Introduction

The number of international students has grown considerably in the early 21st century. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), in 2000 the global number of students enrolled in tertiary education outside their country of citizenship was two million; by 2012 that had increased to four and a half million, representing an average annual growth of almost 7 percent. Among all groups of migrants—including labor migrants, family migrants, and refugees—international students are the fastest-growing group. International students are generally defined as having left their country of origin and moved to another country for the purpose of study, and are usually divided into two groups: those who move abroad to complete a degree (degree mobility), and those who move for a short-term study exchange (credit mobility). The multifaceted question of why students move abroad has been of considerable interest to researchers in recent years, and three main reasons have been advanced in order to answer this question. For a start, universities in many countries take an entrepreneurial approach to higher education, and several use global strategies to attract international students in the interest of increasing revenue. This phenomenon is known as the globalization of international education. Secondly, several governments view international students as valuable future skilled migrants and devise measures encouraging them to remain after completion of their studies. Finally, students and their families recognize the labor-market value of obtaining foreign qualifications. Unfortunately, despite their importance as a distinct migrant population, and also in terms of the topic’s potential for enriching our understanding of contemporary forms of mobility, there has been relatively little research on international student mobility (ISM) in comparison to other forms of migration. The decision by an individual to move abroad for the purpose of acquiring international education has traditionally been explained from the perspective of human capital theory. According to this perspective, an individual will choose to migrate if (and only if) this means acquiring an experience or diploma (=human capital) that will improve future earnings. This rather simplistic cost-benefit model has recently been challenged by new theories. The literature on international student migration is multidisciplinary, incorporating notions of geography, sociology, higher education, migration studies, and international law. This article offers a foundation for gaining a comprehensive understanding of ISM and identifying research gaps. It proposes classifying the scientific literature according to six main questions: (1) How to theorize ISM? (2) What are the directions and patterns of student flows? (3) What are the students’ reasons for moving, and what are their subsequent experiences abroad? (4) What are the regulations, policies, and strategies of supranational bodies, national governments, and universities regarding ISM? (5) What are the outcomes and effects of ISM? (6) What are the students’ plans for future mobility, and what are their experiences upon return?
Theorizing ISM

Efforts at providing a solid empirical foundation to understand international student mobility (ISM) have increased in recent years. However, efforts to theorize are less abundant. The papers presented in this section propose a set of explanatory theories. Major recent theoretical advances include adopting a more contextual approach as well as acknowledging the role of university policies and government on student mobility. Four main theories have been advanced: (1) Findlay 2010 brings supply and demand-side theories together, thus explaining student mobility as a complex interplay between the financial interests of higher education institutions in the United Kingdom and the motivations and actions of international students and their families; (2) Findlay 2010 and Findlay, et al. 2012 put forward class reproduction approaches by arguing that student mobility should be understood as part of a broader process of transnational class reproduction; (3) Raghuram 2013; King and Raghuram 2013; and Madge, et al. 2014 suggest global knowledge theory to understand international students not simply as individuals moving between physical locations, but as key agents in transforming and constituting new global spaces of academic knowledge; and (4) Murphy-Lejeune 2002 suggests that international students be understood as a new migratory elite. The majority of theories pertaining to student mobility have been formulated by British scholars focused on the United Kingdom. Since there exists a long history of international student migration to other countries, the next step is to expand this geographical scope and examine the empirical validity of theories outside the United Kingdom, leading to a more robust and differentiated understanding of international student mobility.


Understanding student mobility as knowledge migration, Findlay argues for examining the contexts of decision making, and questions the adequacy of previous theorizations of international student mobility. Widening the cost-benefit/economic perspective, the author argues that researchers need to give more attention to “demand-side” theories that examine the choice of students to move abroad to improve their cultural capital, and “supply-side” theories that investigate the financial interests of academic institutions to attract international students.


Analyzing a questionnaire survey and interviews with international UK students, this article shows that class reproduces itself through international study: students from private schools are more likely to gain access to international universities and to accrue social and cultural capital during the experience. Furthermore, analysis of international students should integrate broader life-course aspirations. Finally, the “reputations” of educational destinations are structured by individuals, universities, and states.


King and Raghuram highlight the tensions and contradictions inherent in viewing international students as both “desired” (fulfilling the needs of a highly skilled labor market) and “unwanted” (due to the politics of migration control). Future research needs to produce greater theoretical insight, more in-depth ethnographic research,
further quantitative research, more attention to gender and race, and stronger attention to links between student mobility and how scientific knowledge is produced.


Argues two main reasons for a shift in conceptual focus from international student to international study. First, given the great diversity of international students, it is timely to problematize “the international student” as a singular category. Second, it is necessary to widen the focus of international students as simple maximizers of financial and human capital in order to acknowledge that they also produce academic knowledge.


Bringing together case studies and theory, Murphy-Lejeune produces the first in-depth qualitative study of student migration within Europe. Drawing on the theory of “the stranger” as a sociological type, the author suggests that the travelling European students can be seen as a new migratory elite. The book presents the narratives of travelling students; explains their motivations, the effects of movement into a new social and cultural context and, the problems of adaptation; and describes the construction of social networks and the process of adaptation to new cultures.


Raghuram views student migration as a key component of knowledge migration, arguing that student migrants are also involved in labor and family migration, and it raises the question of what distinguishes student migrants. The paper reviews theories of student mobility and suggests extending the dominant scope from primarily analyzing the spatialities of migration to examining how students become agents in configuring the constitution, power, and sustainability of academic knowledge.

