

## **Rhythms of Academic Mobility**

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0151 231 5292

WORD COUNT: 7,303

### **Disclosure Statement**

There is no financial interest or benefit that has arisen from this work.

### **Biographical note**

Judith Enriquez-Gibson is a Senior Lecturer in Education Informatics at Liverpool John Moores University, UK. In her work, education and technology relations and related topics, such as mobilities and literacies, are always informed by practice-oriented approaches.

## Rhythms of Academic Mobility

Academic mobility has been discursively circulated in at least two ways: as the cause of transnational identity capital and as the resource for knowledge transfer worldwide.

Instead of a preoccupation with neoliberalist and human capital accounts, this article offers a rhythmic perspective and analysis that shifts the matter of academic mobility away from a purely discursive frame of reference. It explores the rhythms of a mobile and migrant academic in an auto-ethnographic and everyday account of human-body encounters. It engages with the unintended realities of the body as the border, especially when it comes to ethnicity and place of origin.

Keywords: academic mobility; rhythmanalysis; non-EU/UK migrant; academic migrant; corporeality

### Introduction

There has been growing interest and attention, particularly in comparative education, on the policy models and contemporary conditions that drive 'knowledge diaspora' and deploy migrant academics. This is jointly orchestrated by the intensity of academic mobility and the highly marketised higher education institutions that mobile academics serve. There is an obvious emphasis on the economic value of academic mobility. Terri Kim and other scholars of comparative education have explored and discussed the emergence and politics of academic mobility in various policy contexts within neo-liberalist ideologies and global market initiatives. Academic mobility has been discursively circulated in at least two ways: as the cause of transnational identity capital (Kim 2009; 2010) and as the resource for knowledge transfer worldwide (Fahey and Kenway 2010). Instead of a preoccupation on the institutional and social effects of this global phenomenon, the focus of this article is small in its scale but pivotal in its considerations. It extends the neo-liberalist and human capital accounts of academic mobility and transnational identity capital towards non-economic deliberations and through everyday accounts that are closer to the social and material realities of human movement. In epistemological terms, it invites further consideration of the links

between mobility and identity beyond the intellect. In ontological terms, it draws attention to how the identity of a mobile academic is bodily inscribed, assigned by places, perceptions and impressed by others, namely, local citizens and fellow border crossers. In pedagogical terms, it provides the everyday of an auto-ethnographic self as a locus of alternative considerations and topics for discussion about globalisation, cosmopolitanism, migration, and education studies and research. In its boundary work, this article does two things: to align the global and human capital accounts of academic mobility to human and everyday accounts of movement; and to draw attention to my everyday accounts as ‘moments’ in Lefebvrian sense, that is, as the lived space-time of the body in terms of repetitions, degrees of alienation and the modalities of presence and absence (Butler 2012). Alienation is central in Lefebvre’s social theory and expresses the material experience of mobility that is always partial and susceptible to disordering by counter-rhythms and collateral realities. ‘Collateral realities are realities that get done incidentally, and along the way’ (Law 2013, 156), and for the most part, they are done unintentionally. In order to gain insights into the affective and embodied rhythms of being an academic migrant and a visa holder, I engage with Lefebvre’s (2004) rhythmanalysis. Lefebvre’s project on rhythmanalysis, which has an analytical focus on the rhythmic and repetitive, has yet to be placed at the forefront of comparative education, transnational or mobility studies.

In the next section, I propose an approach to academic mobility that locates the body at the centre of an auto-ethnographic inquiry. It grounds the politics of mobility described by Cresswell (2010) in terms of the rhythms of the everyday drawn from Lefebvre’s rhythmanalysis. It argues that a corporeal account is important for understanding the speed, frictions, and feelings that are experienced as a mobile subject moves. Its inquiry adapts the six elements of mobility introduced by Cresswell (2010) by framing and following the body’s movements and encounters in particular moments. Finally, it articulates and reveals the

boundary work done by myself and what it corporeally means to move as an academic migrant. I conclude by emphasising the friction of being othered or othering that is experienced through the body whilst on the move as a mobile academic. The rhythmic effect is that of an alienation of becoming an internalised other and a realisation that the indelible collateral reality of my academic mobility is my own identity that could not escape an essentialised notion or singularity. The insistence to construct a singular identity through biometric data records through my body becomes the border that defines the rhythm of the boundary work that a highly-skilled migrant academic like me must cross in relation to the politics of my body-on-the-move.

