1998), as well as on the mobilities turn within the social sciences (Sheller and Urry 2006). When taken together, one of the most striking features of the articles is that they explore the lives of those involved in internationalised higher education, taking their mundane, often messy, experience seriously. In focusing on the mundane lived experience of actors within the field of internationalised higher education, this special issue seeks to open up new avenues to both understand and respond to the aporia that are apparent. It aims in this way to address the dislocations, diversifications and concentrations that have resulted from educational mobilities and to tease out the implications for teaching in higher education.

This editorial itself is framed around a consideration of agency on the part of both individuals and collectivities. This framing incorporates a reading of the articles in the special issue that sees agency as something that is never simply pursued on the agent’s own terms. In the paragraphs that follow, we depart from the themes of exclusion and inclusion, the mundane, perverse privilege, and collectivities, exploring their manifestation in relationship to educational mobilities and internationalised higher education, interweaving the contributions of the papers in this special issue. We are cautious to not present this as an agenda of any kind; instead focused on considering the taken for granted in this quite ‘noisy’ field. In this way we hope to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of internationalised higher education, one that does not depend on the binaries that Larsen (2016) suggested dominate research in this field. For instance, she suggested that it is helpful to think about internationalisation in ways that avoids a separation between a single place (i.e. the local) and a multiplicity of places (i.e. the global). One can similarly look to frame analyses that are not simply bound by a reductive contrast between what is domestic as opposed to foreign, or what is mobile versus immobile. The lived experience of faculty, students and others is entangled in ways that lie beyond any resolution into binaries. The analysis in this editorial, furthermore, takes note of the links between agency and emancipation. Emancipation may be understood as self-determination, in which subjects realise their own desires rather than remain subject to domination on the part of others (Bhaskar 1986). Bhaskar argued that if we are able to understand the outworkings of agency, then we will be better able to redress injustice.

**Experiences of exclusion and inclusion**

Several of the articles in this issue explore how agency within internationalised higher education is mediated by experiences of inclusion and exclusion. Rao, Mace, Hosein and Kinchin (2019) considers the teaching roles of academics who have migrated across national borders in order to work within higher education (Teichler 2017). It explores the difficulties that migrant academics may face in shaping local policy and values, exploring how a pedagogical othering can occur when migrant academics teach. The study explored personal narratives of nine migrant academics, arguing that these academics felt that they were constrained in their attempts to express their own pedagogic values. The study suggests that pedagogic adaptation by migrant academics aimed at improving student learning is not problematic in itself. Rather a lack of pedagogical openness on the part of institutions can result in restricted opportunities for international faculty to shape collectively-endorsed teaching practices.

Other exclusions will also affect the capacity of migrant academics to engage in shared decision making around teaching. Misiaszek (2018), for instance, reflecting on her experience in China built on the critical exploration by Koh (2003) of Singapore’s ‘foreign talent’discourse. The use of the term ‘talent’ to characterise a person implies a quality that someone might possess that would allow them to serve a utilitarian purpose. The term ‘foreign talent’ itself is ambivalent, in that it may be employed both as a compliment and as a means to an impersonal distancing. When different groups of staff are distanced from each other it is more difficult for them to pool their concerns together in ways that might lead to change at the level of an institution, making it harder for them to reach beyond performative remits where these exist. For instance, contractual expectations may indicate that an academic should publish a certain number of papers in journals that are included within the Social Sciences Citation Index. Or, again, it might be the case that a reflexive performance of gratitude is expected on the part of the foreign talent in light of the ‘rewards’ that they have received. (Indeed, similar considerations may apply to international students in receipt of scholarships.) In the face of these varied constraints it might seem an impossibility to come together with other faculty to address challenging welfare needs faced by students.

Exclusions can also occur as a result of the way in which teaching staff and students gaze on other students. Larsen (2016) highlighted the tendency that exists to label international students as suffering from a deficit in relation to their learning; even if their need to learn is little different to the situation that all students face. The article by Lomer and Anthony-Okeke (2019) included in this issue is particularly critical of narratives that see international students as in deficit, excluded from contributing effectively to seminar discussions because of an unfamiliarity with Western norms for classroom interaction and through colonialist assumptions in selecting content. The paper reports on an insider action research project that investigated a master’s level course on higher education in the UK that was taken by a cohort of international students, primarily from China. The course sought to include students through the means by which course content was selected, enabling students to select the focus of their work. Lomer and Anthony-Oeke argue that a critical pedagogy should position international students as equal participants in shared learning, taking forward work for courses predicated on their own interests and agendas.

