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Capacity-building, internationalisation or postcolonial education? Space and place in development-aid-funded PhD training[1]

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ABSTRACT

Set in a Swedish university context, this article explores the complexities of postgraduate supervision among a group of students who are seldom included in research on the internationalisation of postgraduate supervision – development-aid-funded PhD students. The results highlight the importance of acknowledging students' prior knowledge and mobility trajectories as crucial for developing emancipatory international supervision. Here the concept of 'translocal supervision' is suggested as a theoretical contribution to the field of 'intercultural supervision'.

KEYWORDS

Intercultural supervision, postcolonial knowledge relations, space/place, development aid

Introduction

The increased transnational mobility of postgraduates is one way in which globalisation manifests itself in research and higher education.

1 The research in this article is part of the SIDA-supported project *Aid and Institutional Change: Modes and Narratives of Mobility and Career Paths among Ph.D. Holders in Swedish Supported Programs to Research Training in Tanzania.*

The tendency has increased interest in the flow and direction of transnational postgraduate mobility among researchers and policy-makers world wide (Appelt *et al*. 2015; Jacob and Meek 2013; MORE 2010; Shields 2014; UNESCO 2010). Less researched is how transnational postgraduate mobility impacts on the internationalisation of receiving institutions and, in the context of this article, on postgraduate supervision.

Despite the almost unidirectional path of transnational student mobility from the Global South to the Global North, and the increased engagement by the university sector in development-aid-funded PhD programmes (Jacob and Meek 2013), the educational development of postgraduate supervision is seldom contextualised in relation to the different groups of international postgraduates (Manathunga 2014). What are the power relations which are at work in postgraduate supervision when students from the Global South enter geographic and social spaces from where they have historically been excluded? This article makes a contribution to this research gap by exploring the complexities of the postgraduate supervision of Tanzanian and Mozambican PhD students in Swedish universities and by relating the discussion to postcolonial knowledge theory. The particular group of postgraduate students who are the focus of this article have all been funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency's (SIDA) programme for research-capacity building. It is expected that these students experience frequent mobility between their home academic department and a Swedish academic department as part of their postgraduate training. Accordingly this article makes a contribution to research on the internationalisation of postgraduate training by exploring *layers of internationalisation*, a line of thought which will be further developed in the following sections.

In previous research, development aid for researching capacity building has been conceptualised as a 'path-dependent process' (Libecap 1989; Ostrom 2005). From a postcolonial perspective this means that institutions observed at any one point in time can be defined in terms of their institutional precedents and relational power conditions, both current and historical. A postcolonial perspective on knowledge relations therefore implies that independence from

colonial powers does not mean that hierarchical power relations related to the colonial era have ceased to exist in contemporary university contexts – on the contrary. Power relations remain and are organised through the market-driven economic, technological, scientific and cultural dominance of countries in the Global South (Altbach 2004; Fanon 1986; Sawyerr 2004). In the context of this article, this means that supervision, to a large extent, is constructed according to the premises and priorities of the universities having the strongest position in terms of academic and economic resources, compared to a supervisor model which would include less-hierarchical relations. Preconditions for supervision are also intimately linked to donor policy agendas which, by their control over resources, assert an influence over the power and positioning of participants in the everyday student–supervisor context and ultimately in the international research system. This article starts from this complex situation and questions how the in-between space of the local and the global and the power relations inside and outside a nation-state are reflected in its institutions and the way(s) in which people negotiate these power relations in their everyday academic lives. Based on narratives around supervision, the space of subject-making – i.e. how subjects (here postgraduate students) manage and negotiate norms, cultures and values in particular academic contexts in Sweden – is the focus of the analysis in this article. This research focus is crucial for being able to 'see the existing barriers within the transnational context for a marginalised population' (Mayuzumi 2014, 283, see also Mohanty 2003).