### **Lefebvre and rhythmanalysis**

Henri Lefebvre is the thinker behind the theory of rhythmanalysis, a concept that has remained relatively marginal compared to the works of his contemporaries. Rhythmanalysis is about rhythms. 'Everywhere where there is interaction between a place, a time and an expenditure of energy, there is rhythm' (Lefebvre 2004, 15). Rhythms are repetitions that are both linear and cyclical and unfold in a multiplicity of presences and differences. The significant contribution and starting point of rhythmanalysis is the human body, which I position at the centre of academic mobility in this auto-ethnographic account. The rhythmic perspective is further situated and embodied with Lefebvre's notion of the everyday. The meaning of the everyday is two-fold: first, it refers to the mundane, the day-to-day, and second, it is also the repetitive happenings of the everyday. The everyday is enacted most evidently with the body. In fact, the body, Lefebvre argues, is the metronome of everyday life. This means that the body is the point of contact of the corporeal and mechanistic rhythms and also of the mobile and static moments of the everyday.

This auto-ethnographic account is particularly focused on both the material aspects of

movement and the ways those movements are socio-culturally and spatio-temporally understood (Cresswell 2010; Lefebvre 2004). I bring the three aspects of mobility described by Cresswell (2010), namely, physical movement, the meanings and narratives associated with movement, and its practices, into contact with Lefebvre's notion of rhythm and everyday. A relational understanding of mobility as rhythm, I am arguing here, has considerable potential for thinking about the politics of various forms of academic mobility beyond human capital accounts in the context of economic and cultural globalisation. In fact, the rhythms of academic mobility can be analysed and discussed in relation to the rhythms of identity as inscribed in places, bodies, academic positions, and other people.

### **Rhythmanalysis in Autoethnography**

Autoethnography is the qualitative method that offers a way for me to give voice and flesh to my own academic mobility for the purpose of extending and contributing to the current understanding of skilled migration and transnational identity. This approach provides me with a vantage and entry point into the intersections of personal and societal considerations and micro and macro linkages and agency and structure narratives. This is an ethnography of the self. As such, it is an interview with the self about personal experiences of memories and moments of academic mobility. Usually in an interview, as the researcher, I ask the other about their stories and then make judgements and adjustments as to what is relevant to the object of inquiry. In this case, to interview myself involved 'conversations' with my past self through remembrance and memory retrieval and with absent others whose stories and narratives were encountered in literature. In this partial and rather mobile account, I provide responses to what I have read and experienced. I, and others I do not know, become data in this text where academic mobility is made to mean something different. The intent is never to represent my experiences as an academic migrant. No subject, Clough (1998) argues, can

possibly be fully aware of themselves. The unconscious makes full intentional subjectivity impossible.

Data in ethnography traditionally arise from interviews, field notes, documents and research diaries or journals. Inevitably, an ethnography of the self would follow the same tradition for the most part. An excellent example of such an autoethnography is Shahram Khosravi's (2007) 'Illegal' Traveller, where he spoke of borders and border practices that both regulate and construct the traveller as 'other' on the move. In this auto-ethnography, I attempt to interject personal experiences into moments translated into written text. It is a personal narrative woven and implicated by the narratives of other border crossers. I did not collect 'hard data' for my autoethnography. For some, this may be problematic at the very least. Instead, I relied on my memory, which is not very different when I interview the other. I have relied on others' memories in my transcriptions of interview data and my field notes. Here, like Wall (2008), I relied on my own memory triggers and moments recaptured in the present time as I encountered other voices in literature and other studies. After all, 'ethnography is an act of memory' (Coffey 1999, 127 cited in Wall, 2008, 45). Texts that are produced in ethnography could not be separated from the memories that inform and shape them. Besides, to objectify data and record the 'facts' in writing reflects the thinking of a positivistic age when personal impressions were not seen as important (Ottenberg 1990 cited in Wall 2008).

