

Shaping Asia Through Student Mobilities

American Behavioral Scientist
2020, Vol. 64(10) 1400–1414
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DOI: 10.1177/0002764220947753
journals.sagepub.com/home/abs



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Abstract

While most Asian students still opt for Western universities when envisioning international destinations, growing numbers turn to Asian countries and their universities. This new development has received increasing attention among practitioners and policy makers, while social science research only recently turned to Asia-to-Asia students' international flows. This contribution offers, first, a literature review, reflecting on trends and the magnitude of inter-Asian students' movements. These movements are seen as multiple and complex mobilities, not only in spatial but also in the social and ideational sense. Student strategies in making choices while moving to foreign Asian universities as well as their pathways within the social spaces of universities—paying attention to the multiscale dimensions of movements and the assemblages they recreate—constitute the second part of the article. The third and main part discusses what we learn about the changing shape of Asia while following students' pathways and aspirations. These movements shape Asia's academic space that is embedded in the shifting dimensions of Asian economies, politics, social negotiations, cultures, and values.

Keywords

student mobilities, connectivities, Asia's academic space, aspirations, movement

Most aspirations embraced by Asian students and their families as they opt for international migration move them toward Western destinations.¹ For a growing number of students, however, the educational pathways lead to Asian universities. This recent development has received increasing attention among practitioners and policy makers (who actively contribute to redirecting student movements), while research has only

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slowly turned its attention to Asian students' international flows² heading "Eastward" (see Collins & Ho, 2018; Lipura & Collins, 2020). This contribution asks what we can learn about the changing shape of Asia's societies as we follow students' pathways, visions, and aspirations. How is Asia revalued through academic choices? Which barriers affect student navigations through Asian academic regions? What effects do their choices have on recreating connectivities? How do comparisons affect students' (positional) movements? And in what ways are comparative parameters changing, possibly leading to the reevaluation of Asian academic spaces vis-à-vis the Western centers?

This short contribution draws its approach from recent postcolonial reflections on Asian reconfigurations. "Asia" is taken here as a discursively delineated region, but more importantly it is seen as an "interconnected space" (Roy, 2016). It traces measures and movements contributing to producing the region as a "Rising Asia" (see Raghuram et al., 2014). While paying attention to Western imbrications in shaping "Asianness," this article addresses how Asian narratives, polices, and inter-Asian student mobilities shape Asians' positioning in the highly unequal realm of higher education. The emphasis is on "Asia," but while the bulk of reviewed literature centers on the East and South-East-Asian region—toward which also students from other Asian regions oscillate. Both, the student flows and the academic attention mirror the present-day Asian imbalances in the mobile worlds of students and in their reception. The notion of "shaping" deployed here emphasizes connectivities (paying due attention to barriers and obstacles), comparisons as well as collaborations (Brosius & Pfaff-Czarnecka, 2019) across the Asian region and its manifold global entanglements. Given the brevity of this text, such important issues as asymmetries and inequalities entailed can only be sketched, but not analyzed in detail.

Grasping university students' inter-Asian mobilities through the lens of connectivities, comparisons and collaborations throws light on the notion of "mobility"—which must be used and understood in plural. While the experience of studying is a process of movement entailing learning, growing, and developing the self; academic studies are processes interweaving spatial, social, ideational, and other movements (Pfaff-Czarnecka & Prekodravac, 2017). All of these movements shape Asia's academic spaces, which are embedded in shifting economies, politics, social negotiations under conditions of pronounced inequalities, cultures, and values.

This article provides an overview of recent publications addressing these issues. The scope of these studies is very broad—ranging from descriptions based on policy and service quality analysis, to critical pedagogy perspectives, and postcolonial analysis. They derive from a range of surveys, questionnaires "targeting" policy makers, authorities in higher education as well as students and their families. Fewer studies draw on ethnographic observations. Data on national contexts are very disparate in quantity and quality. Disparities are striking between the elite institutions located in selected countries and the numerous provincial universities spreading all over Asia. Bringing these different perspectives and approaches to "talk to one another" (Lipura & Collins, 2020) is a difficult task, but they profit from being confronted with one another.

