



WORK & CULTURE

.edu Migrations: Historical Mobility in the World Educational System

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*Breaking Down the Ivory Tower: The
University in the Creation of Another
World*

Work & Culture 2005/4
http://www.yale.edu/laborculture/work_culture.html

Recommendation 3. We recommend that the proportion of non-US students admitted be increased from about 6 to about 8 percent.

International students are currently not eligible for need-blind admission, though many of them receive financial aid. We see the fiscal rationale, but not the justice of excluding international students from need-blind policies and are concerned that this exclusion implies or teaches a double standard at a point when The College is striving to inculcate global cohesion. The experience of peer institutions is that need-blind admission can markedly increase the quality of the applicant pool. The College's pool of talented international students is already strong; however, to ensure that the College has the broadest range of the most talented international students from which to choose, we urge that there be more active and targeted recruitment of such students from a wider range of countries, particularly those in Africa and Latin America.

—from a report of the Committee on Academic Priorities of Amherst College, MA

The above lines represent one of the numerous calls for internationalization that could be heard on university campuses in the US. To be sure, it is among the more generous and laudable of its kind. And it would be highly unfair to ask of such a document to concern itself with about how this “pool of talented international students” is produced, what effect they would their migration produces, both in the donor countries and in the USA, or what would happen to those students afterwards—questions which will guide this paper. Instead, Recommendation 3 seeks no more than it states: to diversify the College with the “broadest range of the most talented international students.” Institutions of its rank find a clear cultural premium to having a diverse number of such students. Consequently, they consciously enter into competition with their peer institutions for the available pool of internationally mobile students. The internationalization of universities has become a common slogan for many college presidents, higher education experts, business leaders or government officials.

Of course, the internationalization of US higher education is no current fad. One can find appeals to bring more foreign students to US campuses with varying intensity over the last fifty years. On an even larger historical scale, what is in fact a relatively new historical formation is the nation-based university that came about gradually in Europe following the displacement of Latin as the universal academic language by local vernaculars. The medieval universities—Bologna, Florence, Paris—were all truly international institutions (if “international” sounds meaningful in a medieval context), with teachers and students from different ethnicities. The same principle held true outside of Europe: Al-Alzhar, the prototypical Islamic university, was meant to serve the whole of Arab civilization (Altbach, et. al., 3). The university, then as now, is

unthinkable without internationalization, without the gathering of a large and cosmopolitan body of scholars. Otherwise, as an institution, it would surrender its claim to universality. What this essay seeks to challenge is certainly not internationalization itself but the principles upon which this body scholars is now constituted and the purposes for which it is employed.

The framework organizing international student mobility in the contemporary world economy is we shall call the *world .edu system*. As the world .edu system will be the primary unit of analysis of this essay, we shall define it from the outset as the bounded system of the world's institutions of tertiary education, operating with a single division of labor and according to its specific rules, and connected by networks of human mobility, extending beyond national boundaries. The world .edu system represents the most recent stage of the historical world educational system, which emerged in the aftermath of the Second World War; what distinguishes the world .edu system is its increasing alignment with the agenda of the contemporary globalized economy (neoliberalism), its growing independence of the state, and a hitherto unimaginable interconnectedness through technology.¹

UNESCO's statistics in its *Global Educational Digest 2006* provide us with a snapshot of international student mobility within that system (130-138). The data makes possible the classification of all states into core educational powers (the USA, the UK, Germany, and France), an educational semi-periphery that sends its own students to core countries, while accepting foreign ones, and an educational periphery, out of which the pool of international students largely emerges. Despite the incredible complexities it dissembles, such a categorization will provide the necessary framework for the study of international student flow, for which UNESCO's geographical region-based analysis is not always adequate. The division of educational labor into core, periphery, and semi-periphery is hardly particular to our time. What is new, and what this essay will examine in greater detail, is the increasing dependence of higher education in the core and some semi-peripheral .edu powers on international students. A complex set of institutional considerations drives the demand for international students: tuition fees (dominant factor behind the internationalization of British, Australian and most other educational systems), scientific supremacy (the main consideration for American universities), pursuit of cultural and political influence (more prevalent in the past, but now sought by non-state actors as well), and the cultural premium that an international student body brings with itself. Out of these motivations, a veritable .edu competition for foreign students arises among and within the core and semi-peripheral powers, much to the detriment of the quality and accessibility of education there. At the other end of the world .edu system, in the .edu periphery, a pool of internationally mobile students is constituted and through various channels made available to the .edu core. To understand why international students embark on their mostly global South-to-North .edu migrations, we evoke Bourdieu's concept of educational capital, which at present is heavily concentrated along the North Atlantic. The search for this capital and its conversion into other kinds of capital align the personal politics of some internationally educated with the agenda of the contemporary global economy, but more often they render the .edu migrants into a flexible, controllable, and depoliticized workforce in service of that

economy. That is, the neoliberal world .edu system produces its own neoliberal subjects.