To consider and 'interview' the borderwork of the body in academic mobility, this article is informed and framed by Creswell's (2010) geographical-theoretical approach to mobility, which emphasises the geographical and historical formations of movements, narratives about mobility, and mobile practice. The main task of this article is to consider different aspects of academic mobility *both in transit and transition* through six (6) political frames of mobility (see Cresswell 2010, 22 – 26 for details) for reflection and analysis in terms of Lefebvre's

rhythmanalysis wherein the body is emphasised and becomes the locus of inquiry and mobile explorations. The object of questions 1-4 is the movement of a person or thing and in questions 5 and 6, the focus on mobility is the feeling and friction of mobility itself. I have adapted all questions and replaced 'the people and thing' in questions 1-4 and 'mobility in questions 5 and 6 to 'the body' as shown below:

1. *Why does ... [the body] move?*
2. *How fast does ... [the body] move?*
3. *In what rhythm does ... [the body] move?*
4. *What route does ... [the body] take?*
5. *How does ... [the body] feel?*
6. *When and how does ... [the body] stop?*

Each of the above elements defines and redefines the divergent and convergent boundaries of being a mobile subject – a migrant academic or 'border crosser' (Jones 2013). Though Cresswell's proposal has separated the rhythms of movement in question 3, where he does reference the work of Lefebvre's work, I choose to enact the politics of mobility in Cresswell's work in terms of the body through Lefebvre's rhythmanalysis that is applied to all elements. Each of the above frames defines and redefines the divergent and convergent boundaries of being a mobile subject. For a border crosser, the 'inside' and 'outside' are not mere metaphors for referring to realities out there. They refer, Ellsworth (2005) argues, to the inescapable materiality of embodiment. Understanding this relation emphasises Lefebvre's insistence on the connection between the body and its space (Butler 2012). According to Lefebvre, though the body is a 'bundle of rhythms' that accumulates and expends energies productively in the generation of new spaces, it is constantly subject to the pressures and ordering tendencies of linear repetition' (Butler 2012, 127). Lefebvre's (2004) rhythmanalysis can help explore collateral realities of academic mobility, particularly the doings of the body. As the metronome for rhythms, the body perceives movement and experiences places in all sorts of ways. The senses used in the process of place making (placing me, that is), as well as

the way social characteristics, are 'written' on the body, such as skin colour, disability, being young or old, race, gender, and ethnicity, affect mobile and bounded practices. A rhythmic approach is not concerned about rhythms as things, but as effects of the relations of time, space and movement. In short, they are patterns of practices that emphasise experiential observation, rather than perception. It mixes the felt with the conceived. Constraints, absences or absent relations, such as border crossing, residence/visa restriction, loss of daily co-presence with family and friends, are all rhythms of alienation and collateral realities of academic mobility. The borderwork that needs to be done to articulate the relationship between mobility and academic knowledge is not neutral. For my body, the work at the border is alienating as my body becomes the border that inhibits my own movements no matter what route I choose and take. Furthermore, questions related to 'home' or 'where are you from?' reveal a spatial and directional movement, commonly framed within sedentary understandings. This strongly suggests that my bordered or othered self simply belongs elsewhere. These are further explored in the next two sections.

The rhythmic articulations of my academic mobility are not shared in the following account in a question and answer format, rather I further employ Lefebvre's theory of moments. A moment is marked by constant tension and dialectical or antagonistic unity of pace, tempo, feeling and friction in temporal and spatial turns. Before moving on, it has to be said that what the preceding analytical consideration and reflection of mobile subjectivity highlights is the very impossibility of maintaining an uncomplicated distinction between who I am and where I am in an essentialist sense or in any strict or "pure" geographical sense outside the bounded and controlled routes of mediated experience.

### **Mobility as Rhythm**

In general, practice is conceptualised as cognitive, social and material. It is rarely the