 It is apparent, then, that experiences of exclusion and inclusion work either to enable or constrain agency. Okazaki, David and Abelmann (2008) pointed to the extensive body of research that exists within social psychology on the legacy that colonialism has left on the identities and subjectivities of those targeted by prejudice, and who are framed as ‘other’. Flam (2010) similarly argued that endemic experiences of being silenced or made to feel inferior by a dominant other can lead one to develop an internal voice that internalises the gaze of the other upon oneself, constraining one from developing one’s own voice. Her work both critiqued and extended perspectives developed by Archer (2007) in order to consider how the structural settings that agents find themselves in constrain and enable action. Agency is specifically understood here to comprise a process by which individuals articulate concerns, pursue specific projects and establish practices in order to realise those concerns. For Archer (2007, 4) this process is driven by reflexivity, understood as the ‘the regular exercise of mental ability, shared by all normal people, to consider themselves in relation to their (social) contexts and vice versa’. The analysis by Flam (2010), however, demonstrates that experiences of exclusion not only constrain scope for action, but also influence one’s reflexivity. This special issue further explores ways in which both mobilities and immobilities can closely affect the chances of being excluded by others.

 Flam (2010) proposed, nonetheless, that one may seek to develop a rebellious voice in front of a gaze that ‘others’ one. What Flam (2010) termed ‘outlaw emotions’ of shame and indignation over one’s treatment can support an engagement with social movements that work to redress the balance. Exclusion can provide an occasion for corporate agency that challenges relations of domination. Archer (2003) used this term to refer to the process by which agents come together in order to frame and promote mutual interests. It remains the case that individuals and groups can respond in different ways to silencings and exclusions. Responses are possible beyond those that are led by the institution. Rao et al. (2019) argue that diversity amongst teaching staff represents a resource for institutions if they are able to find ways to establish pedagogic values. In this one should not discount the possibility of corporate agency on the part of those who are excluded. It is true that institutions pay close attention to the contraints on pedagogy that they face from national policy or international competition, say, and they will not always be amenable to agendas that do not respond in an obvious fashion to these constraints. However, there is scope to catalyse institutional change in higher education if one is able to establish shared concerns with colleagues in order to support corporate agency, as Lundgren-Resenterra and Kahn (2019) have argued. Such work, though, may be as self-subversive as it is challenging to undertake (Hale, 2014). It is, nonetheless, as much needed in establishing pedagogic values at institutional level as it is in work to address noticeable intersectional patterns of hiring of staff on the part of institutions.

**The mundane cultural basis for lived experience**

Physical or virtual movement around the globe may have become more straightforward in recent years, but the same cannot be said about the pursuit of intercultural relations. Challenges can be expected where concerns, projects and practices of students are pursued in an unfamiliar cultural setting, or where agency crosses over more than one cultural system. Archer (1996) argued that a cultural system is made up of all those things that people are able to know or grasp, with the components of a system able to influence socio-cultural structures and interactions. Significant uncertainties result when one is expected to act as an agent in a novel cultural setting, given the additional demands that are placed on one’s reflexivity. In the case of internationalised higher education, the cultural systems entailed take in different languages and national cultures. Furthermore, the knowledge associated with different academic fields can be formulated in various ways, while given features of a body of knowledge may receive differing levels of emphasis as the setting varies. Knowledge communication practices vary from one context to another across the world. Academic culture can thus differ significantly from one locality, institution and/or department to another. The complexity entailed in the cultural systems associated with higher education does mean that it is important to avoid collective stereotyping, as Harrison (2015) has argued.

If it is true that every single student is faced with the prospect of acting as an agent in relation to a body of knowledge that is unfamiliar to them (Kahn, 2014), then the uncertainties entailed in action on the part of a student are multiplied when additional unknowns or ‘unfamiliars’ are included. On the one hand, there may be a tendency for those teaching to take into account unfamiliars that are well known to them (such as those that pertain to mastering the immediate body of knowledge at hand), and to ignore what one might call unfamiliar unfamiliars, which might include the challenges posed for students by a novel cultural setting. On the other hand, a range of strategies may help students to act as agents in the presence of uncertainty. Urry (2007) has pointed to the importance of network capital, which refers to the capacity to sustain networks of social relations with those from whom one is physically distant. Network capital, however, is as much needed in the face of differences in the cultural systems with which students are familiar as it is important in relation to physical distance. Given that social relations can play a key role in dealing with uncertainty (Donati and Archer 2015), it is not surprising that some institutions have sought to develop social relations between students coming from different national cultures (Leask 2009), but a wider perspective is nonetheless needed. If students are to be prepared to exercise agency, then it is essential to tackle this as an integral aspect of educational programmes.