**Directions and Patterns of Student Flows**

This group of studies either analyzes existing statistical data sets or produces new statistics on the changing flows of international students. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2014 (OECD) is the main source of annual statistical data on international student migration. Bhandari and Blumenthal 2011 examine national trends in international student mobility in origin and destination countries. Gürzü 2011 examines the evolution of international students’ mobility over time. Teichler, et al. 2011 and Wächter 2014 focus on student flows to Europe; Ruiz 2014 examines the location preferences of international students in the United States; and Kritz 2015 examines student outflows in Africa. Most studies focus on student mobility within and into countries of the Global North. Studies on mobility within and into countries of the Global South are scarce. There is also a great need for statistics and comparative analyses that differentiate student mobility by gender, country of origin, discipline of study, and specific migration trajectories.

Examines national trends in international student mobility in origin and destination countries including Africa, China, India, Latin America, Australia, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States. They also examine policies toward international students in Canada and Australia as well as the rationales and strategies of regional education hubs in the Middle East, a recent development in cross-border higher education.


Gürüz surveys the literature in order to understand how the mobility of students has evolved over time, and also the reasons for the recent expansion in the numbers of international students. The rationales of students and their families are explored, as well as the rationales of the governments of their countries of origin, and the institutions and countries of destination.


Kritz examines why African countries have larger student outflows than other global regions, drawing data from the annual international student survey conducted by UNESCO in collaboration with the OECD and Eurostat. Three indicators are analyzed: total number of tertiary students abroad, tertiary gross outbound enrolment ratio, and outbound mobility of enrolled students. The hypothesis is confirmed that African students go abroad because tertiary-training capacity is limited at home.


The OECD is the main source of annual statistical data on student migration, including who studies where and in which fields. Its 2014 report highlights that in 2012 Australia, Austria, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom had the highest proportion of international students as a percentage of the total number of students in tertiary education. Students from China, India, Korea, and other Asian countries represent 53 percent of foreign students worldwide.


A new database on foreign student visa approvals in the United States is used to analyze a recent increase in international students, finding that students are concentrated in metropolitan areas, come from fast-growing cities in emerging markets, and that 45 percent of graduates extend their visas to work in the same metropolitan area of their studies, highlighting the relationship between student migration and the economic dynamics of the host region.

Teichler, Ulrich, Irina Ferencz, Bernd Wächter, Laura Rumbley, and Sandra Bürger. *Mapping Mobility in*
Three main topics are addressed. First, the historical development of the international mobility of students into, out of, and inside of the “Europe 32” region (European Union, European Free Trade Association, and Turkey) is analyzed using 2006–2007 UNESCO, OECD, and Eurostat data. Second, a comparative overview of credit mobility developments is provided using Erasmus data. Third, it critically analyzes methodological strengths and weaknesses of international student mobility data collections.

Using UOE data (UNESCO, OECD, Eurostat) from 2006 to 2007—the most recent complete set of clean and comparable data—presents the current picture of credit and degree mobility into, out of, and between thirty-two European countries (EU-27, EFTA-4, and Turkey). He argues that there is not one single “mobility,” but rather different types of “mobilities.”

Studies that examine the different reasons motivating students to move abroad for higher education degrees, and make inquiries into their experiences, are the most numerous. Four orientations can be identified. A first set of studies (Beine, et al. 2014; Bessey 2012; Choudaha and de Wit 2014; Perkins and Neumayer 2014; Rodríguez González, et al. 2011; and van Mol and Timmerman 2014—all cited under Determinants of Student Mobility), based on ex post surveys, use statistical approaches to examine the determinants of student mobility. A second set (Abuosi and Abor 2015; Efionayi and Piguet 2014; Dako-Gyeke 2015; King, et al. 2011; Pungas, et al. 2015; and Sykes and Chaomh 2012—all cited under Migration Intentions) examines the migration intentions of students who have not yet migrated and the staying desires of those who have migrated. A third set (Brooks and Waters 2010; Brooks and Waters 2011a; Brooks and Waters 2011b; Carlson 2013; Garneau and Mazza 2013; Holloway, et al. 2012; Nogueira and Ramos 2014; Prazeres 2013; and Waters, et al. 2011—all cited under Becoming Internationally Mobile) examines the process of how students become internationally mobile. Finally, a fourth set (Chiang 2014; Collins 2012; Daniel 2014; Guissé and Bolzman 2015; Gunawardena and Wilson 2012; Khan, et al. 2015; Leung and Waters 2013; van Mol 2013; van Mol 2014; Vázquez, et al. 2014; and Waters and Leung 2013—all cited under Experiences Abroad and Transnational Lives) investigates the students’ experiences abroad and how “transnational lives” emerge. With rare exceptions (Pungas, et al. 2015 examines ethnic differences in reasons for studying abroad), few studies attempt to examine how gender relations and socially constructed gender identities, as well as ethnicity and class, influence the decision to move, where to move, and characteristics of student trajectories. Studies focusing on student strategies of mobility across transnational space are also rare. Finally, few studies examine the sociospatial dimensions of students’ educational and posteducational trajectories.

Determinants of Student Mobility

Beine, et al. 2014; Bessey 2012; Choudaha and de Wit 2014; Perkins and Neumayer 2014; Rodríguez González, et al. 2011; and van Mol and Timmerman 2014 use statistical approaches to identify a variety of
determinants of student mobility: network effects, cost of living, geographical proximity, future income, the reported quality of universities, colonial ties, common language, desire to learn a new language, better climates, and the educational background of the students’ families. Moreover, Perkins and Neumayer 2014 highlight that despite significant contextual differences across countries, the determinants of international students outflows and inflows are similar. At the same time, variations do exist between “developed” and “developing” countries. In particular, while domestic university quality does not have a statistically significant effect on the numbers of outgoing students for developed countries, it is positively correlated with student outflows for developing countries.