Fighting the Cold War on the Educational Front: The Rise of the Mass University and Foreign Student Enrolments

Before the contemporary .edu system became possible, a world educational system had to be forged out of the destruction of the Second World War. Surely, many American and European students paid their homage to the nineteenth-century German university, and many a colonial subject had to make a similar educational pilgrimage to Oxford, London or the Sorbonne well before decolonization. Yet it was not until the rise of the mass university in the decades following The Second World War that higher education became truly a mass commodity. After all, once the world education system emerged as a part of the world-economy, it had to follow the latter's imperative of capital accumulation "via the eventual commodification of everything" (Wallerstein 1998, 10). The several-fold rise in enrolments and the new ambitious research agenda made it a capital-intensive sector more responsive to the needs of the post-war economy than it had ever been before. Slowly but steadily, international student enrolment rose to 2% of all tertiary students in the world by the mid-1970s. The percentage has remained steady ever since then (UNESCO). At the very core of this new world educational system stood the United States. The successive disasters of The First World War, the political and economic volatility of the Weimer Republic, nazification, and the total devastation of the Second World War had greatly reduced the previously dominant German university system. By contrast, the United States emerged from The Second World War not only less affected by the destruction suffered by other participants but also internationally empowered. This political and economic dominance over the post-war scene soon translated itself into educational supremacy. In the years before, during, and immediately after the war, many European scholars found refuge there. Already in the 1950s, the flow of European students and scholars, from Germany and England in particular, to the USA had given rise to the alarmist term "brain drain."ⁱⁱ Indeed, it did not take long for the USA to establish itself as the most common destination for internationally mobile students from the First and the newly decolonized Third World. The thirty years between 1954 and 1984 saw a ten-fold increase in US international student enrolments from 34,000 to 340,000 (Open Doors 2003, 17). Some of these students came on ideologically predetermined channels, such as the massive US scholarship scheme for students from Guinea-Bissau, following the 1980 anti-Soviet coup in that country (Altbach et al. 46). Yet the tuition-paying majority of international students in the USA came to the states privately, and was not subject to the kind of ideological obligation government scholarship-holders were (Open Doors 2003, 6). But the very act of studying and socializing in the US had ideological implications regardless of the way one came.

According to Immanuel Wallerstein, the Soviet Union, the United States's greatest competitor, re-entered the world economy following the Second World War after a period of voluntary self-isolation (Wallerstein 2000, 98). While reinstated as a semi-peripheral state, it sought full core status. But the limited nature of direct Cold War educational exchanges between the First World and its dependents, on the one hand, and the Second World and its own, on the other,

make it more meaningful to think of two semi-autonomous world sub-systems within the larger world system. These subsystems came into contact only occasionally, when they competed for the same section of the periphery—the potential pool of Third World students. The core power of the smaller sub-system, the Soviet Union, educated a significantly smaller population of international students than did the USA but enjoyed greater ideological control over them.

The USSR was a latecomer to the Cold-War educational competition. Because of the tremendous devastation of the Second World War and the consequences of Stalinism, it was not until Khrushchev's gradual coming to power in the late 1950s that enrolments in higher education began to mirror and exceed the growth taking place in the First World. While various Soviet institutes had been providing ideological training to foreign sympathizers well before the Second World War, and technical training to Eastern European citizens in the post-war years, it was only in 1956-7 that USSR started seriously competing for influence in the newly decolonized states and recruiting from their potential student pool. Consistent with the Soviet state's let's-show-'em-what-we-are-like approach to ensuring foreigners' loyalty, students from newly decolonized states were given stipends for living expenses twice or thrice as high as the stipends of Soviet students (Edel'man). Between 1965 and 1980, the number of foreign students enrolled at Soviet universities increased from 24,000 to 62,000, excluding the number of those pursuing vocational or specialized degrees. The fact that the Soviet state bore all the costs of educating international students allowed it greater ideological control over both their circulation within its sphere of influence and the content of their educational programs. The symbolic moment for Soviet recruitment of students from (potentially) friendly countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America was the founding of Patrice Lumumba Peoples' Friendship University in Moscow upon Khrushchev's initiative in 1961. According to the web site of the university, its mostly international graduates (47,000 from the undergraduate division and the 4,300 PhDs) work in 130 countries of the world ("History of founding of the People's Friendship University"). The other Warsaw Pact countries, too, accepted their share of ideologically desirable foreign students. Latin American, African, Vietnamese or Afghani student enrolments in Eastern and Central European universities accurately reflected political expedience. Training Third-World cadres was one of the ways in which the Cold War was fought.

The Soviet Union and the USA were hardly the only destinations for students of developing countries. Western European countries were networked with their former colonies through a system of official exchanges, vestiges of which still remain, in the form of privileged Francophone status for students at French universities hailing from the former colonies, or Commonwealth scholarships at British ones. In 1980, France received 114,000 foreign students, most of whom hailed from the traditionally French sphere of influence in sub-Saharan Africa and the Arab states. That same year, 56,000 students, the majority of whom came from the former British Empire, enrolled at universities in the United Kingdom (Altbach et al., 2). Educationally, the post-colonial periphery was still greatly dependent on its former metropole. If we add to the four above-mentioned countries (the USA, USSR, France and Britain) Germany (61,000 international students in 1980), whose economic miracle and free public

universities were attracting a diverse group of international students, then we shall have the core group of educational powers for most of the Cold War period.

Towards the Present: from Three Worlds into One

What has happened since the days of the Cold War? Most immediately, the number of international students has risen significantly. Between 1980 and 2004, the number of internationally mobile students has grown from 1.0 million to 2.5 million. Yet over the same period, there has been a corresponding increase in worldwide tertiary enrolments, from 51 million to 132 million, with most of the growth taking place in developing countries. Overall, the proportion of international students has stayed practically constant: slightly less than 2%.ⁱⁱⁱ That is, more students are having their education abroad simply because there are more students in the world.