case that the corporeal dimension of practice is taken into account, especially when we attend to mobile intellectuals. I want to attend to the 'dressage' (Lefebvre 2004), which refers to the disciplining and training of the body that bears close comparison to Foucault's work, of everyday mobility that is closer to my body. Instead of concerning myself with nations and state-level discourses of mobilities and migration, I focus on the body and its rhythms as it becomes the boundary of singular subjectivity and territory. The everyday is rhythmic and relational and as such, it is a space, which is a product and pre-condition of the processes of social and material productions (Butler 2012). I extend this definition as an alternative framing for academic mobility as a 'transnational space' (Kim 2009). In this sense, academic mobility vis-à-vis the everyday is an arena of difference and inequality, wherein alienation always persists and must be acknowledged. It confronts the mobile self and attends to it socially and materially, both within and in-between places and borders, and with respect to other things, people, and events. It considers what happens to one's identity unknowingly and unintentionally when crossing borders, not as human capital or a knowledge carrier, but as a human-body. This account describes and interprets my mobile identity alongside my 'fixed' positioning as always the other with an 'alien' status. It engages with the realities of mobility as a boundary in itself, especially when it comes to ethnicity and place of origin. As an academic researcher, it is an encounter with my own self as the subject and object of mobility. The narrative is interwoven with other academic mobilities encountered in various texts. It explores the implications of the notions of boundaries and borders beyond static and spatial configurations of movement. As my own mobility and identity as an academic are complicated, a close analysis of how the term 'mobility' is actually used beyond the spatial metaphors of 'flows' and 'liquid modernity' and capitalist accounts of knowledge transfer must be pursued. As Faist (2013) argues, it is fruitful to analyse how mobility is used and 'what kind of boundary work it is actually doing' (1640). Lefebvre's rhythmanalysis can be

applied to corporeal considerations of academic mobility in terms of Hagerstrand's three-fold contribution to time-space geography (Pred 1977). First, all human actions and events (experiences) are simultaneously inscribed in both space and time as rhythm. Academic mobility is a rhythmic spatial and temporal event or series of events. It must be defined beyond a permanent or long-term change of residence or dislocation to an alien setting, decoupled from family, friends and a way of life. Second, a biographical perspective is relevant. My life-path (or mobile tracks) is or has, it turned out, a series of mobility-related events and encounters. Some of which are unique and unexpected, others recurrent and familiar in time-space trajectories. Third, the rhythms of my life-paths are necessarily emotional and sensory. They continue from my past, as I recall Filipino dishes, the sound of tropical rain and the sudden chill of December, through the present, where daylight saving time matters considerably and there are four seasons to consider in my wardrobe, into a planned or imagined future. Interestingly, my past is not solely defined by myself. It is also shaped by others, mostly based on a monolingual ethos, ethnic perceptions, and assumptions in relation to my physical appearance in terms of the absent and distant origin my body represents.

The manoeuvres and encounters briefly described from literature read and memories remembered open a discussion about the politics of mobility in relation to point of departure, border control and academic 'positioning'. All of which implicate identity as part of a much wider geographical and informational network, as well as networks of bodily relations and social understanding. Furthermore, one's movements are governed not only by the freedom to act but also, more importantly, by constraints, which may be institutional, financial or personal. These could create immobilities (blocked mobilities), such as the inability to travel or to take employment. These make up the rhythms of being a migrant academic. People's formulation of my identity could create constraints in both racial and gender terms. Such

constraints question the integrity of my identity and belonging in places where I have made tracks of presence and productivity over time.

### **Body at the Border**

In a millennium of global and differentiated mobility, a diffusion of nomadism defines the location of many academics. Mobility, even within the noble desire of knowledge transfer and transnational identity capital, does not resolved power differences and other forms of structural inequality. Liquid modernity and flows become elusive or imagined realities of mobilities. The project of this article traces more than an intellectual itinerary and attempts a resistance to intellectual reductionism. It reflects in a personal manner the existential and material moments of the multi-cultural migrant academic that I embody. Crossing a nation-border that involves boarding a plane and arriving at airports is fixed with access control, interrogation, biometric data checks, and counter-checks. In the UK, there are two lanes for entry clearance: one for British nationals and European (EU) and European Economic Area (EEA) citizens and the other is for all other, non-EU/EEA nationalities. As a non-EU/EEA passport holder, I join the slower and usually longer queue of 'outsiders'. To get an entry clearance, I must not forget to complete a landing card and most importantly, I must have a valid visa. The ease of going through an e-passport gate is not an option for me. As a border-crosser, I simply do not have this privilege. This is a familiar route to follow and its rhythm is predicated upon a stable, centralised self as verified by my passport. To sedentary others and dominant subjects, my 'becoming' is a curiosity and a habitual opposition to dominant unitary identities and teleological models.

I did not think when I boarded the plane to go to Malaysia in 1996 that I would not be going back to the Philippines and how becoming a border crosser could significantly influence my place, status and identity. I did not know that my very own body would territorialise me repeatedly. I have always been positioned 'outside' and the markers are

inscribed and established by routinized regulations of state borders. But more closely, they are inscribed upon my physical features and by the perceptions and gaze of dominant and sedentary subjects.