Focusing particularly on postcolonial space relations in postgraduate supervision, Manathunga (2014) notes how postgraduate training does not simply *take place* but is produced through, and produces, that place. While theorising place relations is frequent in other social-science branches such as sociology, political science and human geography, it is under-theorised in international and comparative education. In their call for research, Larsen and Beech stipulate that:

> […] the field should engage more thoroughly in theorising about the concepts of space and place, and in particular understanding place not only as an object in its concrete form but also as a set of relations between individuals and groups (2014, 192).

As indicted in the quotation above, place is not only seen as a geographic place but also as a social space which is produced through interaction. As the analysis in this article shows, geographic and social place/space relations are mutually constituted and intertwined with postcolonial knowledge relations which impact on the internationalisation of postgraduate supervision; the theory section will elaborate on this line of thought, after the following section has introduced the aims of this study and the research questions.

Study aim and research questions

Responding to the call for educational research on space relations, this article will take as its point of departure the supervision narratives of Tanzanian and Mozambican PhD students who have undertaken postgraduate training in Sweden and will explore the internationalisation of postgraduate supervision in Sweden. More specifically the aim is to explore *how* place/space representations are articulated in the supervisor narratives and *what* these place/space representations produce in terms of the internationalisation of Swedish postgraduate supervision.

Previous research has pointed to two themes which are particularly important for ensuring the positive outcomes of supervision and, from the longer-term perspective, a successful academic career (Farahani 2015; Manathunga 2014). These themes are:

- *Whether and how students' prior research knowledge and mobility trajectories are recognised and valued by their supervisor/s.* This theme is crucial in understanding – from the perspective of the students – how translocal supervision is constructed and managed.

- *Feeling or not feeling at home in academia*. Research focusing particularly on processes of inclusion and exclusion in academia has often dwelt on those who feel at home in academia *(the insiders)* and those who do not (*the outsiders)*.

In this paper space/place relations in supervision are represented by these two themes which will be analysed alongside three interlinked dimensions of space: 'space as practice', 'representations of space' and 'spaces of representations' (Lefebvre 1991). The analysis seeks to provide answers to the following research questions:

- How are the prior research knowledge and the mobility trajectories of these transnational scholars recognised and valued?
- How are home/non-home spaces represented and experienced whilst under supervision?
- Which complexities of the internationalisation of Swedish supervision practices do these space representations reflect?

Previous research and theoretical framework

Previous research into 'intercultural' supervision

The doctoral student population is becoming more and more diverse and a growing tendency is that an increasing number of students are coming from developing countries to the 'West' for their graduate studies (Mahroum 2005; Wang and Li 2008). In this context, research into cross-cultural supervision has identified eight 'intensifiers' in which international students need more support compared to home students: language, cultural differences in dealing with hierarchies, separation from the familiar, separation from support networks, cultural differences (excluding dealing with hierarchies), time, stereotypes and what happens when the international student returns home. While these 'intensifiers' are presented as separate categories, in practice they are often intertwined (Winchester-Seeto *et al*. 2014). In this vein, post-structural perspectives on postgraduate supervision emphasise that supervisory relations, contrary to the 'hyper-rational descriptions' (Manathunga 2014, 22) offered in university handbooks, are emotional and full of pleasures, irrationalities and dilemmas which are played out in relation to the aforementioned intensifiers (Grant 2003; Green and Lee 1995; Johnson, Lee and Green 2000). While previous research has produced important insights into the complexities of intercultural supervision, it is difficult to draw wider

conclusions, since this research has tended to focus on small-scale studies which were often limited in scope (Manathunga 2014).

Research on supervision from a postcolonial perspective is an emerging field that counterbalances the deficit perspective that is sometimes predominant in research into intercultural supervision. A postcolonial perspective adds to previous intercultural research since it highlights the various geographic places that are brought into the supervision environment, how historical power relations from the colonial era are produced and negotiated in contemporary supervisory relations, and points to the importance of investigating place–space relations in supervision sessions (Bullen and Kenway 2003; Kenway and Bullen 2003; Manathunga 2014).