Analyzes the determinants of location choice for international students. Using new data capturing student populations in thirteen Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, the authors find support for a significant network effect, cost factors such as housing prices, and attractiveness variables such as the reported quality of universities. In contrast, university fees do not seem to play a main role.


Bessey uses a gravity model approach to examine the determinants of international student migration to Germany. Data on student inflows stem from “Cosmopolitan Science,” a joint venture of the German Academic Exchange Service and the Higher Education Information System that collects data on “educational foreigners.” The results highlight that, despite the widespread idea of unlimited student mobility, geographical proximity still plays a central role, as students from distant destinations remain a minority.


Using OECD data and a review of relevant literature, Choudaha and de Witt examine how and why patterns of international student mobility have changed in the early 21st century. It compares mobility patterns in key source countries (China, India, Korea) and key destination countries (United States, United Kingdom, Australia). It also examines multiple factors that influence the mobility of different types of students. Finally, future directions of student mobility are discussed.


Perkins and Neumayer use the human capital approach to examine variations in the motivations of students for studying abroad. The findings, based on a statistical analysis of a large sample of country pairs, call into question the importance commonly ascribed to universities as a “pull” factor. Far more influential is future income, colonial ties, common language, and preexisting migrant stocks. Important differences exist in the determinants of international student mobility between “developed” and “developing” countries.

Analyzes the determinants of Erasmus student mobility using a panel data set of bilateral flows for all participating countries. Differences in the cost of living and geographical distance are relevant to explain student flows. There is also a positive relationship between student mobility and the educational background of the families. Other students’ behavior, willingness to learn a foreign language, and better climates are further factors.


Van Mol and Timmerman investigate the determinants of intra-European student mobility in Austria, Belgium, Italy, Norway, Poland, and the United Kingdom. Results are based on an online survey (n=5654) and in-depth interviews and focus groups with nonmobile as well as ex-mobile students (n=71). The results show that mobility decisions are socially and biographically embedded and that macroeconomic context also plays a role in decisions to move abroad.

**Migration Intentions**

Intentions are a strong predictor of actual moves. A first set of studies uses quantitative and qualitative methods; the authors included in this section examine the migration intentions of high school or university students in Africa and Europe. African students (Ghana, Senegal, Ivory Coast, Niger) intend to leave their native countries for reasons of better employment opportunities, better salaries, an improved standard of living, established networks, career progression, better education for children, a higher educational level, and lacking confidence in the future of their native country (Abuosi and Abor 2015, Efionayi and Piguet 2014, Dako-Gyeke 2015). In contrast, the main motivations for English students to leave are quality of university and a desire for adventure. In Estonia, ethnic minorities are shown more willing to study abroad, “the reasons behind this possibly not feeling like at home in Estonia (‘exit strategy’) and the attraction of foreign education (‘academic achievement mobility’)” (Pungas, et al. 2015; p. 2387). A second set of studies examines the staying intentions of international university students. Focusing on five EU countries (France, Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom), Sykes and Chaoimh 2012 highlights that reasons to stay include employment opportunities and gaining international work experience, whereas family considerations are the mean reason to leave after graduation. In the same vein, Geddie 2013 examines the staying intentions of international students in London and Toronto, and finds that relationship considerations intermingle with more materialistic settlement considerations. The study by Altberts and Hazen 2005 concludes that professional factors encourage international students to stay in the United States, while societal and personal factors draw them back to their home countries. Finally, Bijwaard and Wang 2013 shows that employment after graduation induces foreign students to stay and unemployment induces them to leave, whereas forming a family in the Netherlands induces them to stay.


Abuosi and Abor examine the migration intentions of nursing students in Ghana. Data was obtained through
structured questionnaires for students in three nursing schools. Using logistic regression analysis, the authors show that salary differentials remain important determinants of nurse migration. Moreover, established networks, career progression, and securing better education for children are also prominent factors of nurse migration.


Using focus group interviews, Altberts and Hazen investigate factors motivating students to stay in the United States or return home after graduation. Three categories of motivating factors are identified: professional, societal, and personal. In most cases, professional factors encourage the students to stay in the United States, while societal and personal factors draw them back to their home countries, although wide variations exist among students according to specific home country situations.


Bijwaard and Wang use administrative micropanel data to empirically examine the return of recent foreign students in the Netherlands. The results reveal that labor market and marriage formation experiences of these students in the Netherlands impact their decision to leave. Specifically, employment induces students to stay and unemployment induces them to leave, whereas forming a family in the Netherlands induces them to stay.


Dako-Gyeke studies the out-migration intentions of thirty-four final-year undergraduate and graduate university students (sixteen men and eighteen women) in Ghana. Each person participated in one of four digitally recorded focus group discussions. The results show that most participants intend to leave Ghana. Improved standard of living, employment opportunities, and the prospects for further education determine their migration intentions.


Efionayi and Piguet address the migration intentions of African students by examining plans for international migration expressed by university students from Senegal, Ivory Coast, and Niger. Based on 4000 questionnaires and fifty semistructured interviews, some main motivating factors are identified: family networks, a higher educational level, and a lack of confidence in the future of their native country. These results confirm that the theoretical framework of human capital needs to be broadened.


Geddie underlines that many governments have implemented strategic regulatory changes to encourage foreign
(post)graduate students in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics to remain after their studies. Drawing on in-depth interviews with foreign students in London and Toronto, the author shows that “relationship considerations” such as care for ageing parents, managing dual careers, future childcare, and work-life balance concerns are tightly intermingled with more materialistic settlement considerations.


