**The only way is up? Exploring the geographies of international higher education**

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In 2002 Martin Haigh declared that there was a need for international educators to start ‘internationalising the curriculum’. Internationalisation processes had motivated the development of ‘global’ study programmes at universities in Europe, North America, and Australia, but even if this had changed the socio-cultural profile of the student cohort, leading to a greater ethnic, linguistic and national diversity, the impact on course curricula and contextual frames was limited. In consequence, Haigh challenged academics to put an end to Western/Eurocentric domination, building international education on a socio-cultural and geographical platform that was equally accessible to all learners present in the multicultural classroom.

The present paper accepts Haigh’s challenge, departing from the question: *What does an ‘international’ curriculum look like*? Conventionally, such a question has been addressed through ideological frameworks provided by postcolonialism, leading to a focus on binary distinctions between ‘the West’ and ‘the rest’, ‘North vs. South, old world/new world etc. What is missing is empirical research documenting what socio-cultural and geographical contexts are actually (re-)produced in international education. In an attempt to redress the balance we engaged with the question of curricular contexts in the 2016 article ‘Geographies of knowledge and curricular practices’, developing a method to map the spaces represented in course literature from one international Master programme (Tange/Millar 2016). The current paper expands on this work, using qualitative and quantitative data from different international Master programmes to discuss what an ‘internationalised’ curriculum might look like.

A theoretical point of departure is provided by Larsen and Beech, whose 2014 review of ‘spatial theorising’ in comparative and international education highlights our need to treat space as a social construct. Larsen and Beech draw on the spatial theory of Henri Lefebvre, inviting us to perceive space as subjective, produced by individual actors, rather than a setting to be taken for granted. This is important in the light of the present paper, which starts from an understanding of the ‘international’ as a space constructed through lecturers’ choice of course reading, case studies and the general framing of knowledge in international education.

A second key word is scale which has been adopted from human geography. Scale can be defined as the predominant unit of analysis and conceptualised as a hierarchy ‘ranging from the national to the regional and local’ (Leitner and Sheppard 2009, 232). When interviewed about the impact of internationalisation on their teaching, Danish lecturers mention their need to ‘re-contextualise’ disciplinary knowledge, upscaling from local or national frames of reference to a regional, international or global scale. As a result, internationalisation motivates Danish educators to abandon domestic literature and examples, opting instead for material available in English. But does English-medium necessarily equal ‘international’? Using the core-periphery model proposed by Berg (2004) one might argue that within ‘the West’ we have a system of concentric circles where Anglo-America occupies the centre, English-speaking countries such as Canada or Australia represent a semi-peripheral position, and non-English-speaking countries such as France, Germany and Denmark are situated at the margins. The present inquiry has tested this theory on course reading from five MA programmes, leading to the preliminary conclusion that the internationalisation of course curricula in Denmark seems to favour Anglo-America at the expense of knowledge produced in Continental Europe.

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