Supervision as a postcolonial contact zone

Manathunga (2014) uses the concept of 'contact zone' to analyse the intercultural supervision of postgraduates. The concept originates from Pratt's (2008) understanding of 'contact zones' as 'the social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination' (2008, 7 cited in Manathunga 2014, 16). In accordance with Manathunga (2014), this article emphasises the agency of all participants in supervision contact zones. Continuing with this line of thought, a cautionary note is necessary: in this article we do not suggest that agency is unlimited or equally distributed. On the contrary, while agency is possible for all actors, the consequences of hierarchical dependency relations in postcolonial postgraduate supervision can hardly be overestimated and the effects are visible both at a discursive level and in terms of the material/geographic boundaries for postgraduate training. Consequently, this article calls into question the use of 'inter' in 'intercultural perspectives of supervision' and adopts the stance that 'inter' refers to the (hierarchical) conditions for postgraduate training rather than to how different cultures meet. In this context we therefore introduce, instead, the concept of 'translocal supervision'. A translocal[2] perspective

2 Here we are inspired by Floya Anthias' (2012) understanding of 'translocal'.

centres on power dynamics rather than cultural differences and, more specifically, shows how power dynamics cut across the local and the global and move and shift across place, space and time.

Place and space in supervision

In addition to a translocal and postcolonial understanding of the concept of 'contact zone', the theoretical framework of this article implies an understanding of geographic 'place' as 'space', as something being 'constituted through a process of interaction' (Massey 1999, 279). Here, this means that the 'contact zone' of supervision is seen as socially constructed and continuously produced within a particular (social, postcolonial and geographic) higher-education context.

Applying place/space as an analytical category, Lefebvre (1991) distinguishes between three particular space dimensions: *spatial practice*, which refers to the common-sense ways in which space is interpreted and perceived, *representations of space*, which refer to abstract ways in which space is represented to make sense of space and, finally, *spaces of representation*, which refer to the ways in which spaces are lived and experienced. In this context we note that spaces of representation are lived in as well as embodied.

Drawing on the work of postcolonial academics like Edward Saïd (1979) and Franz Fanon (1986), contemporary feminist postcolonial researchers have theorised the ways in which certain spaces and bodies are constructed as belonging and what happens when bodies that do not belong to the somatic norm enter these spaces (Ahmed 2007; Mirza 2009; Puwar 2004). From this angle, we can analyse the consequences of living with, but not being included in, the somatic norm (i.e. white, middle-class, male bodies). Nirmal Puwar notes:

> While all can, in theory, enter, it is certain types of bodies that are tacitly designated as being the 'natural' occupants of specific positions. Some bodies are deemed as having the right to belong, while others are marked out as trespassers, who are, in accordance with how both spaces and bodies are imagined (politically, historically and conceptually), circumscribed as being 'out of place'.

> Not being the somatic norm, they are space invaders (Puwar 2004, 8).

From a postcolonial gender perspective, Sarah Ahmed (2012) refers to the notion of 'institutional whiteness', both embodied and symbolic, and how it is responsible for spaces of belonging for white bodies in academia and the marking of black bodies as trespassers. In her work on 'institutional whiteness', she suggests that black bodies 'stick out' in white spaces. This maintains a white institutional norm where non-white bodies are both welcomed yet marginalised (2012, 41).

Here the concepts of 'space-invaders' and 'institutional whiteness' are used as an analytical entrance for analysing how space is represented, embodied and lived in the supervision contact zone and what these space relations produce in terms of internationalisation. Before the analysis is presented, the background and context of the research is outlined.

Background

Sweden has a long-standing tradition of supporting research in low-income countries through SIDA. The support is channelled through 'research partnership programmes' for research capacity-building in low-income countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. In some cases these programmes have been in operation for more than 40 years – as is the case for Mozambique and Tanzania, where the programmes date back to 1978 and 1977 respectively. The programmes are built around the so-called *sandwich model*, designed to sustain links with the home institution during training. The overall ambition of Swedish development aid for research capacity-building is that it should result in enhanced international collaboration and the establishment of local PhD training programmes (Alberts *et al*. 2003; Boeren *et al*. 2006).