Applying a questionnaire survey of fourteen hundred final-year students in England, this article examines migration intentions and motivations to study abroad. Quality of university and desire for adventure are the most important motivations. Decisions to study abroad are positively correlated with academic performance, prior experience abroad, parental wealth, and social class. Studying abroad creates an “elite within an elite.”


Conducting a representative survey of high school graduates in Estonia, this paper examines ethnic differences in reasons for studying abroad. The results of multilevel binary regression analysis show that there exist significant ethnic differences despite controlling for individual characteristics, including various forms of capital and personality traits. Members of minority populations are more willing to leave than members of the majority population. Differences disappear once controlling for the study language of the school.


Sykes examines the postgraduation migration plans of international master’s and PhD students in five EU countries (France, Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom). The results of the large-scale survey of over 6,200 international students at twenty-five universities show that almost two-thirds of the respondents want to stay after their studies conclude. Reasons include employment opportunities and gaining international work experience. Family reasons motivate those who plan to leave after graduation.

Becoming Internationally Mobile

Using qualitative methods, authors in this section examine the processes by which students become internationally mobile. A variety of interpretative perspectives are proposed. For a start, and in line with former results, Brooks and Waters 2010 and Brooks and Waters 2011a focus on British students to highlight the social embeddedness of international student mobility (ISM). Still focusing on British students, and in line with emotional approaches, Waters, et al. 2011 uncovers notions of fun, enjoyment, and the pursuit of happiness as important motivators to study abroad. Holloway, et al. 2012 uses an intersectional perspective to argue that reasons for students from Kazakhstan to study in the United Kingdom include class reproduction, gender, sexuality, and religion. Brooks and Waters 2011b proposes that ISM is significantly affected by education,
immigration, and employment policies. Garneau and Mazzella 2013 goes further to see ISM as an interplay of institutional policies and students’ agency. Using a processual perspective, Carlson 2013 sees study abroad not as the result of a one-time choice, but as the outcome of long-term biographical processes. Finally, Nogueira and Ramos 2014 pleads for more attention to South-South mobilities and Prazeres 2013 for North-South mobilities.


Based on an analysis of mobility narratives of eighty-five UK citizens who moved overseas for higher education, Brooks and Waters conclude that decisions about whether to move do not merely depend on the individual, but are strongly embedded within social relationships with family, friends, and partners. The paper points to the socially reproductive nature of such ties and discusses their implications for the development of “mobility capital.”


Brooks and Waters examine the influence of short-term economic calculations on the decision of young adults to study abroad and their funding sources. Results show that those who move abroad for an undergraduate degree tend to be from higher-income families than those who move for postgraduate studies, and are thus less sensitive to university fee differentials. Both groups, however, were able to draw on previous experiences of family.


This book develops a comparative understanding of the motivations and experiences of students who choose to study abroad. It includes case studies of students from East Asia, Europe, and the United Kingdom, and considers the implications of mobility for higher education policies and future migration research. One conclusion is that international student mobility is significantly affected by education, immigration, and employment policies.


Drawing on narrative biographical interviews with German students abroad, Carlson asks how students become geographically mobile. He finds that study abroad is not the result of a one-time choice, but rather the outcome of long-term biographical processes. Student mobility is also a result of students reacting to their social embeddedness: for some, going abroad is part of a distancing process; for others, it’s a way of joining in.


Garneau and Mazzella gather contributors for this special issue that underscore the plurality of logics that configure South-North mobility: government policies of the origin and destination countries, the institutions of
cooperation agreements, the scientific community itself, and the individual and her or his family. They also underscore the variability of the students’ sociodemographic characteristics, the diversity of study paths, and the plurality of strategies of migration and employment.


Focusing on students from Kazakhstan living in the United Kingdom, Holloway et al. conclude that a key driver of mobility is the desire to obtain foreign qualifications that make them stand out from others in their native labor market, thus maintaining middle-class status. It suggests that understanding class reproduction in student mobility implies examining intersections with other categories of social difference such as gender, sexuality, and religion.


Nogueira and Ramos examine the six-month study-abroad program ESCALA, created in 2000 for students of twenty-eight public universities from Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay. Results show a growth in the number of participants over the years, a majority of female students, and the preference for Argentina and Brazil as destination countries. Latin American countries are less desirable, while universities in countries of the North remain preferred destinations.


Prazeres reviews and discusses the literature on intranational and international student mobility. She criticizes the literature’s current focus on mobilities within—and to—the West, claiming that there is an absence of research on mobilities from the North to the Global South. She further suggests exploring the impact of place and mobility on students’ personal, national, and global identities.


Finds that notions of fun, enjoyment, and the pursuit of happiness are important motivators for UK students to study abroad. Several students wanted to leave the particular rigidity of British higher education, and others saw education overseas as a chance for personal reinvention. These kinds of motivations work alongside more strategic objectives, such as the accumulation of cultural capital.

**Experiences Abroad and Transnational Lives**

Understanding the experiences of students abroad gives insight into possible future mobilities as well as the adequacy of education, immigration, and employment policies. A first set of studies addresses the question of
how the culture of host countries affects the experiences of international students (Chiang 2014, Gunawardena and Wilson 2012). A second set examines the strategies that students devise to live in a foreign country (Collins 2012, Daniel 2014). A third set reveals the challenges that international students face during their studies as well as in career progression (Guissé and Bolzman 2015; Khan, et al. 2015; Leung and Waters 2013). Finally, van Mol 2013 and van Mol 2014 examine the effects of European student mobility programs on the European identity of students.


China has become a prominent destination for international students. Drawing upon reports of sixty international students in China, Chiang examines how they perceive and experience Chinese culture. Results show that although China has had an open-door policy since the late 20th century, its sociocultural practices are still mostly unfathomable to international students. It seems imperative for Chinese universities to incorporate intercultural understanding into the curricula of international education.