The Striking Increase of Student Movements Across Asia

“The world is going to university”—this was a title of a 2015 issue of *The Economist*. In 2012, the University World News reported that

(t)he number of students around the globe enrolled in higher education is forecast to more than double to 262 million by 2025. Nearly all of this growth will be in the developing world, with more than half in China and India alone. (Maslen, 2012)

All around Asia, the number of students and academic institutions is increasing (Neghina, 2017; Waters & Leung, 2013). Before 1990, Japan was the only country in Asia “receiving” on a large scale (Ota, 2008). Today, students from Asia, and from other continents including Western countries, have enrolled at numerous universities in Japan, China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand, South Korea, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Taiwan (see e.g. McNamara & Ahrens, 2019). National trends differ very significantly: for instance, Bangladesh is a student-sending country (Anwarul & Salma, 2016), while few students are taken in. China is aiming at receiving 500,000 international students by the year 2020 (Wen et al., 2018). Even smaller Asian countries such as Sri Lanka, Laos, or Brunei Darussalam receive foreign students today (UNESCO, 2019).

Asian policy makers have dedicated much energy into channeling students toward their countries. Slogans including “human capital formation,” “national capacity building,” “international competitiveness,” “Southbound exchange,” or “rising Asia” indicate that student mobilities have become a necessary ingredient in forging national destinies. While pursuing their intense developmental expectations, visions, and strategies, authorities see students (whether domestic or foreign) as “carriers” of their ambitious plans. By enhancing student flows toward their countries, authorities expect to simultaneously develop economies, strengthen infrastructures, and forge nation-building processes. Knowledge production has taken center stage: uncountable documents stress the developmental value of knowledge and the ambitious visions to become centers of knowledge and technology production, in Asia and globally. Internationalization is an important strategy embraced by authorities for expanding their national academic sectors. Japanese institutions of higher education take advantage of the growth in enrolment brought about by students from Southeast Asia (International Consultants for Education and Fairs, 2016), facing a decline in enrolments of national students. Also, demographic renewal in Singapore, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan (Lukacs, 2015) is another rationale for attracting international students (Alemu & Cordier, 2017; Collins & Ho, 2018). Also for this reason, these countries, and also China, Thailand, and the Philippines, vie with one another for ASEAN students (ASEAN, 2010; UNESCO, 2019).

More and more Asian universities are climbing in the major global reputation rankings. The 2020 Times Higher Education index of 2019 only includes Western universities among its top 20 positions, but Asian universities, especially the elite institutions of Japan, China, Hong Kong, and Singapore, are prominent holders of the positions

that immediately follow. National discourses differ and are usually engaged in highlighting national aims, but viewed together, they reveal a concerted effort to strengthen belonging in Asia while simultaneously striving to elevate their own statuses within the Asian academic fabric. Positivist, strongly quantifying, market-oriented discourses abound with authorities actively engaging in measurement, quantification, and comparison. Global competitiveness is paired with boosting regional cooperation with the aim of improving the national image. Academic student exchange is expected to create and reinforce interlinkages at national and institutional levels.

These developments are accompanied by cultural imaginaries that are either depicted as aspirational plans or as vehicles of sociotechnological transformations heading toward excellence. Chinese authorities have stressed repeatedly that new connectivities generated through student mobilities should result in “knowing China” (*zhihua*) better, in “loving China” (*aihua*) or being “friendly toward China” (*youthua*). Students are made to familiarize themselves with Chinese culture and language (Zhao, 2015). The “Study Korea Project” is similarly expected to enhance the country’s reputation and “global familiarity” (Wen et al., 2018). Singapore’s claims of being an “Intelligent Island,” “the Biopolis of Asia” and a “Global Schoolhouse” equally cater to imaginaries of a “Rising Asia” and the establishment of one’s elevated role in this development.

Enhancing the inflow of international students means deploying manifold innovations and strategies such as lowering entry ceilings for international students. Asian authorities are engaged in mutual observation while fine-tuning strategies in the “target” countries. This holds for student admission policies, curricular, and pedagogic improvement, or—as in Singapore—short study visit programs (Sinhaneti, 2011; Yang, 2014). Correspondingly, students speak of opportunities “rolled out by the Singapore state” (Collins et al., 2014) including governmental grants, working permits, and a “citizenship promise,” that is, the prospect to acquire citizenship with a lowered procedural threshold. International headquarters established at several universities cater to students’ needs such as consultation and counselling, academic services, and housing.