What has changed are the terms of international student mobility. Major political upheavals and gradual socio-economic developments have profoundly transformed the sources global student flow over the past thirty years. In 1977, as part of Mao Tse Tung's initiative to open the country to the West, China let its own students pursue education abroad. It took less than twenty years for China to turn from a negligible source of internationally mobile students into their biggest exporter. Similarly, the dissolution of the Second World in the late 1980s and early 1990s interrupted the flow of students within that system, and seriously reduced, though did not eliminate, its intake of Third World students. These processes meant that a vast pool of students was now made available to the expanding First (now Only) World educational subsystem, or more specifically, to its transatlantic core. With political boundaries made more porous and economic crises diminishing educational and professional opportunities at home, Eastern and Central European high schools and colleges became gateways for migration to Western European or American universities.^{iv}

The end of the Second World de-ideologized channels of international student mobility. Between virtual disappearance of Soviet scholarships for Third-World students and the drastic reduction of government sponsorship of international students attending US institutions (from 15% to 3% between 1980 and 2002), educational migration lost the explicit ideological investment of the main Cold War adversaries (Open Doors 2003, 5). Peoples' Friendship University, the erstwhile quintessence of ideologically-motivated international education, still enrolls almost half of its student body from among international students, but now on a private, fee-paying basis. Symbolically, its de-ideologization was illustrated by the removal of the African socialist Patrice Lumumba from the institution's name. By contrast, the processes of economic globalization within a unipolar world have enhanced the status of the major world .edu power, the USA. The increased volume of economic, scholarly, and population exchanges within a less ideological bloc, the European Union, has increased the combined .edu power of its Franco-Germano-British center.^v

.edu Mobility: UNESCO's Snapshot of International Student Mobility

UNESCO's *Global Education Digest 2006*, the most complete statistic available on the number of students leaving and entering each country, presents us with a snapshot of the contemporary world .edu system. The digest's region-

by-region data analysis, however, is not always satisfactory.^{vi} Say, grouping Russia together with many of its former satellites not only distorts up all averages but also dissembles that country's particular role within the regional subsystem. Unlike their Eastern Central European counterparts, a very large number but only a small proportion of Russian university students leave their country. In addition, Russia attracts 76,000 international students, twice as many as it loses. Despite its wider, international claims (many students from developing countries in Africa, East and West Asia continue to have their education there),^{vii} contemporary Russia is best thought of as a regional power with respect to its former republics in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. In the latter region, it competes with Turkey and Kyrgyzstan; Lebanon, Jordan, Qatar and Dubai fulfill the function of such powers for the Arab region; Cuba for Latin America; South Africa (50,000 international students) is an even more significant destination for Sub-Saharan Africans. South and West Asia (the countries of the Indian subcontinent and Iran) seem to lack a well-pronounced regional educational power, as most of their internationally mobile students leave the region altogether. By contrast, in Asia, the regional educational powers are several: Macao, Malaysia, New Zealand, and on a rather larger scale, China (100,000 international students), Japan (118,000) and Australia (167,000). The last three states, even though attractive mostly to students from the region, are attempting to break out of their semi-peripheral status and compete for foreign students with the core powers.^{viii} Finally, North America and Western Europe contain all the core countries: the absolute leader, United States (573,000), followed by three European powers: UK (300,000), Germany (260,000) and France (238,000). Together, these host more than half of the world's 2.5 million internationally mobile students. Each of them can boast a much more geographically diverse international student population than can China, Japan and even Australia. In a sense, the core education powers today are very much the same as they were during the Cold War, with the exception of the Soviet Union's dropping out and Australia's becoming a serious contender for core status (possibly joined in the long run by China if its the latter's international enrolments continue to grow at their current pace).^{ix}

On the basis of the UNESCO data, it is easy to reconstruct power relations between imperial metropole and colony. We need not do that. What is more interesting is the gradual transformation of these relationships into patterns of linguistic and cultural affinity. Thus, for example, South African universities attract more students from the former British colonies in sub-equatorial Africa than their counterparts in the United Kingdom do. Similarly, students from India, Malaysia, Hong Kong and Singapore prefer Australia to Britain. As a factor of international mobility, geographic proximity here trumps deference to the former imperial center. That the US is an even more popular destination for students from Sub-Saharan Africa and East Asia than South Africa and Australia (respectively) suggests that a country's economic and .edu power is still the ultimate "pull" factor, more significant the combined power of imperial connections and geographical proximity. By the same logic, France bests Belgium as the primary destination for former Belgian colonies in Africa. Of the smaller colonial powers, Portugal still attracts a significant number of students from its former African possessions, and to a lesser extent, from Brazil while the

Netherlands and Spain seem poorly wired educationally with their former colonies.

The UNESCO data also suggest another type of dependence—between a small country and its bigger neighbor—which does not fall comfortably under the rubric “regional power” or “empire.” Denmark, for example, is the most significant destination for outbound Icelandic students, Italy for Albanians (20% of all Albanian students pursue their education in Italy), Greece for Cypriots, Bulgaria for college-bound Macedonians, Romania for Moldavians, Vietnam for Laosians, Cameroon for Chadians, Madagascar for students from the Comoros Islands. In all the small members of these pairs—and their list could be significantly expanded if we add all the small island states—the proportion of outbound students to those who remain at home is consistently over 10%, reaching 142% with the Comoros Islands (that is, to every 100 students who attend college on the Comoros Islands, there are 142 who head abroad). The relationship between the population of the country and the likelihood of its students becoming educational migrants is fairly strong: students of smaller states are much more likely to have their tertiary education abroad. By contrast, states with larger populations (India, China, USA, Indonesia, Russia, Germany), regardless of their socio-economic development, send only a small percentage of their students abroad (which can still be, absolutely, a very large number). A bigger state can offer the educational, cultural, and professional opportunities a smaller one lacks.^x