Various articles in this special issue address this territory, in addition to the article by Lomer and Anthony-Okeke (2019) that has already been introduced. Johansen and Tkachenko (2019) argues that it is helpful to see university classrooms through the lens of the theories of both cultures of learning and small cultures. According to Cortazzi and Jin (2013), a culture of learning is constituted by the attitudes, expectations and values that students and teachers bring to their teaching and learning. A small culture, meanwhile, is present wherever cohesive behaviour exists in a localised social group. This notion of a small culture specifically offers a way to avoid stereotyping on the basis of national or ethnic considerations (Holliday 1999). It prioritises mundane lived experience, whether this concerns norms for where and when one eats and drinks, or how a student addresses a teacher. Johansen and Tkachenko (2019) argue, furthermore, that combining the concepts of both small cultures and cultures of learning offers an opportunity to explore the dynamics of intercultural spaces within higher education classrooms in ways that open up the knowledge communication practices entailed to scrutiny. More specifically, Johansen and Tkachenkoexplore the practices and norms in evidence on a joint masters course in intercultural communication within educational settings. The authors conclude that it is possible to establish new localised cultures of learning in internationalised classrooms, although they suggest that high levels of reciprocity between all those involved are needed for equal levels of power distribution.

The next article, Bond (2019), meanwhile, explores ways in which the agency of a group of international taught post-graduate students who were primarily from China and Saudi Arabia was affected when studying in the UK. Kim (2009) argued that the movement of academic staff and students across national boundaries is determined by market considerations. She suggested that this movement is undertaken in ways that neglect interculturality, but that a consideration of interculturality is important if students and staff and are to exercise agency. In exploring what is entailed in students accessing the taught and hidden curriculum within a given intercultural setting, Bond argues that mobility has an immediate impact in that time is needed to adjust to a new academic and social culture. Her research points to the challenges of exercising agency within unfamiliar settings, as one absorbs new assumptions about the nature of knowledge. As a result Bond suggests that there is value in teaching international students (a term that is itself problematised within the study) to develop narratives of self-representation in order to support their agency. Such teaching could, indeed, include attention to when a country, language or culture could reasonably be conceived as ‘one’s own' – or to when one is able to consider oneself to be a member of an academic discipline. After all, even young school pupils are able to develop identities as scientists (Reveles, Cordova, and Kelly 2004). Narratives of self-representation, furthermore, were seen to affect the extent to which students were willing to develop network capital that addressed (academic) cultural distance.

The body of knowledge that is studied, the curriculum, is also an integral aspect of the cultural system entailed in higher education. Neoliberalism privileges Western perspectives in higher education curricula, as Gyamera and Burke (2018) have demonstrated, for instance, in relation to African higher education. They linked the pursuit of success in global institutional rankings to a marginalisation of Indigenous knowledges and to new forms of colonisation. Larsen (2016), however, has noted: “The fact that Indigenous knowledge is considered local, while European or Western knowledge as global is reflective of Othering discourses embedded in colonizing processes and thus deeply problematic.” Kahn (2014), meanwhile, argued that the pursuit of a project by an agent who is a student entails extensive commitment on their part – so that the relevance of a curriculum to one’s own history and aspirations is closely related to student engagement. One can ask to what extent a curriculum allows students to pursue projects that matter to them, or realistically supports the development of new commitments on their part. Indeed, the investigation undertaken by Lomer and Anthony-Okeke (2019) gives a central role in curriculum design to basing assessment around the students’ own interests. If insufficient attention is afforded to student agency, then students may well become alienated in the sense that their capacity to participate is restricted (Mann 2001). While it may be possible as a migrant to a certain extent to avoid engagement with a given national culture, it is typically difficult for a student to avoid engagement with the academic culture that frames their studies.

**Educational mobilities and perverse privilege**

Misiaszek (2018), in this study on China, employed the term ‘perverse privilege’ to refer to the way in which privileges can be accompanied by distressing challenges. In such cases the privilege itself is only realised if one is able to deal effectively with the adversities that are entailed. There is a way, indeed, in which some level of disquiet is an integral aspect of what is entailed in learning (Berlak 2004). Perversities may be present, indeed, as an integral aspect of one’s experience of internationalised higher education. It may be the case that the mobility has been chosen against one’s own will, or out of necessity due to intersectional micro and macro social, political, economic, gender, religious influences. A move beyond one’s natal country may have been chosen in order to avoid poor academic working conditions (Kenway and Fahey 2011). An academic may be perceived as having a deficit because of needing to leave a place of origin, not good enough to find a job in a competitive home setting. In this issue, Blanco and Saunders (2019) considers how the mobility of academic staff is not privileged in any straightforward fashion, highlighting how experiences of time-space compression accentuate differences, whether in relation to national identity, race, sexual orientation or religion. The study itself is based on a collaborative authoethnographic analysis of lived experience of work as short-term foreign experts at a Chinese Normal University. The authors experienced the novel constraints on their agency as teachers to be as much an occasion for anxiety as a source of privilege. They experienced a genuine discomfort in their teaching. This was seen to stem from an inability to communicate in Chinese, and from a limited understanding of the cultural and academic setting within which they taught. The authors suggest that mobility possesses an educative potential in relation to their capacity to teach, with mobility thereby experienced as a peverse privilege.