### **Mobility as ‘Placing me’**

Place, as located in mobile events, has been argued as not just the ‘where of something’, but includes the practices that are integrated into its where-ness (Wilken 2008). This becomes an important consideration in understanding the historical and geographical formations of border crossing for a foreign academic. Furthermore, the place becomes an outcome of practices or that it is woven through the routes of experience or practices. The key point that becomes important here in the politics of becoming a migrant academic or a mobile subject is the fact that mobility is embodied, mediated, situated and ultimately relational. It is not a mere container of things or fixed in a manner that positions stuff. It is in-between - simultaneously open and yet bounded by practices and people to ‘take place’ or when some of those I encounter could not, in their words, place me. This is a shared sentiment of difference with Jones (2013):

“I hope you don’t mind me asking where you come from?” (Actually, I do mind, very much so, but I will not let on and instead reply politely.)

“I live in Rainford.”

“No, I am sorry. I meant, where do you come from, originally? Only, I couldn’t help detecting a slight accent in your excellent English. But I have difficulty placing you.” (Why do people always try to place me? I am getting so tired of being asked this question!)

“Do you mean, where I was born?”

“Yeah, what’s your country of origin?”

“I was born in Germany, West Germany, to be precise. Bavaria, actually.” (754, *italics in the original*)

Lived experience is defined in Lefebvre’s notion of the everyday in terms of the inhabitation of space, which emphasises the centrality of the body – its gestures and rhythms. My first account on the repeated question and curiosity of ‘where are you from originally?’ reveals the alienation and the ‘alien’ status that is persistently attributed to my mobile standing. I draw attention to how the importance of my ‘dwelling’ has on the conceived and perceived academic status. Constraints are imposed on my body as dictated by the management of various social rules and conditions that govern and structure border control and entry restrictions. The dominant discursive nature of transnational identity capital inadvertently dismisses the role of the body in the everyday of academic mobility. Academic mobility is not just the circulation of competencies of mobile academics and the consumption of knowledge capital, but also the repetitive regulation of mobile bodies that have alienating effects on identity in non-economic and less capitalist terms.

On another occasion, I have been placed by the sheer lack of cultural exposure to the British media and sense of humour. As described by Pherali (2012), there is an assumption and a requirement to be familiar with X-Factor, a TV talent show, or the Great British Bake off, a baking show or popular celebrities like Joey Essex. I still do not know who Joey Essex is. I still could recall a colleague of mine in Malaysia who told me that when I come to the UK to do my PhD, I should not believe people when they address me as ‘Love’. She warned me that they do not mean it. My Malaysian colleague was right. In my first UK entry and after a short stay, I did find that a word loaded with meaning and usually handled with care and expressed sparingly and mostly privately was unexpectedly uttered casually in fish and chip

shops and supermarkets' check-out counters. Surely, they were not meaning or feeling the same word 'love' I have expressed myself. Such encounters have taught me about other forms of capital based on Bourdieu's work. More importantly, it highlights how my mobility is subject to cultural constructions and interpretations that are not necessarily felt by me or where I come from.

**'Where are you from *originally*?'**

Does a nomadic subjectivity have an origin? Must it have one? This question has increasingly bothered me over the years. Not so much of what it asks explicitly, but implicitly or what usually follows it in conversations. How did you get here? First, the question of origin strongly suggests that I do not belong naturally where I am. Secondly, I got there from somewhere else and that I have moved. I fall into the trap of categorisation in my encounters, not only with the 'locals' but also with fellow border crossers and aliens. I have become more aware of the problematic assumption behind such questions; that each 'alien' is an integrated and singular identity. In other words, there is just one identity to every person. Such singularity has eluded me though my passport and fingerprints would uphold this as primarily true about where I come from. I do not think of my nationality or how others see me. In fact, the question about my origin unsettles me. It is a harsh reminder of my alien/migrant status, the outsider or other that belongs elsewhere. My ethnic identity is permanently inscribed in my facial features and skin tone. There is no escaping my body. It has been acknowledged by scholars such as Ryan (~~2009~~2010) that ethnicity is fluid and yet it has always classified me. In fact, it is a boundary line, the border that I could not cross.