Come here, Mr. Foreigner: the Demand Side of the .edu Migration

What are the institutional motivations that lead the core educational powers to spend so much of their time, money and effort recruiting foreign students? In Great Britain and Australia, for example, foreign students serve mostly as a source of tuition fees for these country’s chronically under-funded university systems. A seventh of all British university students hail from abroad. The majority of them are non-EU-citizens, and have to pay tuition fees several times as large as those of British and EU students. The British media frequently cites £23 billion as the amount foreign students bring yearly to the economy, and most directly, to universities (MacLeod). Some universities, such as the London School of Economics (two-thirds foreign enrolment), receive as much as a third of their income from international students. The financial survival of the whole British university system has become dependent not merely on the number of matriculating international students but to projected increases in that number. The social price at which such dependence comes could be illustrated by Oxford’s decision to reduce the number of UK students it accepts in favor of non-EU foreign nationals (Staff and agencies). But the most dramatic example of a system of higher education turned into a service sector for foreign clients comes from Australia (17% international enrolments), where the universities’ increasing reliance on foreign student tuition fees is palpably undermining their academic integrity. The Australian example suggests the consequences of full commercialization of an education system: departments that fail to attract large number of foreign students (anything but business studies and information technology) have been downsized; a huge managerial corps of recruiters, off-shore operators, finance administrators and others has displaced faculty as academia’s focal point; the universities have grown dependent on fluctuations in

the Australian dollar, visa policy or any other factor that could reduce international enrolments (Margison). An .edu market has been created, over which neither universities nor their governments have any control. In the UK, Australia and most semi-peripheral states, the demand for international students is primarily a demand for tuition-paying customers. The accompanying talk of “diversification” and “internationalization” of higher education, with which increasing foreign enrolments become justified, rings decidedly hollow.

With an international population of only 3.4%, American universities are rather less reliant on foreign tuition fees. Instead, the primary source of demand for foreign students in the USA are the country’s science and technology, which depend on recruiting engineers and scientists from abroad.^{xi} For a very long time, America’s high schools and colleges have simply not produced the number of scientists demanded by industry. Already in 1960, 34% of doctoral students in engineering at American universities were foreign; by 1982, the percentage was 51% (Altbach et al., 36). The post-2001 fall in the number of Chinese applicants for those disciplines induced into many government and business leaders a fear that the country is “losing its technological edge.”^{xii} To a lesser extent, other core educational powers demonstrate similar reliance on international students for their science and engineering sector. And each has its own particular visa or naturalization scheme to retain graduates of those disciplines. Upon the completion of a PhD at a US university, over 80% of students in these disciplines remain in the country, whether within or without academia (National Organization for Research at the University of Chicago, 75).

A select few well-endowed US institutions, such as the Northeastern liberal-arts College whose document in the beginning, can afford to be motivated by a higher consideration: to bring the cultural diversity of international students to their campuses, regardless of the students’ ability to pay for their education. The cost of need-blind admission for foreign undergraduates, however, is so prohibitive that only handful of US colleges have adopted such a policy. Many universities in core and peripheral countries, however, do provide partial, or more rarely, full scholarships (discounts) to international students with a view to improving not only the academic quality of their student bodies but also their international diversity. Sometimes these scholarships are given more selectively, to students hailing from particular countries, or from particular ethnic or otherwise defined groups, with the aim of enhancing the host country’s international prestige and sphere of influence, and producing a foreign population socialized in and possibly loyal to that country. It is largely for this reason that many former imperial powers have made an effort to maintain educational and other connection with their former colonies or Cuba continues to subsidize the education of many Latin American students. The decline in government funding of universities and government-awarded scholarships in the post-Cold War world, however, has also meant that such considerations of national prestige cede their role to the economic imperatives discussed above.

Finally, there is the case of Germany, France and a few other Western European countries, where the university is still a practically free public good, subsidized by the state, and foreign undergraduates—not a source but a significant drain on the country’s finances. However, given the diminishing support from the state, these educational systems have been under tremendous pressure to follow Australia’s and Britain’s example, as evidenced by Germany’s

recent decision to allow its universities to charge fees. This measure will disproportionately affect foreign students.

Typically, within any given national university system these different motivations co-exist in a proportion determined by resources, ambitiousness of research agenda, sphere of influence, and commitment to public education.

No One's Safe: the .edu Competition

Out of this demand for foreign students arises the .edu competition among the core counties, with some powerful semi-peripheral states also entering the fray. So far, Australia has produced the most coherent national strategy for international students, which others are attempting to emulate (Clark and Sedgewick). Fearing that the world's best and brightest are going elsewhere, Germany is abandoning its erstwhile commitment to equitable funding of higher education, designating ten universities as 'centers of excellence,' which will aim to attract international talent through much enhanced funding.^{xiii} Ironically, returning its debt to the nineteenth-century German university, the American system of higher education is providing the model for the .edu reforms in Germany. Largely in response to the implicit American competition, the whole European Union ambitiously launched the wide-ranging Lisbon reforms aimed at transforming the Union into "the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in the world" by 2010 (Clark and Sedgewick). One significant step towards that end is the Bologna Declaration, which aims to standardize the European system of higher education, making educational mobility easier (Ainem, Caspar et al.). Interestingly, such anxiety-driven European developments are, in turn, worrying American observers, politicians and university leaders. John Douglass's widely publicized article "The Waning of America's Higher Educational Advantage: International Competitors Are No Longer Number Two and Have Big Plans for the Global Economy" is representative of this increasing anxiety (Douglas).^{xiv}

Conducting this competition, national promotional groups (the Australian Education International, the British Council, Fulbright, joined recently by the Chinese Confucius Centers) have been branding the educational service they offer to prospective international customers as "the British experience" or "the Australian experience." The DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) and EduFrance have—until now—been less aggressive participants. After all, you do not have to brand an (almost) free public good, which is still what for the most part higher education represents for the international students there. Independently of state policies, university consortia in those countries have been lobbying for more lenient visa regulations and greater freedom for universities in setting fees and international enrolments. Individual universities, too, send representatives abroad to recruit prospective international students. The marketplace of the college fair, pioneered internationally by American private colleges, is becoming an increasingly popular form for European and Asian universities to advertise themselves to foreign students. Some Anglophone universities have begun outsourcing the promotional functions to private operators such as the Study Group, which "helps 35,000 students from 120 countries fulfill their ambition" every year (Study Group).