Collins examines intersections between the transnational connections of South Korean students within their own country and their daily encounters in the urban spaces of Auckland, New Zealand. It shows that students meet at places that offer familiar elements. Thus, Starbucks coffee shops are favored because of their international homogeneity. Pragmatic factors also play a role: Internet cafes that use written and spoken Korean are preferred.


Based on ethnographic work conducted in 2011 and 2012 in Rio de Janeiro, Daniel analyzes the networks established by Peruvian students in Brazil. Students use the resources available in their networks to help newcomers and encourage their fellow citizens remaining in Peru to study in Brazil, which gives them an important role in the student migration chain, both different and complementary to the role played by official institutions.


Guissé and Bolzman use semistructured interviews to examine the living conditions of ninety-six international students (Africa, Latin America) studying at the University of Applied Sciences and Arts of Western Switzerland. Their legal and socioeconomic situation is shown to be precarious. Furthermore, their employability as graduates in Switzerland is constrained by legal barriers, and those returning struggle to find a job matching their qualifications.

Gunawardena and Wilson examine how the culture of host countries affects the experiences of international students, an issue that remained largely unexplored. By examining the experiences of Indian students in the Australian international tertiary education sector, they conclude that the diversity of international students’ cultural backgrounds has not been given enough attention. Tertiary systems need to be more responsive to the needs of students.


Khan et al. examine the reasons for the migration of international medical graduates (IMGs) to the United Kingdom and review the barriers they face in training and career progression. IMGs migrate searching for better medical education, higher income, improved prospects for their families, and general security. They are, however, confronted with psychosocial difficulties, cultural differences, challenging exams, and obstacles in career progression.


The logic behind transnational education is that “institutional capital” (i.e., educational qualifications) can be transferred across space without restrictions, making place unimportant. Drawing on the researched experiences of students and graduates of British degree programs in Hong Kong, Leung and Waters conclude that place is still important because institutional capital does not always travel without friction due to a combination of policy-related, social, cultural, and economic factors.


Van Mol uses a mixed-method approach to examine the effects of European student mobility programs on the European identity of students, including an online survey at nine universities in Austria, Belgium, Italy, Norway, and Poland, and qualitative interviewing at universities in Antwerp, Innsbruck, Oslo, Rome, and Warsaw. Results show that development of a “European identity through student mobility is not self-evident for all European countries, and is subject to regional variation” (p. 219).


Making a distinction between degree mobility (pursuing a complete degree abroad) and credit mobility (limited period of study abroad within an exchange program), van Mol focuses on Erasmus intra-European student mobility. He uses a mixed-method approach to examine who goes abroad, how students reconstruct their social networks, the influence of Erasmus mobility on an increased sense of European identity, and the nexus between student mobility and future migration aspirations.

Drawing on data from semistructured surveys and grade records, Vázquez, Mesa, and López analyze the academic performance and experiences of one hundred Chilean and international students (Latin America, North America, Europe) participating in the International Student Exchange Program at the Universidad de Los Lagos in Southern Chile. Chilean students, mostly low income, placed importance on strengthening their independence and autonomy, whereas international students showed interest in learning from and adapting to another culture.


British universities are the largest provider of “transnational education” in Hong Kong. This paper examines the experiences of Hong Kong students who do not need to travel abroad to earn a British degree. Waters and Leung conclude that it remains difficult for those immobile students to acquire the specific kinds of skills that employers would expect from a British degree, such as English-language proficiency and British cultural capital.

Policies of Supranational Bodies, National Governments, and Universities regarding International Student Mobility

The investigations in this section examine regulations, policies, and strategies put in place on three different scales: by the European Union, by national governments, and by universities—the latter two both in receiving and sending countries—that facilitate or restrict international student mobility. European Union Regulations introduces articles on student mobility and international law. It is striking that legal articles having an international perspective are extremely limited. National Governmental Policies focuses on policies and legal frameworks of national governments regarding international student mobility. Studies with this focus are scarce though important to understand international student mobility. In most countries, legal regulation of student migration is de facto derived from migration policy despite the fact that this sometimes leads to significant contradictions with the policies of tertiary education institutions. The existing studies on national government policies and legal frameworks discuss both the opportunities and challenges introduced. “Closed” policies are legitimized by security issues as well as the fear that foreign students might crowd out natives from graduate programs and ultimately become competitors in the labor market. “Open” policies aim to increase the number of highly skilled workers but also follow the idea that student migration is correlated with entrepreneurship, international trade, and investment. These latter policies raise the issue of whether to interpret this kind of migration as “brain drain” or “brain circulation.” In the context of this highly politicized debate, studies have not focused sufficiently on the extent to which agreements or contradictions may exist between national policies of immigration, the needs of the labor market, or the strategies of tertiary institutions to attract students. Finally, Policies and Strategies of Institutions of Higher Education brings together articles that examine the rationales and strategies of institutions of higher education to attract international students as well as forms of pedagogic responsibility in international student mobility (ISM).
Existing articles focus on the mobility of students within the context of EU exchange programs. Three types of issues are addressed: first, the barriers faced by European students to study abroad (Council of Europe 2015); second, the question of who should cover the costs of their education within the European Union (Davies 2005, Dougan 2005, Jørgensen 2009, Looijestijn-Clearie 2014) and the portability of student loans (Skovgaard-Petersen 2013); and third, the legal rights of Turkish students to study in countries of the European Union (Hoogenboom 2013).