Mobility gives a feeling of stasis and boundedness through engagements with the environment or other people. Here the friction is felt through my body. Particular affective habits, positive and negative, must not be underestimated. Language, facial features and skin

tone shape visceral experience and the other's interpretation of acceptance, belonging, discrimination or dismissal. Contrary to the 'Anglo' or 'white' cultural perspectives, which some theorists have presumed to be universal, homesickness is not a longing for home, but a relational effect of being treated as a stranger, of being positioned as the other. As a border-crosser with brown skin, I warn against the assumption that my mobile status and disposition is oriented towards a re-turn to where I come from. Consequently, between mobility and displacement is an experience of misplacement.

'Thus the body has an identity that coincides with its essence and cannot be altered by moral, artistic, or human will. This indelibility of corporeal identity only furthers the mark placed on the body, the body forms the identity, and the identity is unchangeable and indelible as one's place on the normal curve ... this fingerprinting of the body means that the marks of physical difference become synonymous with the identity of the person' (Davis 1995, 31-32).

My 'non-identity' in the UK is further inscribed into how I am put in my place when I travel in and out of the UK and the rest of Europe. The development of new biometric technologies means the body itself is used as a 'mobile document' kept in some database unknown to me, aside from the usual passport I always have to carry with me as a form of identification before crossing borders. My body and its fingerprints, I have to accept, has been the source of surveillance data (Lyon 2001).

Furthermore, there are normative values and 'proper' rhythms that destabilise academic life. Border crossers are not homogeneous. They are categorised as labour migrants and the so-called highly skilled migrants. The discursive contrasts between the two are quite obvious. As pointed out by Faist (2013), the former are called 'wanted but not welcome' and the latter are 'wanted and welcome' (1642). As a highly skilled migrant, I have the relevant competencies for cross-border communication and opportunities. My transnational education

and career paths have secured me an academic position at the upper end of the socio-economic ladder. And yet, my ethnicity ascribed the identity of a labour migrant. Interestingly, such inscriptions are mostly performed by those who share my ethnicity. Such encounters make poignant the fact that I belong to an ethnic group of global labour migrants, who have left their home country, mostly as servants, and more recently, as nurses.

My mobile subjectivity does not conform and is blatant, at times, a 'non-sense'. The following common sense assumptions simply do not apply. First, it assumes that my identity is inscribed in my skin colour and place of origin. Second, it emphasises 'there', an absent place, rather than 'here', where I am. Third, it assumes that my identity is a definite form, singular and coherent. To appreciate the rhythms of academic mobility, these assumptions or seemingly common sense realities must be undone or done differently. And in its making and undoing, there are collateral realities of movement that must be closely considered. Collateral realities would reveal that identity is not independent, given, definite or stable. Relations are rhythmic and they are specific. For this reason, my interest is in how mobility shapes identity through its rhythms and counter-rhythms.

My identity as a migrant academic is not a singular or stable category but a repertoire of multiple identities, both acquired and ascribed, that are organised unequally in relation to the access of identity-building resources – with the spectrum of possible categories that have been produced – name, accent, physical appearance, PhD degree from Aberdeen, my identity/identities are also stratified. Identity in one space may not be readily converted into its counterpart in another space. Evidence of differentiation is captured in the UK compatibility measure of my 4-year undergraduate degree, an honours degree from Ateneo de Manila University in the Philippines, which was 'valued' as an 'ordinary degree' in the UK.

In 2005, I requested a 'Statement of Comparability' for my undergraduate degree from



UK NARIC (National Recognition Information Centre for the United Kingdom), a national agency for the recognition and comparison of international qualifications and skills. The assessment letter states that my four-year full-time honours degree from Ateneo de Manila University 'is considered comparable to British Bachelor (Ordinary) degree standard'. The letter further states that the assessment 'although based on informed opinion, should be treated only as guidance'. The academic standing and value of my degree were devalued. It was assessed to be of lesser value than an honours degree obtained in the UK. I would like to quickly point out how the honours degrees, particularly an undergraduate degree with honours in Computer Science in the UK, do not necessarily meet the criteria described by NARIC. I feel that it is a collateral reality of my migrant status. It is contested but something I have to accept and to which I submitted knowingly to obtain my further academic qualifications, an MA, and a PhD, both from UK universities and where NARIC's role did not matter anymore as I crossed the boundary of UK comparability measure. My academic identity or knowledge status is defined according to measures and conditions I did not know or intend.