Participants in this .edu competition have been very inventive in confronting certain structural disadvantages in attracting more students, such as

having the wrong language (anything other than English) or lacking educational prestige. English-language campuses have appeared could be found now in most countries. In search of the prestige of recognizable brands, some ambitious semi-peripheral states have established on their territories campuses of internationally recognizable universities. Singapore boasts campuses of the Chicago Business School, INSEAD (the most prestigious French business school), and University of New South Wales. International campuses have been mushrooming not only there. Carnegie Mellon, Georgetown University, Texas A&M, and Weil Cornell Medical College have all opened campuses in Educational City, Dubai, Qatar's government's project to lure Western brand-names and regional students. Educational City faces stiff competition from another multi-campus, the United Arab Emirates' Knowledge Village, which has so far attracted satellites from the University of New Brunswick, Heriot-Watt, Mahatma Gandhi University and a few other global-minded institutions. A quick examination of the web sites of most satellite campuses shows that the majority of them offer degrees only in business-related subjects and informational technology. These subjects seem to fulfill the role played by theology in the medieval universities: the very basis of knowledge. Of course, there are satellite campuses with more ambitiously designed curricula; on some occasions, a successful campus gradually increases its educational offerings beyond business and IT. However, the spectrum of subjects offered there, and one could argue, the quality of education, remains much narrower than on parent campuses. Yet the Western university benefits from having such off-shore campuses by internationalizing its brand-name. Indeed, many of them seem more concerned with brand promotion than with an actual educational process.

The ultimate branding exercise, however, could be found in the university rankings that have been inundating most core and semi-peripheral countries for the past ten years. Recently, this brand competition has taken a global turn through publications of several "Best Universities in the World" lists (Best for what? Judged by whom? How?)^{xv} National media in each country use the position of their own universities within that ranking either to congratulate the country for the achievement, but more frequently, to urge radical reform of its system of higher education so that it can compete with America's top-ranked institutions. Conceived purely as *mimesis* of higher education, national and international rankings actively transform it. The final product of the .edu competition is the globalized university's somewhat paradoxical state of constant crisis (accompanied by cost-cutting) and constant expansion.

International Students: In Search of Bourdieu's Capitals

So far our discussion has focused predominantly on the more abstract institutional demand side of international student mobility with little consideration as to why students embark on these lengthy, inconvenient and possibly traumatic migrations. Here, it is important to make a distinction between two types of international education. The majority of foreign students hailing from developed countries spend only a semester or a year abroad. Most often, they seek a foreign experience as opposed to a foreign degree, in Bourdieu's terms, cultural as opposed to educational capital. Programs such as Socrates-Erasmus within the European Union and many university-to-university exchanges send hundreds of thousands of students to a foreign university for a

semester or a year. The more numerically significant kind of mobility, and the one that properly merits the name “.edu migration,” is the pursuit of a foreign degree by students from the educational periphery in the educational core, that is, the movement from sites of lower to sites of higher educational capital (Bourdieu). Such a definition of .edu migration requires a spatially dynamic view of Bourdieu’s convertible types of capital. After all, the surface of the Earth is extremely unevenly endowed with different kinds of capital, and that endowment bears poor relation to population distribution. Not unlike financial capital, most of the educational capital of the planet is concentrated along the North Atlantic, in what world-system theorists would call core educational powers. Bourdieu’s concept of educational capital and the possibility for its conversion provides the much-needed intermediary between our world-system framework (demand-oriented view of the labor market for international students) and the actual motivations of international students (supply-oriented view). Indeed, we shall now adopt the latter view, examining, from the perspective of foreign students, the structures of the world .edu system, the way these students navigate around them, and finally, the subjectivities that emerge out of this navigation.

The Bulgarians: My Case Study

The absence of hard data about international students and their sheer variety make such a task rather challenging. What I can offer instead are my personal anecdotes and observations of a small subset of international students, that of Bulgarian students abroad, of which I have been a member, first as a high school student at Dulwich College, London, then as an undergraduate at Williams College, MA, then for two years as an auditor at the Russian State University for the Humanities, and currently, as a PhD student at Yale University, CT. This section, focused as it is on a much smaller unit of analysis, will hopefully offer a useful corrective to the abstractions of our earlier world-system analysis.

Before we begin, however, it may be useful to provide a brief account of the distinguishing features of the Bulgarian educational migration. Because Bulgaria has lacked powerful centers of higher education (its first institution of higher education, Sofia University was established as late as 1888), its students have been very mobile historically. Depending on the country’s political affiliation at the moment, the destination for educational advancement have been either Russia or Western Europe. The recent .edu migration began over a decade ago with the end of the Cold War and was fuelled by the continual economic crisis of the 1990s, which seriously compromised educational and economic opportunities at home. With 10% of its college and graduate students abroad, Bulgaria currently has one of the highest outbound mobility rates of Eastern and Central Europe (only Albania with 30% and Macedonia with 12% exceed the Bulgarian rate; UNESCO, 132). The top destinations of this migration are Germany (12,100), USA (3,700), France (2,900), and Austria (1,600; *Ibid.*). Unlike internationally mobile Chinese and Indian students, Bulgarian .edu migrants are mostly undergraduates. By virtue of studying in tuition-free Western European countries, where education is state-subsidized, or by adroitly navigating the American and other countries’ scholarship systems, most Bulgarians belong to the minority of internationally mobile students who do not

have to rely on their family resources to fund their education. Unlike Americans, or to a lesser extent, Western Europeans, who spend a year or a semester abroad, Bulgarians usually enroll in a degree-granting program and pursue a full course of study.