The operational frames of the PhD training programme are decided jointly by SIDA (the programme's funder), the HEIs offering the PhD training in Sweden (providing supervision, office space and research facilities) and the research institutions based in the low-income

countries that provide students for the programme as well as office space at the home universities. During training, the PhD student moves regularly between the Swedish university and the home university.

Context

The number of international PhD students in Swedish universities has grown steadily over the past decade and figures from 2014 reveal that 40 per cent of those beginning doctoral studies in Sweden are international students (Universitetskanslerämbetet 2014:7). Despite the fact that nearly half of the Swedish PhD population are international students, there is very little research on how they experience their PhD training in Sweden; the group which is the focus of this article – development-aid-funded students – have not, prior to this research project, been the subject of any investigation.

A questionnaire survey (sent out by the authors in 2013) forms the background to the interview analysis presented in this article (see also Author A for an analysis of the survey results). The questionnaire dataset consists of 291 individuals (159 in Mozambique and 132 in Tanzania) who have participated in SIDA's bilateral programmes of support for research capacity-building in Mozambique and Tanzania during the period 1990–2013. The response rate was 51.6 per cent (82 individuals) in the Mozambican case and 47.7 per cent (63 individuals) in the Tanzanian case.[3] From the questionnaire results we know that an overwhelming majority of PhD candidates and graduates were positive about supervision in Sweden, 91.3 per cent of the Tanzanian graduates and candidates reporting mostly very good or good experiences, the corresponding figure for the Mozambican population being 86.4 per cent. However the questionnaire also revealed experiences of discrimination during the students' time in Sweden: Mozambican respondents reported a somewhat higher frequency of discrimination (51.1 per cent) compared to their Tanzanian counterparts (39.2 per cent). In both cases, the main trigger for the discrimination was skin colour. Generally, the PhD candidates

3 The response rate for similar studies of European PhD graduates was much lower, and was only 11 per cent in the MORE project.

reported that they experienced discrimination more frequently compared to PhD graduates. We also found gender to be important in both country cases – i.e. male students (79.5 per cent) were more content with the supervision they had received than female students (63.3 per cent).

Sample, method and analytical design

From the questionnaire sample, 38 PhD graduates were strategically selected for individual interviews conducted by the authors in Mozambique in 2013. Women represented 40 per cent of the interviewed academics. In the interviews we strove for maximum variation amongst our respondents (Patton 2002) in terms of age, academic position and scientific discipline. The interviewees' age range was between 30 and 60 years, and the majority were university lecturers, though there were also representatives from the ministry and the university administration. The scientific fields represented in the interviews ranged across the social sciences, medicine and technology. In the overall sample there was a slight skew towards the natural, technical and medical sciences.

The individual interviews were conducted as 'mobility biographies', particularly designed to map and explore researchers' trajectories over time, space and place (Kenway and Fahey 2011). The interviews were first organised along a thematic content analysis, generating categories. Secondly, new sub-themes where constructed. The construction and analysis of themes and sub-themes is conducted in relation to previous research on post-graduate supervision and postcolonial knowledge theory (see also Kvale 1997). The main analytical questions are: How is the supervision situation experienced from the viewpoint of the student? How are place and space relations represented in the interviews? What power relations and subject positions can be observed?

The analytical design is inspired by post-structural research which means that the results are presented in a joint 'results and analysis' section. From this, it follows that the interview extracts are not seen as

evidence; instead, quotes from the interview narratives are used here to explore any contradictions and complexities in the empirical material. This is done by continuously discussing the interview extracts in relation to the overall theoretical framework presented at the beginning of this article, as well as in relation to theory and previous research, especially relevant for understanding a particular interview extract.

Spatial relations in Swedish supervision

In this section the results and analysis of spatial relations in the supervision contact zone (i.e whether and how the students' prior research knowledge and mobility trajectories were recognised and valued by their supervisor/s and whether they felt at home or not in Swedish academia) will be presented along three interlinked dimensions of space: spatial practice, representations of space and space as lived (Lefebvre 1991).