It is also the case that distress can be experienced when mobility occasions encounters with inequity, as Henderson (2019) demonstrates in this special issue. This study takes an autoethnographic approach in looking at two schemes funded by a UK research funding body that facilitated short-term doctoral mobility. The study uses a critical academic mobilities approach to explore the subjective experience of doctoral students as mobile subjects, recognising that these experiences are structurally influenced. Short-term doctoral mobility schemes can have a significant impact on the development of early career researchers. Experience of such a scheme typically leads to the accrual of transnational academic capital, such as transnational networks and the capacity to engage in alternative modes of thinking. Fahey and Kenway (2010), indeed, argued that transnational mobility has become a key means by which academics acquire recognition from others. Short-term doctoral mobility schemes are thus often positioned as occasions of privilege for those doctoral researchers able to gain access to them, opening up a range of career benefits. Henderson (2019), however, identifies ways in which the mobility imperative that underlies these schemes can result in exclusionary reproductions. She further demonstrates how experience of a short-term doctoral mobility scheme can provide occasions for those involved to undermine cultural stereotypes, and to stimulate decolonisation and democratisation of knowledge production.

Furthermore, mobility can give rise to vulnerabilities. Sherry et al (2010) pointed to a range of difficulties that international students experience, including those relate to language, culture, finance, exclusion from social life, unhappiness at being away from home and exploitation. Other vulnerabilities may be relevant when one is studying on a fully online basis, including those that pertain to a disruption of embodied performance (Misiaszek 2017). Ecclestone and Goodley (2016), however, contended that use of the term ‘vulnerability’ to refer to commonplace educational experiences can cut in different directions. They recognised that identification of vulnerabilities can catalyse work for more socially just policies, but suggested also that those with vulnerabilities can be marginalised and pathologised as a result of the identification. Larsen (2016), indeed, has highlighted ways in which identifying someone as vulnerable can serve to glorify the agency of privileged liberal humanists who take responsibility for those on the margins. Bamemberger, Morris and Yimini (2019) argued that “humanitarian ideals coupled with neoliberal categories normalise inequalities”. Well informed responses are required rather than simply well-intentioned ones, something that Henderson (2019) takes into account in the way that she questions the positioning of mobility as a universal good. Ecclestone and Goodley (2016) suggested that identification of a vulnerability should primarily constitute a trigger for establishing connections between people, rather than an occasion for a therapeutic process. While support services may well be needed, staffed by those who have a nuanced understanding of the realities faced by those who are mobile, connections between people are critical. A relational approach is essential if one wants to avoid the tendency by which international students find themselves constructed as infantilised, with their agency potentially constrained as a result.

**Collectivities as teachers and learners**

The large majority of universities are linked to specific localities through their titles, with universities offering programmes at a distance and religious foundations constituting the main exceptions to this. And yet there are ways in which institutions themselves, and not simply programmes, have become increasingly mobile in recent years, whether through the introduction of branch campuses, jointly-managed institutions, flying faculty, hubs for student recruitment and so on (Ullberg 2015). The basis on which institutions are established, though, closely affects the teaching and learning that occurs within them, a consideration that has received relatively little attention in the research literature. Apple (2013) explored how the manner in which educational institutions are established closely influences the way in which collective identities are both created and re-created. These collective identities can both support emancipatory projects or foster new inequities. For instance, an institutional agenda can promote new forms of colonialism on top of existing colonialisms, as might occur when, say, an South-East Asian institution employs white, Northern scholars to teach the Humanities in English to African students on a branch campus in ways that neglect African discourses; shaping the collective identities of these students.