Expectations at Home, Networks Abroad: Passages through the .edu System

Bulgaria's combination of a rigorous secondary schooling and weaker tertiary education makes high school the primary gateway point for the majority of Bulgarian .edu migrants. Feeding the .edu migration is the system of prestigious language high schools, which not only produces an elite group of students but also teaches that group a European language (most commonly English, followed by German, French, and to a lesser extent, Spanish) and prepares them for an internationally mobile life. Even though the recent expansion of intensive language instruction to other types of secondary schools has eroded the privileged position of language high schools, in most of them successful students are still expected to pursue a degree in the country in whose language they specialize. Unless these students were among the pioneers who left for Western European or American universities in the early 1990s, they have before them the example of their predecessors, who have already achieved their .edu migrations.

With the help of those upper-year students, a horizon of migratory possibilities is constructed in Bulgarian high schools, and questions about how and where to apply, and what to expect upon arrival are easily answered. Cultural institutions such as the Open Society Foundation, the American-Bulgarian Fulbright Commission, the British Council, DAAD, the French Cultural Center, and the Spanish Embassy provide official information and otherwise facilitate the application process. Completing this horizon, but with information of significantly lower quality, is the steady stream of articles in the Bulgarian press that describe the life of Bulgarian students in Germany, France, Austria, the USA, Japan, Italy and Spain; extol Harvard (but have good words to spare for the "Los Angeles-based" Stanford); bemoan the unreformed German system of higher education; and discuss MBA and other types of programs.^{xvi}

Processing this barrage of information, Bulgarian students end up creating for themselves a rather specific map of the country where they hope to pursue their education.^{xvii} On such a mental map of the US, for example, Cambridge, MA is most frequently the capital, with important centers in Ithaca, NY (not so much because of Cornell University, but on account of Ithaca College, NY, which enrolls about 50 Bulgarians); Bridgeport, CT (faded in importance now, but in recent past home to over 100 Bulgarian students at the University of Bridgeport); South Hadley, MA (where the local Mt. Holyoke enrolls over 30 Bulgarians); Williamstown, MA (a town that barely exists on a geographic map of the US, but whose scenic college has been generous to Bulgarian students). To be sure, through a combination of factors (primarily scholarship availability), these sites have attracted an abnormally high concentration of Bulgarian students; more common are colleges and universities with smaller Bulgarian enrolments. The South and the mid-West barely exist on this map because few colleges from these regions provide significant scholarships to foreign students. The same is

true to otherwise big cities such as Houston and Dallas. Indeed, this map has very little to do with the actual population or social realities in the USA.

The scholarship map persists for some time after the Bulgarian students' arrival in the USA as college towns such as those mentioned above are often the first places to visit at the invitation of friends. Indeed, personal networks created in Bulgaria continue abroad. Thus, within three years of his matriculation at Dowling College, NY (1999), my friend Georgi had managed to attract to that college three of his friends by advising them on their application and pleading on their behalf before admission and financial aid officers at the college.

Ultimately, networks and concentrations among Bulgarians at US colleges lack the density of their peers at German or Austrian universities, where their numbers are much greater while the distances are much shorter. Munich alone boasts over 2,700 Bulgarian students (4,000 in 2001), primarily concentrated between Ludwig-Maximilian University and Munich Technical University.^{xviii} The sheer size of the Bulgarian student community within that city makes possible the existence of a veritable parallel polis. According to one Munich-based Bulgarian observer, its primary nodes are located in dormitories with disproportionate concentration of Bulgarians (Gazdov). After all, it is often with the help of their compatriots that Bulgarian students arrange housing and job placements. Munich may be a somewhat extreme example of such a microcosm, yet the dozen very detailed web sites of Bulgarian Clubs at other German universities testify to the strength of the community of Bulgarians students in Germany.^{xix}

Especially when a strong Bulgarian community is absent, Bulgarian students abroad often integrate within another social group: that of international students, with whom they share the experience of displacement, and a particular status in the receiving society. Despite the efforts of university administrators, to many, socialization with other foreign students remains on the whole easier than with native ones. A somewhat extreme, but revealing example is offered by Williams College, where I knew of 10 Bulgarians who dated other foreign students and only 3 who had American partners. At the same time, only one out of twenty students at Williams was an international student.

Exiting the .edu System: The Production of Neoliberal Subjectivity

National or international, such ethnically defined networks help form the international students' horizon of expectations regarding academic and professional choices. Yet to a large extent, these choices are already predetermined by the terms of the world .edu system. The educational capital of a foreign degree as well as the possibility of its conversion into other kinds of capital makes .edu migration not unlike economic migration. The disproportionate representation of business as the international students' preferred major—in Britain, for example, an international student is twice as likely to pursue a course in business and management as a native one—demonstrates this emphasis on converting educational into financial capital (United Kingdom Council for International Education).

While adequate statistics for major choices of Bulgarian students abroad are not available, they are hardly an exception to this academic and professional orientation. Once again, Williams College offers a not unusual example. Of the 15 Bulgarian alumni I know from this college, none has left the USA, while 9

became consultants or investment bankers, 1 a corporate lawyer, 1 a law student, and 4 graduate students. Last summer I conducted an informal survey, which asked them to describe in detail their political ideologies, party sympathies (in the USA and Bulgaria), attitudes to free trade, labor unions, and other issues traditionally defining personal politics. With five participants (probably the most politicized among them), the survey cannot claim any statistical validity. However, the combination of that survey and the informal interviews I have had with many Bulgarian students abroad suggests that a significant proportion of them, especially among those headed for jobs in business, support contemporary neoliberalism and globalized economy.^{xx} The close alignment of business (as an undergraduate major and a professional field) with the agenda of the globalized economy predisposes many of its students or practitioners towards a neoliberal ideology. Many Bulgarians abroad also see in globalization, probably correctly, the structural force that brought them to the United States.