Spatial practice in Swedish supervision

> I took my plan for a PhD dissertation with me to Sweden and my supervisor in Sweden helped me to make a few changes but, yes, I knew what I wanted to research and my supervisor in Sweden made sure that I had everything I needed. She gave me all the kinds of support that I needed. She was always there for me and, in terms of the material, the office, computer; I had everything that was necessary for work (Female lecturer, Mozambique).

> For me, supervision in Sweden worked very well; my Swedish supervisor had worked here with me at my department before I was accepted onto the PhD programme. When I started my PhD he came down here regularly, he wanted to have a group down here so we were able to discuss our work, so I didn't have to wait until I was in Sweden to see him. When I went to Sweden it was in agreement with him. He told me which periods I should come to Sweden so he would be able to make space to work with me (Female practitioner, Mozambique).

In the interviews, the respondents pointed to the importance of spatial practices as a basis for their positive experiences of supervision in Sweden. These spatial practices are linked here to the material aspects of supervision (access to computers and technical equipment) as well as to supervisors' involvement in facilitating the students' transition from their home academic department to postgraduate studies in Sweden. Hence, the supervisors had looked out for them when the students arrived in Sweden, had made time to meet with them, and were also familiar with the home university contexts of their PhD students. Furthermore, several of the respondents were already established academics in their home university departments and had had previous experience of prolonged sojourns in international university contexts. This means that, over the years, they had developed an interest in and knowledge of particular research themes. When the supervisors in Sweden recognised the students' previous knowledge and research interests, this was also seen by our respondents to have positive value. Taken together, the interview narratives reveal that, when students' mobility trajectories and previous knowledge are recognised, this, along with the provision of material research equipment, are mentioned as the main 'spatial practices' that construct positive experiences of Swedish supervision. Nevertheless, despite these overall positive experiences, the interviews also revealed that there were tensions surrounding the expectations of the PhD training programme in general and the supervision context in particular. The following section will elaborate on this complexity.

Representations of space in translocal supervision: home in 'unhomed' spaces

> I must say that I had a very, very good stay in Sweden. Yes, I felt like 'I'm home' […] But it was never easy to do the training in Sweden, no. Even though we are academics, here in Mozambique everything is different compared to Sweden; some of us don't have the Internet or computers and, in Mozambique, we have no funding for research (Female lecturer, Mozambique).

> Everything was really well arranged on our arrival and the departmental secretary took wonderful care of us international students […] No, I would not say that I was integrated into the

> department and my Swedish research colleagues. The supervision caused me a lot of anxiety. You see, supervision is very different here in Tanzania. In Sweden, the supervisors would ask a lot of questions but give no answers; it gave me a lot of anxiety. Nobody explained that it is the common way in which supervision is given in Sweden (Male lecturer, Tanzania).

A common theme in the interviews was mixed experiences (i.e positive and negative experiences) from staying in Sweden. The quotations above are chosen because they are particularly clear examples of representations of mixed experiences in relation to staying in Swedish academia. In the first quotation feeling 'at home' (i.e positive experience) is mentioned as well as experiences of inferiority and feeling as an 'outsider' (negative experiences). In the second quotation the practical arrangements made by the department secretary and how these arrangements created a welcoming atmosphere is highlighted. Later in the interview the same PhD student stresses that he never felt integrated in the Swedish research community at his department. According to him, he and his development aid funded colleagues had never been included into the community of Swedish colleagues at the department. Supervision with his two Swedish supervisors had also been very stressful. He had tried to change his writing and communication style with his supervisors but had received very little feedback on what and how he should change, which had caused him a lot of anxiety. How can we understand this complexity? Postcolonial gender research has theorised how it is possible to experience academia as a place/space where an individual is included and from where, at the same time, he or she has experienced exclusion (Farahani 2015). This argument is built on the notion of 'home' as a complex analytical site, which can produce inclusion as well as exclusion (Brah 2001; Farahani 2015). In this context, diaspora researcher Avtar Brah (2001) notes that the ways in which home is constructed and lived are often closely aligned with intersecting power relations, among others related to gender, social class and race. Closely aligned with Brah's (2001) argument is Homi Bhabha's (2001) understanding of 'unhomed' as something that does not necessarily imply 'being homeless'. Instead, being 'unhomed' is produced in contexts where colonial subjects constantly need to negotiate the power matrixes of prevailing postcolonial inequality