Governmental frameworks were created for understanding student movements and for fine-tuning action, accordingly. In Singapore, the National University of Singapore became the key strategic actor, importing “world class best practices” (Collins et al., 2014, p. 662), reinforcing its alliances with elite universities in the United States and Europe, and by doing so, creating an “East-West bridge” (Collins et al., 2014, p. 668). Malaysia’s main target countries for international student recruitment are China, Indonesia, and the United Arab Emirates seen as “large markets” with linguistic, sociocultural, and/or religious similarities. Taiwan, South Korea, Vietnam, and Thailand are targeted because they are neighboring nations with established or growing middle classes and high-performing or growing economies. Malaysia turns toward Russia, Australia, the Middle East, and Africa for international student recruitment in four core study areas: Islamic banking and finance, advanced engineering, hospitality, and health sciences.

International cooperation and networking within the Asian and Pacific regions are becoming increasingly important. Countries like Indonesia and Taiwan engage in academic teacher circulation (Chia-Ming, 2017) and sharing in professional conferences and seminars as between China and Singapore (Agustin & Montebon, 2018). ASEAN aims to unite the South East Asian countries to promote better opportunities for the member countries in different areas such as economics and education. As a response, the Philippine Normal University spearheaded the formation of the Association of Southeast Asian Teacher Education Network to promote collaboration with ASEAN countries and enhance teacher education programs. Important academic networks in the region include the “University Mobility in Asia and the Pacific” Association, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations University Network, the Association of Southeast Asian Institutions of Higher Learning, and many more.

Despite “brain drain” worries, “brain circulation” is on the rise. Asian academicians, even if permanently based abroad, often take on professional assignments in their home country, becoming important nodes in academic networks (Altbach, 2004). Several Asian cities have undertaken considerable efforts to become more attractive for (returning) professionals (Chan, 2012). “Brain” circulation happens also when half to three fourths of international students in China, Japan, and South Korea come from the other two countries (Sugimura, 2008). Other academic “circuits” exist between Thailand, Myanmar, and Cambodia as well as between Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, and Brunei (Chia-Ming, 2017; Thanalerdsopit et al., 2014).

Internationalization is key in Asian policy makers engaging in raising the quality of academic research and education. Key measures include the establishment of networks with leading universities worldwide, hosting branch campuses, developing joint degree programs, international accreditation as well as measures to raise market visibility (Chia-Ming, 2017; Phan, 2016). Most ambitious Asian higher education institutions thereby manage to position themselves as Western-oriented. Ostensibly, the quest to enhance academic quality is paired with efforts to augment reputation—expected to increase the credential value of certificates. The direction of student flows is an important indicator of the perceived quality of academic destinations. Even countries and institutions that are less known for attracting international students have recently formulated ambitious plans: the Indian Institutes of Technology have recently opened up to foreign students, aiming to attract 10,000 international students in the next years. Overall, the authorities of Asian countries have greatly contributed to augmenting the traffic of Asian students aiming for Asian destinations abroad (see also Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015).

Academic Destinations: Asian Students’ Educational Desires and Strategies

Students’ educational imaginaries, aspirations, and mobilities are shaped by the described measures in significant ways. Taken together, the “top-down” strategies and the students’ “bottom-up” choices and flows interweave into a dynamic fabric of institutional change, processes, and movements. Raghuram (2013) suggests that the

interplay of policies and institutional measures as well as students' action—guided by their quest for credentials and employability—should be viewed from the governmentality perspective: the positional moves (Kim, 2011) on both sides contribute to and are governed by institutional change while embracing strategies of competition and excellence.

Recent studies report that students become internationally mobile for variegated reasons: their decisions regarding their study destinations result from diverse considerations (Lipura & Collins, 2020) and from their class positions (see Collins & Ho, 2018). Numerous students follow their family's pathways by enrolling at universities where their kith and kin have already studied. For most students, their decision to study at an Asian university is motivated by economic and career incentives based on imaginaries of the rising power, connectivity, and significance of Asia. Ranking and reputation are important drivers of students' choices (Wen et al., 2018). Imaginings of a "rising Asia" can also cause students to orient themselves toward countries likely to improve economically (Collins, 2013). Less "élite" Asian destinations are opening up to middle class international students: China (Yang, 2018); the Philippines (Ortiga, 2018); Vietnam (Phan, 2016), with less privileged students often succumbing to mediocrity (Phan, 2016). The widening of Asian higher education therefore results in a redirection of student flows while simultaneously stratifying international education.