### **I don't sound the way I look**

Mobility has the effect of placing or fixing my identity, not only in terms of my origin, or the way I look, but also in the way I sound. The linguistic forms produced by migrant workers, such as myself, and the perceptions of linguistic forms by other migrants different from me and that of the local communities/cities have to be explored. We would find that space is not neutral when it comes to accents. People speak in and from a distant place that projects particular values and culture, including authority and status. It is also a significant marker of corporeal/spatial/auditory boundary of becoming a migrant academic. The connection between knowledge of English and opportunities in life is also a matter of scale. It considerably advances the social mobility from low to high society, from local to global.

The English language incapacitates those who have limited competence in its 'accents', diminishes mobility, and therefore projects stigmatised identities. I am misrecognised because of my accent, I sound American, sometimes, British, but most of the time cosmopolitan in the sense of Bourdieu (1992). My local accent in a foreign body has privileged me and allows crossing boundaries more smoothly at times and yet the monoglot ideology could still be a silencing instrument that does not recognise the resources that I and migrants like me possess. In spite the multilingual realities of mobility, the monoglot ideology persists. This ideology assumes that monolingualism is stable and fixed as a one-language-one-identity construct (Blommaert 2006; Silverstein 1996). There is a preoccupation to 'place me'.

Fellow border crossers with marked regional accents are positioned in spaces that rank their accents low or high through a scaling process. Unconsciously, my accent has been borrowed from those with central and superior ranking, such as British English and American English. Central accents project central identities (Blommaert, Collins, and Slembrouck 2005). Thus, a mobile subject like me, though unknowingly, consumes enormous time and energy to acquire English with a British or American accent. It is an attempt to perhaps belong to the legitimate rhythms of talk. Linguistic rhythms define identities and territories. It restricts and expands the spaces of recognition and acceptance.

On a wider scale, the monoglot ideology produces forms of habitus among people that effectively makes the status of migrants' speech and communicative acts as inferior or unimportant. The fact that an accent is a marker of bilingualism or multilingualism is simply ignored. The linguistic resource to speak more than one language is not given precedence or value. The fact that I speak Filipino and other dialects do not enhance my mobile status as a polyglot. In fact, my multilingual competence does not matter and simply pushes me further into an alienated position. Admittedly, the Philippine languages have no significant reach and

status in global markets and economic terms.

Semiotic resources, acquiring foreign accents in my case, enable academic mobility. It facilitated movement across spaces, in my case, from Malaysia to the UK, UK to the US, the US to Australia and now back in the UK. To some extent, it is my license to teach foreign students in all these countries. My English and acquired accents, plus my English PhD degree, clear borders and cross boundaries as I move across spaces and scales. Ultimately, accents shape and produce unequal social positions that could easily collapse into rhythms of isolation, misrecognition, and alienation. In the end, my accent, cosmopolitan or not, does not represent my body. In the remaining sections before I conclude, I bring the rhythmic and corporeal realities of my academic mobility into a critical pedagogical discussion of ‘globalisation from within’ and cosmopolitanism (Beck 2002) that characterises the ‘body of knowledge’ that has been my license to move beyond the notion of knowledge transfer and transnational identity, that is, in real, bodily and material terms.

### **Boundary lines: identity as territory**

Mobility has to be understood as a bounded but open and contested site, a complex product of competing discourses, ever-shifting social relations, and internal (as well as external) events. Elsewhere is where I am in motion. In other words, any given ‘place’, such as ‘my place’ or ‘where I come from originally’ is dependent upon the interconnectedness of my mobility with other places, including what my biometrics and my acquired accent reveal or hide about my identity. My mobile subjectivity highlights the very impossibility of maintaining an uncomplicated distinction between who I am and where I am in an essentialist sense or in any strict or “pure” geographical sense outside the bounded and controlled routes of mediated experience. In fact, as Cresswell (2010) pointed out, each of the facets is regulated at different levels. Therefore, there is no need to place me as I am always positioned as a mobile subject

necessarily excluded as the 'other within' (ie, non-UK/EU).

'It is not only the categorization of people along nationality/citizenship and thus the accident of birthplace, but also their distinctions with respect to economic utility and social adaptation that make a difference to the life chances of many individuals. Nonetheless, one of the most important meta-mechanisms ensuring the social closure of rich vs poor around the globe is legal citizenship, usually called nationality. The accident of birth into a particular country and the position of that country in the global inequality scale decide life chances to a great extent (Shachar 2009)' (Faist 2013, 1644).