(Bhabha 2001). Here we suggest that the interview extracts reflect the hierarchical relations that are inherent in the postgraduate training programme, creating a dual positionality for the participating postgraduate students of both privilege (i.e being accepted onto the PhD training programme) and disadvantage (i.e. being self-conscious about the underprivileged research position of their home university departments compared to Swedish ones). Hence, the results point to the multi-layered dimension of internationalisation in postgraduate supervision, which should be compared to the dominant policy and research rhetoric of internationalisation which stress knowledge exchange and does not usually include experiences from development-aid-funded students or postcolonial knowledge relations.

Through a critical reading of all interviews we find that many scholars critically reflect on their stay in Sweden. Their reflections refer to a lack of internationalisation of Swedish Higher Education, postcolonial knowledge relations and racism. Here we interpret these critical reflections as agency and resistance towards an 'imperial gaze' (Fanon 1986; Puwar 2004) – more specifically, how certain bodies are made to feel welcome whereas others are racialised and seen as trespassers. These processes are often not expressed in words. Instead silence, gazes and a lack of information or communication are used to construct racialised processes of exclusion (ibid). This leads us to the question of how these tensions are experienced in Swedish academia, a question which the following section will explicitly deal with.

Space as lived and embodied: space invaders in unhomed spaces

> No, my supervision in Sweden didn't work out. My supervisor – how can I put it – it didn't work. I think he has problems.
> *Interviewer*: Problems?
>
> Yes, problems. When we sat in the room and he was sitting in the chair next to me, he never looked at me, always talked above my head. He would talk in Swedish with other people. He made me feel very small, invisible – yes, it is always there, you know, with white people, the question of skin colour. I don't think he was used to working with black people (Female researcher, Tanzania).

> In the Swedish department nobody knew anything about my research topic. When my first Swedish supervisor retired and I was left without supervisor I had to go from door to door to look for somebody who could supervise me. Nobody helped me, I didn't know what to do. Yes, then I found supervisor X; he could supervise my method, but he knew nothing about my topic (Male lecturer, Mozambique).

From these quotations we find that silence/absence is a main constituent of the experiences of exclusion. To understand the theme of silence, we need to turn to the theory of postcolonial knowledge relations, in which silence/absence is a main theme in this body of literature. More specifically silence is articulated through the absence of recognition of scholars and perspectives from the Global South in research and higher education (Connell 2007; Mohanty 2003; Saïd 1979; Teferra and Altbach 2004). Whether focusing on how scholars from the Global South have been excluded from science history (Mirza 2009) or the exclusion of teachers and perspectives in universities' teaching curricula (Mohanty 2003; Spivak 1990) or in relation to how contemporary research agendas and theoretical frameworks are constructed and legitimised (Connell 2007; Harding 2010), this literature highlights how the discrimination of racialised scholars and students in academia is produced and maintained and how postcolonial research perspectives and teaching curricula are legitimised through processes of exclusion. Furthermore, it shows how colonial university systems have historically benefited from the exclusion of scholars and perspectives from the Global South and how these privileges continuously shape contemporary knowledge relations (Saïd 1979; Teferra and Altbach 2004). Against this backdrop, we suggest that the silences attached to the postgraduate students' physical bodies, their mobility trajectories, their previous scholarly knowledge and their current PhD projects in Swedish academia are not arbitrary but the result of specific postcolonial space and knowledge relations operating in a predominantly white Swedish university context (see also Ahmed 2012 for a discussion on institutional whiteness). This has consequences for the subject positions available to these transnational scholars as well as for the content of internationalisation in the supervision contact zone. Let us