Besides developing their professional skills, numerous students seek to gain citizenship in those Asian countries where income opportunities are higher. Financial considerations are as well important. For this reason, scholarship opportunities either from the country of origin (Chia-Ming, 2017) or the host country (Collins et al., 2014) may affect the choice of an academic destination. Such decisions may be supported by low costs of living (Y. Lin & Kingminghae, 2014) and tuition, including work–study programs. Oftentimes, professional prospects are seen as strongly dependent on whether one was able to acquire a degree abroad (Kim, 2011). Western universities continue to be the most sought-after destinations, so that studying at an Asian university, even of high-quality may be perceived as a stepping stone for moving toward the West (Collins, 2013).

Spatial proximity and "cultural familiarity" are important criteria for student mobility choices (Alemu & Cordier, 2017). For instance, China is particularly popular among students who hold foreign passports but are ethnically Chinese. This is partly due to anti-Chinese sentiments and limited educational chances for Chinese ethnic minorities in ASEAN countries (Wen et al., 2018), that is, in Malaysia, Vietnam, and Indonesia. Religious proximity makes for students' mobility along specific religious—especially Islamic (to Malaysia) and Buddhist (to Japan, Taiwan, and Korea)—trajectories. The opportunity to study in English still stands out because it usually augments career prospects—as does Mandarin.

Mobilities and Boundaries in Everyday Student Life

Publications on the trajectories of Asian international students through their study courses at Asian universities remain scarce. Existing publications provide information

that delineate specific trends. Social life during an academic study process is a complex (life) experience. Acquiring academic knowledge means going through a university parcours (Pfaff-Czarnecka & Prekodravac, 2017) that is structured by three key constellations. First, the formal organization of the study course sets obligatory parameters that measure study success. Passage through the formal requirements can take on the character of “hurdling.” Many students feel challenged by their supervisors’ expectations regarding their diligence. But there are supportive measures: in Thailand, pronounced hospitality helps the international students overcome the initial hurdles (Ngamkamollert & Ruangkanjanases, 2015). Bangladeshi students in Malaysia enjoy the university-organized tours, homestay programs, and local hospitality (Akhtaruzzaman & Hoque, 2012.) Attending “Integrate Track” courses eases the adjustment process for international students enrolled at Chinese universities (Wen et al., 2018).

The second constellation comprises the nature of relations with academic teachers. Students can become particularly drawn into their subjects by their encounters and often profit from their academic teachers’ networks, advice, and generosity (Akhtaruzzaman & Hoque, 2012; Collins, 2013). Satisfactory teacher–student relations can partly make good for poor social interaction with peers (Wen et al., 2018), the third constellation. Observing each other closely, students realize when their progress is comparatively slower or when their performance is less excellent. Peers engage in peer-teaching (or exclude each other) and share leisure time in flats and dormitories, via individual friendships, when organizing in student clubs, parties and movements, and when exchanging information. The larger the student populations from particular countries are, the higher the likelihood that they may form national in-groups (for Japanese and South Korean student in-groups in China; see Wen et al., 2018). Common language and similar perceptions of time can help cross-cultural socializing (Rhein, 2018); lacking command of English and of the local languages does the opposite (but see Y. Lin & Kingminghae, 2014). Symbolic and social boundaries and their options in bridging them will be negotiated in teacher–student relations as much as in peer-constellations. Prejudice and recognition at the personal level can have an enduring effect on the quality of academic studying.

There are other distances at work. Geographic distance may cause homesickness, difficulties in adjusting with country-specific variations, and cause problems with nutrition. Cultural proximity can reduce some of the perceived distances, but since most students are young adults, the step toward academic destinations can mean a first step away from “home” to places characterized by a high degree of unfamiliarity—not only in interpersonal constellations but also in cultural, social, climate, and dietary senses (Akhtaruzzaman & Hoque, 2012). Some students welcome the possibility to distance themselves from parental/familial authority while studying abroad (especially positionings vis-à-vis the imperative of “filial piety” as among Chinese students); for them, distancing is important for developing a sense of self (Severino et al., 2014).

The formal organization of the campus can also have significant consequences, for instance, with regard to students’ distribution to dormitories that can be especially decisive for socializing. Domestic students likely live outside university premises in

private accommodation, whereas international students will live in university-offered dormitories whether within campuses or outside. In-group formations often occur around nationality, ethnicity, and educational background. Generally, student living arrangements make a big difference for the modalities of socializing (Akhtaruzzaman & Hoque, 2012; Renschler & Gerharz, in press).