Universities themselves, though, are evidently not the only collectivities involved in internationalised higher education, with this term ‘collectivity’ used to refer to both small and large-scale collective entities that are constituted by people (Ackroyd 2002). The article by Collins (2019) in this special issue considers a study abroad programme set in Northern Thailand in which students are hosted by local communities, so that the students can learn from those communities. She points to an absence of scholarship on the experience of those from within the host community, asking what a study abroad programme might mean for the community that receives students. The impact of the programme on the community itself should be considered as much as the impact on the programme on learners. The study observes that third-party providers are often the default partner when institutions seek to offer such short-term learning opportunities to students. What is evident is that educational organisations themselves often only become mobile through a reliance on third-party capital (Levy 2006). Collins argues, though, that pedagogy suffers if institutional mobility is driven primarily by economic considerations. And yet the lived experience of students, staff and hosts would suggest that creating space for the community voice to be heard equally offers a mean to empower students in their learning. Giroux (2011) has advanced a similar perspective, arguing that the capacity of universities to foster critical inquiry and social justice is diminished when other values take hold of institutional life, whether related to commercialisation, corporatisation, commodification or so on. He contended that it is important to care for the institutional conditions that sustain the pedagogies that advance public interests. He highlighted, for instance, the importance of collegiality amongst faculty as an essential element in preserving public institutions. What is needed is to develop awareness of the nature of these institutional conditions, through ‘a language of resistance and possibility’. Kahn and Walsh (2019) argued that universities are characterised by institutional logics (Thornton, Ocasio, and Lounsbury 2012), in which a common set of norms drives the way in which staff operate. There is work to be done helping to ensure that such mindsets are shaped by collegiality and social justice, rather than, say, by commercial gain and prestige. It is important to realise in all of this that teaching is carried out as much by collectivities as it is by individuals, a perspective that also shapes the conclusions of Rao, Mace, Hosein and Kinchin (2019).

And yet if it is the case that teaching is itself established on a collective basis, then it is equally the case that collectivities are caught up in learning. The final study in this issue by Pitt and Moss (2019) investigates the lives of international students and their family members. It employed a diffractive visual methodology based on work by Barad (2007) to explore the experience of women who moved from Iran to Australia, taking us beyond a consideration of the mobilities of individualised self-sufficient student subjects. The new material feminist approach that they adopted enabled them to consider how international students are affected by a variety of entangled movements. International students are seen to maintain relations with their country of origin, relations that may entail caring responsibilities on their part. These perspectives are seen to have implications for the way in which higher education experiences for international students are designed. It is widely acknowledged that learning contains a shared dimension, as evident when students learn together (Järvelä, Järvenoja, and Veermans 2008). However, the role played by collectivities in student learning is rarely acknowledged. It is a reductive move to focus exclusively on individual students in teaching and learning, and yet one that dominates the field of teaching in higher education.

**Conclusions**

Larsen (2016) argued that much of the literature on transnational mobility of students frames student mobility in terms of self-interested attempts to maximise economic returns to the individual student; with staff and institutional mobility similarly seen in terms of success within a market. An understanding of agency in the mundane lived experienced of internationalised higher education, however, has scope to take teaching and institutions along paths that are more fully inclusive and equitable. A focus on mundane experience would suggest that a consideration of the entanglements of mobilities and immobilities is essential within research into internationalised education, as different streams merge together to establish an entangled state (Barad 2007). A focus on mundane lived experience suggests that faculty and student experiences are entangled in ways that stem beyond the standard binaries that are employed. This special issue has provided an occasion to consider some of the terms that are so often taken for granted in conversations and research and educational mobilities and internationalised higher education. As we know from Global South critiques of Western and Northern development (see, for example, de Sousa Santos (2012)), sometimes ‘slow and not that different from where we started from’ might not be so bad, depending on what ‘progress’ means and where we are moving or being moved ‘to’/ ‘from’/ ‘through’ on this quest to internationalise. Related to this, higher education has a responsibility to incorporate ecopedagogical literacy that questions the impact of these mobilities on the planet (Misiaszek 2018).

Marginson and Sawir (2011) have suggested it is important to see the international student as a strong agent who is able to shape the course of his or her life. However, it remains that case that to focus on agency alone, without attending to the structural influences on that agency, including those that pertain to reflexivity, is to undercut the possibilities for emancipation. The articles within this special issue demonstrate that agency is closely affected by structural considerations that include those related to exclusion, privilege, vulnerabilty, neocolonisation, othering and collective identity. Institutions and faculty have work to do in understanding the intersectional identities of their students. This is a structural issue that requires great sensitivity to avoid positioning the faculty member or the student in a deficit position. Burke (2013) argued that who is in the classroom and how they make sense of others in the classroom directly affects the ways in which pedagogies are raced, classed, and gendered. What is needed is an identity that closely depends on one’s position as an educator or as a learner­­—departing from, but not restricted by, one’s own intersectional position. Shared understanding of these challenges is important if a basis for transformative agency is to be developed across the sector (Haapasaari, Engeström, and Kerosuo 2016).

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