While such a political orientation is quite common with educated 20-30 year-olds in Bulgaria, many of whom are reacting to the legacy of forty-five years of communism, I would argue that studies and work abroad have tended to facilitate the formation of neoliberal subjectivity. In fact, a cohort of Bulgarian “Chicago boys” is currently in training.^{xxi} In an e-mail exchange in the summer of 2005, Ivan, a very talented Bulgarian friend of mine, who went on to become the valedictorian of Williams College, MA, declared himself a libertarian. Libertarianism represents an exceedingly rare political identification in Bulgaria, and one that he must have picked up during his four-year sojourn in the USA. Judging by its online presence, the word entered the Bulgarian public sphere in a major way in December 2004 when the (now former) finance minister Milen Velchev (himself an MIT Sloan School of Management graduate, who went on to have a career in Merrill Lynch before assuming his position as a minister) expressed his loyalties to libertarian thought (Evtimov). Non-partisan though it claims to be, Bulgarian Easter, the major political organization through which young Bulgarians abroad remain engaged in the affairs of their home country, co-writes open letters calling for the abolition of corporate tax, significant tax cuts and other traditionally neo-liberal policies with the Friedrich von Hayek Foundation and Industry Watch. Indeed, a significant fraction of Bulgarian students abroad and the growing number of Bulgarian graduates of foreign universities are gradually coming to terms with the political clout they could wield and the political capital into which a foreign degree education be converted. Finance Minister Milen Velchev may have been one of the first returnees but will hardly be the last. In that same e-mail, my friend Ivan, who is currently working for Deutsche Bank in New York, promised one day to return to Bulgaria. I do not believe that the time spent at Williams changed the general direction of his politics. It has, however, empowered him with the intellectual tools and the educational capital (which could, in time, be converted into class power) to realize this personal politics in practice. It is precisely this group of international students that enthusiastic university presidents greet as the future “world leaders” their globalized universities are educating (Levin).

While the majority of Bulgarian students abroad are no neoliberal ideologists, one does not need to subscribe to the tenets of this philosophy to fulfill an essentially neoliberal role within a given society. Such a function is often predicated by the structural location of the majority Bulgarian students,

especially upon exiting the world .edu system. While the phenomenon of the Bulgarian .edu migration has been too recent to discuss with any definitiveness, the vast majority of the internationally educated Bulgarians have so far tended to stay and seek employment in the countries of the .edu core, where they have received their education. Visa considerations channel a number of those still hesitant about their calling into default positions in business (which can provide a work visa, unlike many other types of jobs), or more rarely, into PhD programs (which usually come with a visa and financial support, generally not available in MA programs or professional schools) or science and technology. Needless to say, an unpaid internship at an NGO is rarely an option. In other words, the particular legal and economic niche Bulgarian (and many other international) graduates of US or European colleges makes them much more likely than citizens to opt for some sectors of the economy (finance, IT, science and technology, and tertiary education) than others (government, NGOs, social work, education, and the like). While most of the structural constraints of the job market are hardly particular to international graduates, the visa status makes international students particularly vulnerable.

Christina Moon's article on Chinese graduate students at Yale in this collection of papers provides a typical yet eloquent example of this vulnerability. The terms of their visa status also forcibly render most .edu migrants, like most other immigrants, significantly more mobile and flexible than their native counterparts. Indeed, the ultimate product that emerges out of the world .edu system and the subsequent constraints of professional development are highly flexible, semi-enfranchised subjects, fulfilling a high-skilled, yet narrowly defined, usually technical function in the receiving society, whose lowest-skilled jobs are also performed by disenfranchised immigrant labor. Such a status of useful semi-citizens hardly encourages a particular commitment to a public good.^{xxii} And it can be difficult to gain awareness of such a public good if the state they encounter takes the shape of the INS or the IRS (or their equivalents elsewhere) while the rights and privileges of a full citizenship are denied to them on legal and cultural grounds. That absence of representation and of forms of political engagement has heavily depoliticized these subjects and made them difficult to organize in labor unions and social movements. Limited in rights, but highly flexible, unrepresented but politically docile, the internationally educated from the global South provide the core .edu powers with an ideal workforce from a neoliberal point of view. Indeed, globally Southern students educated at globally Northern universities all too often serve as a superstructure, which reinforces the neoliberal base that brought them there in the first place.

However rough their passage through the world .edu system and however disenfranchising their post-graduate life, few Bulgarian graduates of American and European universities ever profess a regret for having pursued their studies abroad, even fewer have so far returned to Bulgaria after the receipt of their foreign degree, and certainly none that I know thinks of herself as a victim of the world .edu system.^{xxiii} Like other kinds of immigrants, .edu migrants follow the force-fields of world economy, in their case, the knowledge economy. The real victims of the international .edu migration are to be found elsewhere, in the societies affected by the resulting brain drain. The .edu migration typically aggravates the educational, and hence, economic and other kinds of inequalities that exist between these societies and the .edu powers.

That the globalizers of higher education in the .edu core rarely voice such concerns illustrates perfectly their particular understanding of “internationalizing the campus.” Yet the rhetorical complex with which university leaders are justifying their institutions’ turn towards the New Global Economy—internationalization, diversification, interdisciplinarity, and service to society—have proven extremely difficult to challenge. After all, these slogans represent the very values of most critics of this turn. Who dares internationalization? Who’s against diversity? Who wants to keep disciplines isolated from one another and the university segregated from the rest of society? It is our task to examine the terms upon which the university becomes “internationalized,” “diversified” (as much as a Benetton ad), made “interdisciplinary” (so that some subjects could be disappeared), and “useful” to society (or rather, to its businesses) and reclaim these slogans for an alternative academy, one that really means them.