Academic mobility involves a geographical relocation and an encounter not only with other ethnic groups but also an experience of difference in one's ethnicity. In such encounters, ethnic identity becomes an interplay of self-definition and the other's assignment. Hence, the politics of the body must be considered, including the unequal boundaries that it encounters in transnational and bounded spaces.

### **Body as 'subject matter'**

In the School of Education where I teach, my embodied subjectivity and the boundaries defined by my own body challenge the grand narratives of globalisation and cosmopolitanism in terms of everyday life rhythms. As Favell (2001) argues, the everyday life patterns must be taken systematically in the old bounded world of nation-state-society. Whilst Beck (2002) would argue that the nation-state potentially restricts transnational and cosmopolitan outlook and disposition. In lectures or lessons related to globalisation and education, I become a pertinent topic and an alternative point-of-view. I become a visible evidence of otherness that insists upon the importance of family and professional structures, lifecycles, social mobilities and tacit knowledges in our deliberations and discussions about the impact of globalisation on education. I become an empirical case of an individual alongside the empirical studies of

other migrants (not just the elite or academic migrants) whose lives have crossed national borders.

The preceding account has provided a global, border-crossing reality that highlights everyday matters and concerns about national borders. The overemphasis on knowledge transfer and capital has paid hardly any recognition to the transfer of tacit knowledges that are not solely gained from educational qualifications (Pherali 2012) and educational achievements and expertise that would always remain hidden by one's ethnicity.

The central defining characteristic of a corporeal perspective is the creation of an 'internalised other' (Beck 2002) in a nomadic, academic existence defined by rival ways of teaching, learning and living. I become a real 'subject matter' to reflect on, understand, combine and embrace contradictory and collateral realities and rhythms. The monoglot ideology and nation-state imagination, which tend to exclude the otherness of the other (Beck, 2002), can become 'flesh' in my physical (face-to-face) encounters and engagement with students. I can be, with optimism and drive, a dialogic entry point into the process of interculturality. Beyond knowledge transfer, my bodily existence can be the point of contact to explore, for instance, the three fundamental features of Beck's cosmopolitanism (2002), namely, globality, plurality, and civility. A final critical pedagogical consideration in topics or lessons related to education studies and research is the permanent reality of how my body is unable to speak about the knowledge and experiences I possess. Hence, despite my globalised educational qualifications and achievements, I am an 'other' to my own body.

## **Conclusion**

My experiences of being a mobile academic with an alien status have had different rhythms, wherein transnational identity and knowledge transfer have been territorialised by my own body. Academic mobility does not necessarily lead to cosmopolitanism. In my case,

my ethnic identity remains the border of otherness even when nation-state borders are blurred by my postgraduate qualifications obtained in the UK. These are important epistemological and pedagogical points that must be attended to. In the everyday account of rhythms in corporeal terms, identity is not subjectivity but territory in academic mobility. It is contingent and variable, never fully determined by myself or the transnational arrangements and requirements of institutions or nations or cultural and individual expectations. My place is ultimately not somewhere. It is *(t)here* – both here and there. A historical consideration is paramount in resisting the pressing and persistent boundedness a singular subjectivity imposes upon a mobile subject, made most poignant with the question ‘where are you from *originally*’? In fact, as Cresswell (2010) pointed out, each of the facets is regulated at different levels. Therefore, there is no need to place me as I am always positioned as a mobile subject necessarily excluded as a ‘non-identity’ (ie, non-UK/EU). My migrant/alien status keeps me in liminal and alien places (always plural), even in those most familiar and fixed in my encounters and experiences. Spatial and temporal movements have beat, pace and frequency that are sensed but not necessarily seen as you look at me. Consequently, the politics of mobility and the nation-state ideology would always place me away from here. I have written this article as an academic researcher and a border-crosser. Mobility and knowledge transfer in corporeal terms offer an alternative understanding of globalisation and education that limits the interpretations of what has been spoken or written about academic mobility in neo-liberalist and human capital accounts. This limitation and the difference that the everyday rhythms reveal about academic mobility must be considered more closely. I would end by reiterating that as the internalised other, there is nothing transferable or transnational about my ‘body’ of knowledge. Ultimately, the major collateral reality of academic mobility becomes my own body, whose rhythm alienates me and positions me as the ‘other within’.

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