elaborate on this line of thought. Here, we suggest that silence represents a negation/erasure of the students' prior research competences, transnational experience and physical appearance, and points to the multi-layered and conditioned dimension of internationalisation. In other words, the quotations point to the lack of recognition of the students and their research in Swedish academia, which contradict dominant discourses of internationalisation of Higher education where knowledge exchange is often emphasised (Bill 2008/09:50, Bill: 2012/13:30). Following the geography of internationalisation of Swedish Higher Education we also find that programs for internationalisation of Swedish PhD training mainly is directed towards countries within the European union or the North Atlantic (there are exceptions such as South Africa, Brazil, India, China and Japan). This stands in contrast to PhD programs for researchers from the African continent (within the exception of South Africa), which only exist within the development aid/capacity building framework (Ibid). We therefore suggest that the 'capacity building' component of this particular PhD-program add an additional layer of complexity to the discourse of 'internationalisation' which is not often taken into account in research or in Research Policy: International PhD students become synonymous with white European or North Atlantic students, whilst racialised and postcolonial scholars from Africa remain 'space invaders' (Puwar 2004) within the discourse of internationalisation. Thus, the available subject position for these scholars is that of objects of capacity-building rather than of international knowledge-producing subjects.

Conclusion

Here we present our three main results, which all invoke the complexities involved in the internationalisation of postgraduate supervision.

Firstly, the results on the spatial practices underline the importance of supervisors facilitating the students' access to equipment and other material resources, as well as recognising the prior research knowledge and the mobility trajectories of these transnational scholars

in order to construct a positive experience of translocal supervision. However, these results also point to the transformative work which supervisors do when they facilitate the students' transition to a Swedish university context. However, this work needs to be combined with collective agency in order to challenge structural inequality in universities.

Secondly, the results evolving around the theme of representations of space or 'who can feel at home in Swedish academia' reveal both positive and negative experiences from staying in Sweden. By focusing on a group of students who are seldom included in studies of the internationalisation of supervision practices and cultures – i.e. development-aid-funded students – and by relating the discussion to postcolonial knowledge theory, the results in this article highlight the various places and spaces that are brought into the supervisor contact zone. This result challenges a monolithic understanding of international students and how they are received by the host institutions and points to the importance of critically interrogating the 'inter-' in global discourses on 'intercultural supervision'. In this context we suggest the concept of 'translocal supervision' as a way forward, since this particularly focuses on the ways in which power relations related to individuals' positionalities shift in translocal spaces and on the complex and dual positionalities of both privilege and disadvantage that may occur.

Thirdly, by exploring how unhomed spaces are experienced we highlight the embodied/lived dimension of postcolonial knowledge relations. The results indicate that the embodied experiences of exclusion in the supervisory postcolonial contact zone evolve around experiences of silence and feelings of being neglected. Here the embodied experiences of silence and neglect are seen as representations of postcolonial knowledge relations, where researchers and knowledge from the global south are present in the global north but without being acknowledged (see also Teferra and Altbach 2004). Accordingly, the available subject position for these students in the supervisory contact zone is as objects of capacity-building. Here we ask whether these programmes contribute to internationalisation in a qualitative sense or whether, on the contrary,

they construct a postcolonial white normality in Swedish academic departments in general and in relation to the internationalisation of postgraduate supervision in particular.

Finally, the results presented in this article signal how spatial and postcolonial perspectives contribute to highlighting the various places and power-knowledge hierarchies that are brought into a supervisory context. Here the agency and resistance articulated by the interviewed academics should not be underestimated. These discourses reveal how postcolonial relations are socially constructed and continuously produced and are therefore susceptible to change. Accordingly, this concluding section ends with an invitation for further research into critical explorations of the multi-dimensional layers of internationalisation in HEIs and, more importantly, into what these representations produce and whose interest they serve.

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