The Council of Europe’s report highlights many obstacles to intra-European student mobility, including a lack of information and financial resources, long bureaucratic procedures, and doubts about the quality of studies abroad. EU member states are urged to ratify the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region, streamline administrative procedures, improve the portability of student loans, improve financial support, and encourage the return of graduates by facilitating access to employment.


Davies examines laws and policy issues related to the practice of charging uniform education fees both to home students and international students from other EU member states. Within the European Union, these fees are subsidized by the national governments of receiving countries. Davies suggests that a better approach might be to place the responsibility of covering student subsidies on the states of origin.


The European Union considers that Erasmus mobility for education and training purposes brings economic, social, and cultural benefits. Yet educational mobility between the EU member states remains relatively low. Using a legal perspective, Dougan examines one of the major barriers to educational movement: Who actually pays for migrant studies?


This study considers the legal rights of extra-EU students. Hoogenboom examines the rights that a Turkish citizen can derive from EU law—in particular the Ankara Agreement acquis—to study in a EU member state. He argues that a progressive interpretation of the applicable legal regime supporting the free movement of students is warranted, as greater student mobility may help the European Union and Turkey realize mutual economic benefits.

Hoogenboom states that since intra-European student movement promotes highly skilled and EU-aware citizens, student mobility should qualify as a public good. This implies centralized intervention by the EU Commission. The author examines the case law of the Court of Justice and investigates whether the accumulated decisions of the court have led to a system whereby a member state is obliged to provide study grants or loans under its domestic system for international students.


Jørgensen further develops the principle of nondiscrimination on the grounds of nationality concerning transnational student mobility. She contends that a member state’s payment demand for educational fees imposed exclusively on foreign students is a discriminatory measure falling within the bounds of the European Community Treaty.


Looijestijn-Clearie questions who should finance the studies of mobile students in the European Union: the home member state or the host member state? She observes an inherent tension between the right to student mobility and the aim of the individual member states to guarantee financial stability of domestic educational systems. Furthermore, she discusses the conditions under which the Netherlands may impose fees on EU students regarding the provision of maintenance grants.


Skovgaard-Petersen indicates that it may be possible to relate to free movement law in order to claim portable financial support from home member states. Furthermore, he argues that denying the right to portable support can be assessed as an unjustified barrier to free movement. He states that it is necessary to reconcile a greater support for student mobility alongside the member state’s interest of limiting financial responsibility.

National Governmental Policies

Studies can be divided into four groups. For a start, Becker and Kolster 2012 takes a descriptive perspective to introduce policies of ISM in eleven recruiting and fifteen recruitment countries. Second, taking a geopolitical point of view, Haugen 2013 interprets China’s active recruitment of African university students as an effort to increase its influence in Africa and generate income from education services. Third, using a critical political economy perspective, Spears 2014 analyzes the value of the Science Without Borders Mobility Program set up by the Brazilian government. Finally, authors critically examine the policies of study-to-work transition developed in Australia (Hawthorne 2012) and Denmark (Mosneaga 2015) as well as the experiences of students with the bureaucratic procedures involved in them getting a work visa (Robertson 2011).

Becker and Kolster describe national policies for international students in eleven recruiting countries (The Netherlands, France, Germany, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Australia, Singapore, Malaysia, and China) and fifteen recruitment countries (Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Russia, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, Vietnam, Argentina, Chile, Colombia, and Egypt). The traditional distinction between recruiting and recruitment countries is unclear since several countries send but also actively recruit foreign students.


Haugen points out that China actively recruits African university students in order to increase its influence in Africa and generate income from education services. Semistructured interviews with African university students nevertheless show that China fails to reach these policy objectives because students are disappointed with the quality of the education received. However, the students engage in trade and contribute to the fast-growing export of Chinese products to African markets.


“Designer immigration” refers to policies that select migrants according to the country’s needs. International students have been regarded as such because they will supposedly avoid the employment barriers that highly skilled immigrants regularly face. The number of national programs encouraging long-term settlement of international students is increasing. Hawthorne outlines policies and strategies of this new trend, using examples from the United States, Australia, China, Switzerland, and the Netherlands.


While attracting highly skilled workers is a commonly accepted aim in European host countries, migration management is often concerned with controlling rather than facilitating the study-to-work transition of international students. Mosneaga empirically explores how public authorities, higher education institutions, and the business sector in Denmark shape the policies managing the status transition of international students.


The process of “student switching” in Australia has permitted increasing numbers of international students to use
their studies in Australia as a pathway to residency. Robertson examines how international students experience the bureaucratic process of applying for permanent residency. He shows that students are subject to intense forms of regulation during the application, and that the state’s exertion of power has far-reaching social, economic, and psychological consequences.


Brazil’s emergence in the global economy has prompted the federal government to set up the Brazilian Scientific Mobility Program (Science Without Borders), which aims at advancing the country’s social capital and infrastructure in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. According to Spears, these disciplines are now disproportionately funded versus social sciences, humanities, and fine arts fields. Using a critical political economy perspective, Spears proposes a conceptual analysis of this program.

Policies and Strategies of Institutions of Higher Education

Five orientations can be recognized: first, studies that address the policy-making aspects of the internationalization of higher education (Deardorff, et al. 2012; Knight 2012; Knight 2014); second, inquiries into the role of external agents hired by British universities to recruit international students abroad (Hulme, et al. 2014); third, analysis of the emergence of off-shore universities in Asian countries (Macha and Dervin 2014); fourth, studies using a postcolonial perspective to consider what forms of pedagogic responsibility are involved in ISM (Madge, et al. 2009); and finally, a critical analysis of the inequalities that Britain’s current policies create between wealthy and poor domestic students as well as those that arise between wealthy and poor students overseas (Tannock 2013).