Endnotes

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ⁱ We define neoliberalism as the political-economic philosophy that favor free trade, privatization, opening of foreign markets, international mobility of capital and opposes the national government’s role in business and other aspects of life.

ⁱⁱ The phrase “brain drain” was used first in the 1950s by a spokesman of the Royal Society to describe the migration of British scientists and technologists to the United States and Canada. For more information, please, see Christina Moon’s paper in this collection.

ⁱⁱⁱ The trend has remained the same over the last five years for which date is available, 1999-2004. That period saw a dramatic increase in internationally mobile students, 41%. But as UNESCO’s *Global Educational Digest 2006* report points out, there has also been a 40% increase in the number of total tertiary student enrolments (34).

^{iv} Some recent phenomena in international educational mobility need a more subtle and less obvious explanation: between 1999 and 2004, India practically doubled the number of students it sent to the USA, thereby surpassing the previous leader, China, whose number stayed virtually stagnant during the same period. See Institute for International Education 2005.

^v The same effect could be observed in European financial centers such as Frankfurt and Paris, which stand to benefit most from a more unified EU financial market (Sassen, 18).

^{vi} The digest divides the world into Arab States, Central and Eastern Europe, Central Asia, East Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, North America and Western Europe, South and West Asia, and finally, Sub-Saharan Africa.

^{vii} The attempts of Russian universities to attract more foreign students are continually undermined by the daily racist attacks on the latter.

^{viii} Over 110,000 out of the 167,000 internationally mobile students in Australia’s universities hail from East Asia and the Pacific; 108,000 out of Japan’s 118,000 foreign students are Asian. UNESCO’s statistics offer no such data for China, but the slant towards students from the region should be even greater (UNESCO, 130).

^{ix} The supply of internationally mobile students has been by individual countries, however, has been constantly fluctuating. If the list of top 10 countries-destinations for international students in 1980 looks very similar to today’s, the list of top 10 countries-senders of international students in 1980 bears little relation to the most likely sources of educational migration today (Altbach, et al., 2).

^x Needless to say, student mobility could not be reduced to .edu power vectors, that is, away from less educationally powerful states and towards more powerful ones. Had that been the case, no one would have left the US, and few would have ventured out of France and Germany. For an explanation of this secondary type of mobility, please, refer to the “Supply Side” section of this paper.

^{xi} The Institute of International Education estimates the sum to be \$12.9 billion in 2003 (Institute for International Education 2003, 4). Two-thirds of foreign students report their families’ and their own resources as the source of funding.

^{xii} For more information, please, see Christina Moon’s paper in this collection.

^{xiii} Sassen has identified a similar effect on the domestic stock market, which tend to concentrate into certain cities as a result of globalization (Sassen, 20).

^{xiv} To illustrate the threat posed by U.S.’s technological competitors, politicians from both parties have been quoting the ominous figure of 600,000 Chinese engineers produced per year (as opposed to 70,000 engineering graduates in the USA). That discrepancy has recently been proven enormously exaggerated by advocates of increased investment in US science (Epstein). Yet the American “technological edge” continues to serve as EU’s justification for its expenditures in science and engineering.

^{xv} A simple Google search would yield a number of such rankings, the most widely quotable online probably being *Top 500 Universities in the World* conducted by academics at Shanghai Jiao Tong University in China. Most of such rankings are based on different formulae for computing ISI-like indexes.

^{xvi} Scanned samples of such articles from Bulgarian national dailies could be viewed on the “Education Abroad” web site available on-line at <http://ww.testove.education.com>.

^{xvii} The idea of mental maps was suggested to me by Nikolai Gazdov’s article. The mapping of US educational centers is akin to Saskia Sassen’s analysis in her opening essay to the *Global Networks, Linked Cities*.

^{xviii} An unknown, but not negligible number of them are pseudo-students, who assume student status for the purposes of a visa, which allows them to enter Germany to work or engage in business (typically, buying second-hand German cars to sell them at profit in Bulgaria). For a more detailed description of the way some Bulgarian students exploit loopholes in Germany’s public system of higher education, see Gazdov.

^{xix} A list with links to the web sites of those Bulgarian Clubs is available on-line on the web page of the *Bulgarian Academic Club in Karlsruhe* at <http://www.bg-verein.de/index.php?id=399>.

^{xx} The vote of Bulgarians abroad is generally considered an “anti-communist” vote. The Bulgarian Socialist Party, the overall winner of the 2005 parliamentary election, won fewer votes than any of the three right- to right-center parties in both German and American polling stations (Anguelov).

^{xxi} The Chicago Boys Gang refers to the twenty-five or so members of Augusto Pinochet’s economic team, most of whom pursued at some point post-graduate studies at the University of Chicago, where they were deeply influenced by the “Chicago School.” Their immediate task was the privatization of those sectors of industry President Allende’s government had nationalized. In the 1970s and 1980s, graduates of that school were also well-represented in other Latin American countries.

^{xxii} I define “semi-citizen” as someone holding a work visa, a green card or even possibly a proper passport, but on account of his foreign origin, lacking a citizen’s rights and responsibilities.

^{xxiii} Adopting the observation Helen Kopnina makes in her study of Russians, I have had to acknowledge that internationally mobile Bulgarian students do not think of themselves in the terms proposed by some contemporary theorists of migration (Sandhya Shukla or Aiwa Ong): “hybrid,” “shifting,” “fluid,” “transnational.” Despite the very uncertain future of many of them, they still speak of themselves in the language of earlier scholarship on migration: “home/abroad,” “integration,” “adaptation,” “return” (Kopnina 207).

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