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The Affective Economy of Internationalisation: Migrant Academics in and out of Japanese Higher Education (0267)

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Internationalisation is a policy paradigm with performative effects. It is a post-national, convergent trend governing higher education by an economic imaginary that functions to enhance countries' international competitiveness. It activates diverse knowledge industries and economies, international academic and student markets, global benchmarks and standards and practices. The ideal international academic identity is the global, cosmopolitan, entrepreneurial citizen, with the capacity to create, transfer and exchange knowledge capital across national, linguistic and cultural boundaries. Internationalisation combines connection and attachment to the global economy and professional networks but can be accompanied by disconnection and detachment from nation states, communities, and support networks. Internationalisation is performed and materialised in multiple ways, but is often presented as an ideologically neutral, coherent intervention (Morley et al. 2018). This representation masks its commercial opportunities, financial, ethical and social implications.

Our paper aims to embody internationalisation by engaging with migrant academics coming in and out of Japan. We conducted 33 semi-structured interviews in English in 7 public and 15 private universities in Japan. We explored mobility motivations, challenges, benefits and disadvantages, and thematically analysed the transcripts. As a research team, we represent diverse mobilities and identifications, with experiences of socio-material, cultural and professional practices from our Chilean, Egyptian, Japanese and UK nationalities. Our starting point was not one pure, stable, knowable location, or subjectivity. We are aware that in today's accelerated, socially mediated, technologised society, the notion of fixed and cognitively processed 'lived experience' could be interpreted as theoretically naïve (de Freitas 2018).

Internationalising Japan: a Happiness Formula?

The *Kokusaika*, or *Internationalisation* of Japan's higher education is both a desired and feared force, incorporating awareness of symbolic goods including recognition, distinction, and competitive stratification in the prestige economy (Agawa 2011). A key question is how Japan can contribute to the globalised knowledge economy. In the political economy of neoliberalism, a complex coagulation of opportunity for cosmopolitanism and capitalist circuits of exploitation of knowledge, groups and individuals co-exists. Internationalisation promises happiness (Ahmed 2010). While mobility implies dislocation and disposability in a profit-motivated knowledge economy, it also offers social, intellectual, material and professional benefits. Mobility can also imply the instrumental use, or commodification of academics as human capital to attract more international students, thus as marketing enhancers. Thinking with Berlant (2011), we argue that hegemonic internationalisation policy discourses are pleasurable formations because they comprise a cluster of promises -openness, competitiveness, prestige, cosmopolitanism- that resonate with struggles and fantasies of global inclusion and recognition while encompassing fears that animate the very

same internationalisation strategies.

Learning the Lingo

In our study, internationalisation was frequently reduced to promotion of the English language. Incoming migrant academics were often recruited for their English, and Japanese academics were encouraged to learn English. Language was a site of socio-material tension, pride and difference, provoking a complex affective assemblage. English is not a value-neutral means of communication, and is perceived as an instrument of linguistic and cultural imperialism. For many, it was associated with recasting their identities as entrepreneurs in academic capitalism. Reluctance and resistance were demonstrations of subjectivities that are immune to the technologies of internationalisation. Resistance to English in Japan was also rooted in perfectionism and dignity, rather than in ideology. Speaking a foreign language implies visibility and vulnerability, coming into view, self-promotion or a magnification that is at odds with the orientalist perception that humility and self-effacement are promoted in Japanese culture. However, diversity has become an instrument of measurement (Ahmed 2012). Transforming the norms of the institution involves an element of coercion that might also contribute to the affective environment surrounding the English language in Japanese universities.

Melancholic Migrants: Precarity, Peripheralisation, Friction and Fragilities

The social impact of re-location can be a form of dis-location and displacement, requiring active engagement with otherness (Kim 2010; Morley et al. 2018). Melancholy is the unfinished process of grieving a loss (Butler, 1995), and loss discourses featured in many narratives – of home, belonging, security, inclusion. Participants often reported vulnerabilities and friction. Contracts were perceived as unstable, easily undone and denied. There was a potent affective economy of gratitude underpinned by fragility permeating some narratives. For migrant academics, leaving their home support system means breaking connections, involving living on the edge. Liminality, loss, hybridity and being between two identity worlds carried an affective load. Ahmed (2016) reminds us that the word ‘precarious’ derives from ‘pray’ and means to be held through the favour of will of another, which is how ‘precarious’ acquires the sense of risky, dangerous and uncertain. She suggests that to be welcomed is to be positioned as a guest or stranger. A welcome leads to precarity. If you are dependent on a door being opened, that door can rapidly be shut in your face.

Mobility also makes visible the embeddedness of the patriarchal premium. The female migrant academic occupies a transgressive subjectivity – one that contradicts normative assumptions about women’s location in the domestic sphere. Furthermore, in order to comply with the tacit terms of internationalisation and being a good guest, it was inappropriate to express the injuries, exclusions and subordination of different gender regimes. To name and notice these practices as sexism becomes a failure of integration, marking oneself as different. As Ahmed (2010) elaborates, the migrant is the one who is deemed to have come after, and therefore is expected to integrate into the host culture, however uncomfortable it feels. To be the person who complains carries the risk of self-damage and being the one who invented a problem that did not previously exist. It also implies ingratitude.

What emerged from our study is that internationalisation policies, processes and practices

generate multiple affective engagements. Internationalisation is a polyvalent policy discourse, saturated in conceptual and ideological ambiguity. As a mix of commodification, exploitation and opportunity it is a container for multiple aspirations, anxieties, and affordances. Migrant academics often find themselves reproducing and operating within the discursive practices that construct them, that is, as disposable labour in the knowledge economy, and autonomous but accountable subjects of knowledge capitalism.

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