The SAGE Handbook of International Higher Education addresses historical, theoretical, and policy-making aspects of the internationalization of higher education as well as issues of international student mobility. The editors see the potential for institutions of higher education to rethink their strategies and reflect on how research is carried out and disseminated, but also make apparent the potential mismatches between the aspirations of international students and the needs and resources of the institution.


The number of British universities using external agents to recruit international students is rapidly growing. Hulmea et al. draw on one British university case study examining the role of agents operating in the sub-Saharan African market and the relationships between agents, institutions, and international students, concluding that while agents generate significant economic value to the university, the contribution to global justice by the commodification of education is much less certain.

*The SAGE Handbook of International Higher Education* examines the key concepts of internationalization and the benefits, risks, and unintended consequences involved. The importance of examining differences between countries is highlighted, and it is revealed that economic and political rationales are increasingly key drivers for national policymaking related to international higher education, while academic and social/cultural motivations appear to be decreasing in importance.


Academic mobility has shifted from people (students, faculty, scholars) to program (twinning, franchise, virtual) and provider (branch campus) mobility, and in the early 21st century to international education hubs. Knight examines the rationales, scopes, and scale of the three generations of cross-border education policies. She also discusses unintended consequences related to cross-border higher education, such as financial elitism in international education and decreases in academic quality and integrity.


While South-to-North mobility was long considered the norm, North-to-South and South-to-South mobility has rapidly increased. Macha and Dervin bring together international authors that examine these new spaces of international educational mobility. The authors examine, among other things, the characteristics and effects of internationalization “at home” and the creation of educational hubs in countries such as Malaysia.


This is one of the few studies that critically considers pedagogical issues related to international student migration. Madge, Raghuram, and Noxolo use a postcolonial perspective in order to consider what forms of pedagogic responsibility are involved in student mobility. They call for an engaged pedagogy, understood as a complex form of interdependence and mutuality, which challenges the idea of proximate and distant relations.


Tannock compares media and policy debates in the United Kingdom concerning the off-quota admittance of wealthy students to university while restricting visas for international students. He highlights the inequalities that Britain’s early-21st-century policies create between wealthy and poor domestic students as well as those that arise between wealthy and poor students overseas. He proposes that the principle of educational equality should be extended to include both home and international students.
Outcomes and Effects of International Student Mobility

Studies on the outcomes and effects of international student mobility address three main issues, including (a) Employment Outcomes and Labor Market Mobility, (b) Urban Transformation, and (c) Social Inequality. The first topic, concerning the labor market outcomes of international students staying in host countries after graduation, is receiving increasing attention. Most research has focused on the case of Australia, a country that encourages international students to become skilled migrants. Studies in other geographical contexts are needed to gain a differentiated understanding of the extent to which international students become skilled migrants, and of their labor market outcomes as compared to native skilled workers and offshore skilled migrants. It seems that in order to understand the transition between the study phase and the employment phase, the most promising research approach would be to follow the spatial and academic trajectories of students by using panel data, longitudinal databases, and biographical interviews. Too few studies have done this, and an analysis of the different types of outcomes in the employment situations of international students as a function of their gender, nationality, and discipline of study is still pending. The second—much less developed—field of studies, the link between urban transformation and student migration, is a promising topic. However, expansion of its geographical scope is required, as it is currently limited to the United Kingdom and New Zealand. Finally, the third field of study investigates the connections between social inequality and student mobility. These studies, which focus largely on the case of the United Kingdom, raise the question of to what extent the perspective of class reproduction used by academics at British universities can be applied to other national contexts.

Employment Outcomes and Labor Market Mobility

Studies can be divided into two groups. A first group examines stakeholder perceptions on the connection between international experience and graduate employability (Crossman and Clarke 2010) and perspectives of international students and graduates on the study-to-work transition in Denmark (Mosneaga and Winther 2013). A second group examines labor market outcomes. Hawthorne 2010 and Hawthorne and To 2014 examine labor market outcomes for international students who have become skilled migrants to Australia. Rakotonarivo 2013 comparatively examines the professional integration of Congolese students and nonstudent migrants into the Belgian labor market. Parey and Waldinger 2011 investigates the probability of German students who participated in the Erasmus exchange program later working abroad. Wiers-Jenssen 2013 assesses the employability of mobile and nonmobile students in Nordic countries. Bordoloi 2014 examines how US immigration policies and university structures impact the professional lives of international students’ wives.


Bordoloi uses a feminist family studies perspective to examine how immigration policies and university structures impact the professional lives of thirty-two wives of international students studying in the United States. Using interviews and analysis of immigration and university documents, the results show that spousal agreement to migrate is influenced by gendered understandings of family relationships. Furthermore, spousal migration often comes at the cost of the woman’s professional advancement.

Crossman and Clarke report the findings of an Australian qualitative study (n=45) that examines how employers, academics, and students perceive the connection between international experience and graduate employability. The findings show that all actors involved identify a positive connection, as it means forging networks, having opportunities for experiential learning, acquiring language knowledge, and developing cross-cultural understanding skills as well as new ways of thinking.


Australia has introduced policies designed to retain students as skilled migrants. By 2007, two-thirds of migrants were former international students rather than offshore applicants. Hawthorne raises the question of how acceptable such onshore applicants are to employers. To address this question, education enrolment and migration and employment databases were analyzed, showing that former international students had achieved comparable labor market participation rates to those of the migrants recruited offshore.


Hawthorne and To examine employment rates one year after postgraduation. Using the Graduate Destination Survey, they compare the work status of international students to domestic students in eleven professions (2007–2011); then, based on the Immigration Department’s Continuous Survey of Australia’s Migrants, they compare international student employment rates to those of offshore skilled migrants (2009–2011). English language skills were revealed as the most critical factor in securing early professional employment.