Collins et al. (2014) argue that a “generation of difference” often accompanies international students’ experience. Available data indicates that knowledge hierarchies are intimately interwoven with regional and national coordinates. As academic teachers and students engage in mutual observations and negotiations within the globally oriented competition, the national and institutional backgrounds of those involved are often taken as a mark of distinction. In this vein, Indonesian students in Taiwan are made aware that the Taiwanese “locals” show little interest in their cultures, seeing their national background as a “migrant workers exporting country” (Paramitaningrum, 2013). Chinese students in Singapore report local prejudices vis-à-vis Chinese women as potential prostitutes (Yang, 2014). Generally, literature accentuates boundaries and problems rather than reporting “success stories” of a growing “Asian cosmopolitanism” that would be enabled by international Asian students’ circulation within the region. More research along these lines is exigent; we can only assume for now that Asian students are increasingly engaged in “inter-Asian” encounters, but that these are significantly less driven by “bridging practices” than the ambitions promoted by national and institutional authorities.

Discussion

The ensemble of governmental and institutional measures together with the choices and practices of Asian students’ mobilities to Asian destinations contribute to “shaping Asia” (Brosius & Pfaff-Czarnecka, 2019). Asia is taken here as a temporal and empirical context where mobility, travel, and movement contour “mobile worlds” evolving at different levels. Asia is made in and through the different imaginary, delineated, and everyday spaces. It is a hub of multiple mobilities resulting in manifold “boundary” encounters, mutual assessments, especially qua comparison and competition. Tracing these movements means adopting perspectives on and from Asia while taking under consideration that these significantly cater to the “universalized” Western values, norms, and forms that continue to dominate higher education.

“Giving shape” entails different modalities of governmentality and participative action as giving form to one’s own society and polity. This occurs through regulation of access and institutionalization as well as in negotiations over the modalities of command and resistance: forces of (de-)democratization, participation and civiness are key elements of these processes (Cheng, 2015). Being acted on instigates reactions, tacit dissent, and overt opposition. Different choices and movements, including measures of educational development and related knowledge practices were important elements of giving past, contemporary, and future societies in Asia their form and place in the world. The narrative “Rising Asia” (Raghuram et al., 2014) carries along connotations that come from orientalist endeavors as well as from measures to

counterbalance those. Three dimensions in particular stand out among the ways Asia is shaped by the contemporary international student mobilities.

Positional Moves Within Global “Spaces of Equivalence”

A number of Asian universities have risen very significantly status-wise over the past decades, forming part of a “global academic establishment” today. While engaging in positional competition, institutions as well as students have engaged in self-modelling driven by Western standards of academic excellence. Embracing the competition fetish (Naidoo, 2018) comprising contests sponsored by governments and international organizations, market competition, and status wars intensified by rankings (Shore & Wright, 2015), educational actors have linked numerous Asian universities to the global realm of academic excellence. Nowadays, they belong to “global spaces of equivalence” seen as “commensurate spaces of comparison” (Shahjahan & Morgan, 2016).

These spaces cater significantly to neoliberal orientations, embracing credentialism, and succumbing under market forces and are buttressed by agreeing to, or even by reinforcing diverse practices of measuring, classifying, comparing, and benchmarking—as the “Shanghai ranking” does. These practices are driven by the espousing of ideas of modernity, within which ambitious actors see their academic spaces as still “lagging behind,” but “almost there.” The actors’ imaginaries and aspirations are thereby strongly driven by the quest to global becoming, embracing professional and consumerist aspirations seen as “universal.” Yet the depiction of leading Asian universities as “honorable substitutes” (Collins, 2013) reveals ambivalences in private assessments of rising power and significance of Asia. Given the obvious colonial underpinnings of the present-day “universality” of Western standards and persisting, partly racialized, socioeconomic inequalities, the uncritical espousing of academic values, norms, and forms is an intriguing facet of contemporary developments in Asian higher education.

“Placing Asia” in the Global Race Toward Academic Excellence

The elevated position of numerous Asian science and technology institutions in the global rankings partially explains the willingness to accept Western predominance. Competing means endorsing the rules of the game, but it is possible to use these rules to further one’s own advantage and mark difference—which can be turned into a positional advantage. The rise of new centers located outside the Western hemisphere is decisive for changing the direction and the intensity of student movements (Ye, 2016). While succumbing to “universal standards” as they enter the “spaces of equivalence,” Asian academic institutions are engaged in forging “Asian” brands such as “Asia Biopolis”—which seem to be rather successful attempts at Asia’s revaluation. Such brands draw our attention to the continued effort and strain involved in the rise to the top. But these practices change the coordinates of the “geopolitics of knowledge” (Mignolo, 2011); among these efforts is the turn toward a “New Southbound Policy”

(Chia-Ming, 2017) geared at facilitating the comparability of degrees and the mobility of students and staff in Asia.