In the globalized competition for talent, international students are currently seen as prospective skilled workers. Mosneaga and Winther examine the perspectives of international students and graduates on the study-to-work transition in Denmark. The interviewed students were enrolled in postgraduate science and technology programs at universities in the Copenhagen metropolitan region. The results highlight the diversity of constraints and opportunities that shape individual perspectives and trajectories of international students.


Parey and Waldinger investigate the probability of German students who participated in the Erasmus exchange program later working abroad. By constructing a unique data set, the authors conclude that studying abroad has a strong causal effect on labor market mobility later in life.

International student mobility is an important part of migration flows from the Democratic Republic of the Congo to Belgium. Rakotonarivo comparatively examines the professional integration of Congolese students and nonstudent migrants into the Belgian labor market. The results show that students have easier access to employment and encounter less problems of overqualification in the labor market.


Wiers-Jenssen questions degree mobility as advantageous for the employability of students from Nordic countries. Results show that employability of mobile and nonmobile students is fairly similar; there is scant evidence that mobility enhances employability. However, mobile students seem more likely to hold international jobs in the domestic labor market. Brain drain is a risk as many students from Finland, Denmark, and the Faroe Islands stay abroad after graduation.

**Urban Transformation**

Smith 2009 highlights the need to examine the impact of international student migration on urban transformations, and Collins 2010 focuses on how South Korean international students change urban form in Auckland, New Zealand.


Collins draws on research with South Korean international students in order to examine how student mobilities change urban form. The pattern of students studying, residing, and socializing in Auckland’s central business district positions them as contributors to urban change in three ways: growth of educational activities in office space, development of large low-quality apartment complexes, and increasing numbers of businesses owned by Korean New Zealanders.


Smith highlights the impact of international student migration on urban transformations. He argues that despite the marked increase of student populations and sociospatial concentrations of students in cities, researchers have not used theories of urban restructuring to examine urban transformations and how university towns are being reconstituted.
Social Inequality

Using the case of the Ford Foundation’s International Fellowship Program, Dassin, et al. 2014 shows that such programs can contribute to greater social inclusiveness in the Global South. Knight 2012 examines the unintended consequences of student mobilities, and Waters 2012 critically investigates the implications of the internationalization of education for the reproduction of social (dis)advantage.


Examining the case of the Ford Foundation’s International Fellowship Program through analysis of data collected over a ten-year period, Dassin, Enders, and Kottmann demonstrate that this targeted program can mobilize students from marginalized communities in countries of the Global South for participation in high-quality international education, thus contributing to greater social inclusiveness. Most fellows returned to their home countries and advanced into influential positions that contribute to greater social justice.


Knight examines early-21st-century trends and complexities of student mobilities as well as their unintended consequences. These include “granting and recognition of academic credentials; diploma and accreditation mills; collaborative programs such as joint or double degree programs and twinning and franchise arrangements; the great brain race and its implications for brain gain, brain drain, and brain train; the competitiveness agenda; status building and world rankings; regional identity and global citizenship” (p. 20).


Waters critically investigates the implications of the internationalization of education for the reproduction of social (dis)advantage. She argues that the evidence to date suggests that international education entrenches (and in some cases, within emerging economies, actively creates) social inequalities. For example, when international students return to their countries, they compete for jobs against locally educated graduates. Favorable outcomes feed directly into the process of reproducing privilege.

Future Plans for Mobility and Experiences upon Return

The set of studies in this section examines the experiences of international students returning to their countries of origin postgraduation and the factors that play a role in social and professional reintegration. So far, very few studies are available. More research is necessary in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the reasons for return, the characteristics of return (permanent, temporary, circular), and the different types of students’ return experiences according to gender, discipline of study, and the countries where they studied. The studies presented here highlight challenges as well as opportunities of return migration. González Barea 2004 describes the difficulties that Moroccan students who studied in Spain face when attempting to reintegrate into
Moroccan society and realize professional aspirations. Li 2006 finds that the percentage of foreign-educated returnees appointed to high-level leadership positions remains small. Thieme 2014 shows that it is not only cultural capital obtained abroad that allows successful integration in the labor market, but also the students’ “place-based social capital” in the country of origin. Contrary to the former studies, Wolfeil 2009 suggests that Polish students trained in Germany are influential and often important mediators in German-Polish economic and scientific relations.


González Barea describes the difficulties experienced by Moroccan students formerly at the University of Granada (Spain) while reintegrating into Moroccan society and realizing professional aspirations. At the same time, the potentials for innovation are significant, particularly for medical doctors. Women face more difficulty than men, owing to prevailing gender stereotypes that position women as dependent; this also constrains female mobility in public spaces.


Li conducts an empirical study of senior officials in three main leadership institutions in China in order to understand the role and status of foreign-educated returnees. He finds that the percentage of foreign-educated returnees appointed to high-level leadership positions remains small; however, executive leadership often seeks advice from foreign-educated, returnee-led think tanks, which are affiliated with China’s major universities.


Thieme examines how knowledge acquired abroad can be useful for the professional lives of sixty-five students returning to Kyrgyzstan after graduation. She shows that it is not only cultural capital obtained abroad that allows successful integration in the labor market, but also the students’ “place-based social capital” in the country of origin. The socioeconomic and political environment of the home country significantly influences the way skills can be applied.


Wolfeil examines the patterns and determinants of Polish students returning after an exchange semester in Germany or the completion of a degree from a German university. Using an online survey, he also inquires into the professional value of studying abroad in the Polish labor market. The results suggest that Polish students trained in Germany are influential and often important mediators in German-Polish economic and scientific relations.

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