Shaping Asia Through Connectivities and boundaries

As institutions of higher education and students are coproducers of inter-Asian connectivities, their practices of competition also contribute significantly to the reproduction and shifting of symbolic boundaries. For instance, the association “University Mobility in Asia and the Pacific,” founded in 1991, comprises government and non-government representatives of the higher education sector in the Asian-Pacific region with over 570 participating universities. Generally, Asian governments and their academic institutions have developed a great interest in instigating and channeling international student mobility within Asia. These measures are driven by a range of rationales, including the quest to boost quality and innovation, to counterbalance demographic trends as well as to boost diversity. At the same time, some countries made it a strong point to make themselves better known to neighbors and to improve their reputation.

Some publications report students’ interest in exploring new cultures (e.g., Alemu & Cordier, 2017), however, student choices are guided by diverse rationales, some of which stand out: the quest to acquire professional skills and the best education available, the aim to progress within a perceived global hierarchy of modernity, to opt for better life opportunities and a positional rise in the modern world as well as to take on options offered by educational opportunities, especially scholarships and programs that promote educational mobility. And yet, as international academic mobility can be a vehicle for coming to know each other better, it can also enhance the sense of belonging to different sociospatial realms that move toward modernity and academic excellence at a different pace. Japanese students in China see vis-à-vis their Chinese peers a collective social distance based in their countries’ turbulent histories with each other (Wen et al., 2018). It will take time to overcome past experiences that are perceived in idioms of national/cultural difference. Boundaries of nation, religion, “prestige,” and socioeconomic barriers affect choices and navigations of students across the Asian region. But discernible are extensive attempts to forge collaborations at the governmental level as are students’ civic positionings (Cheng, 2015) toward conviviality.

Conclusion

When Ananya Roy (2016) asked, “When is Asia?” she directed her attention toward “new understandings of relationalities and transformations” and interpreted Asia “not as a bounded geographical location but instead as interconnected space” (p. 313). Significantly more work needs to be done in order to grasp how the ensemble of policies, institutions and actors shape Asia through knowledge, technology, and educational dynamics—where movements of ideas, policies, institutions, and people intersect (see e.g. Chen 2010; Chua et al. 2019). But some trends are discernible.

Analyzing the recent developments in the Asian world of academic mobility tells us a lot about the visions, plans, imaginations, hopes, and strategies that different kinds of actors embrace. By bringing disparate “entities” together, the contours of academic development in Asia, and specifically the redirection of Asian student movements should have become apparent.

Observing these dynamics helps us broaden the mobility paradigm by analyzing the processes and consequences of mobilities, including power relations, hierarchization, and the modalities of inclusion and exclusion. The concept of “assemblage” that was recently introduced into university research (W. Lin et al., 2017) helps with this analysis. It pays attention to how collections of elements are rearranged in societal processes characterized by power asymmetries shaping the interconnections between the diverse elements (on the unevenness of mobilities (see Adey & Squire, 2017). The process-oriented perspective on university education helps us in overcoming conceptual entities as well as binaries of “global” versus “local” that continue to inform inquiries into regional dynamics. In this vein, tracing the assemblage of moving and institutionalized relations—in their horizontal and vertical reaches—helps us uncover the changing contours of Asia.

This analysis has revealed that omnipresent comparisons in the academic field are entangled through mutual observation and networking, and that these trigger further comparisons as well as a realization of the sharing of certain “Asian” perspectives. These are conducive in representing Asia in educational policy discourses—whether in positionings vis-à-vis the Western centers of higher education or vis-à-vis an abstract “West,” or while proactively forging notions of Asian futurity (Roy, 2016). More research is required in order to trace the many forces and directions of movements, but this short analysis has documented the fact that regional movements and flows underlie global dynamics while displaying regional and local specificities.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Notes

1. The author wishes to thank Richa Neog for her thorough literature research, literature digest, and comments, Gloria Glinphratum for thoughtful language-editing as well as the anonymous reviewers who significantly contributed to updating the text.
2. Following UNESCO (2014, p. 33), international students are defined here as (a) Students who are not usual residents of their country of study, that is, those who have recently moved to the destination (host) country from somewhere else and/or (b) Students who received their prior qualifying education in another country, indicating that they have crossed a border.

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