



## Getting emotional about ‘brain mobility’<sup>☆</sup>

Jane Kenway, Johannah Fahey\*

Monash University, Australia

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### ABSTRACT

Our purpose in this paper is to offer an historical and cultural account of the relationships between globalisation, the nation-state, emotion and the academic mobility policies that are driven by the knowledge economy. In so doing we seek to contribute to the emerging literature on the links between emotion, policy and globalisation. These links are under-researched and under-theorised. Seeking to build on Arjun Appadurai's work on the global cultural economy, we coin the term 'emoscapes'. Emoscapes, we argue, involve the movement and mobilisation of emotion on intersecting global, national and personal scales. This concept helps us to illuminate how emotion circulates within global power and knowledge geographies. We discuss global policy atmospherics in terms of the structural power relationship between different nation-states and regions, the feelings such relationships generate on matters of 'brain mobility' and the implications for policy. This provides a broad context for our discussion of the nation-state itself where we consider how the nation-state's position within these global power formations contributes to national feelings. Taking the example of Australia, we look at its emotional archive, the implications for the ways in which Australian policies have territorialised the global 'brain mobility' policy discourse and the nation-state policy atmospherics involved. Ultimately we show how emoscapes have entered and influenced policy and how they are part of global and national power and knowledge geographies.

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### 1. Introduction

Around the world there is intense competition between nations and regions for highly skilled professionals, including high calibre researchers. This is driven by the knowledge economy, which involves the rise of knowledge-intensive productivity on a global scale (Kenway et al., 2006). The policy concern is about the implications of the global mobility of such people for national or regional knowledge and innovation capacity, prosperity and for national positioning in the global knowledge economy (Daniels et al., 2009; Kenway and Fahey, 2010; Rizvi, 2007; Robertson and Dale, 2004). This situation has re-energised an older policy discourse associated with notions of 'brain drain, gain, retain'. As international mobility is more normalised and as researchers' travels and links between 'home and away' are better understood, the 'brain drain' concept has been somewhat superseded by notions of 'brain mobility' and diaspora (Hugo, 2006).

Most research informing this policy discourse is from economics, demography and 'development' studies. The entry point is national economic growth and competitiveness and the reasoning is often derived from knowledge economy and human capital theory. Underlying such research and policy is a view of knowledge and policy that is rooted in Western philosophical traditions of rationalism and empiricism. Research and policy are implicitly seen as emotionally detached, rational and objective. In contrast, as Moisi (2009: 17) argues, 'if we do not integrate emotions into our analysis of the world, we are in danger of ignoring a fundamental aspect of political life'. Our purpose here is to offer a historical and cultural account of the relationships between globalisation, the nation-state, emotion and knowledge economy driven mobility policies. In so doing we seek to contribute to the emerging literature on the links between emotion, policy and globalisation. These links are under-researched and under-theorised.

After outlining the research project from which this paper draws, we consider the emerging literature on globalisation and mobile emotions and introduce our concept 'global emoscapes'. We then discuss 'global policy atmospherics', in terms of the structural power relationship between different nation-states and regions, the feelings such relationships generate on matters of 'brain mobility' and the implications for policy. This provides a broad

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\* Corresponding author. Monash University, P.O. Box 6, Clayton, Melbourne, Victoria 3800, Australia.

E-mail address: [johannah.fahey@monash.edu](mailto:johannah.fahey@monash.edu) (J. Fahey).

context for our discussion of the nation-state itself where we consider how the nation-state's position within these global power formations may contribute to national feelings. Taking the example of Australia, we then look at its emotional archive and the implications for Australia's emotional sensibilities and for the ways in which Australia has territorialised the global 'brain mobility' policy discourse and the nation-state policy atmospherics involved.

## 2. The research base

The research project from which this paper draws examines the ways that ideas, including policy ideas, move across national borders, how ideas transform through and are informed by mobility and the implications of place for thought.<sup>1</sup> It has two main foci. Drawing on theories of cultural globalisation, it critically examines research policy documents in selected countries that are specifically associated with globally mobile researchers (Kenway and Fahey, 2008). It focuses particularly on the policies of prosperous but peripheral nation-states including Australia, Singapore and Hong Kong, placing them in historical milieus (e.g. colonialism and nationalism) and contemporary contexts (e.g. relevant media moments).<sup>2</sup> It also closely considers the mobility biographies and the corpus of research of twenty-four, high profile, globally mobile Professors with links to Australia. They were not selected as a representative sample. Rather they were chosen to ensure a spread across the social sciences and humanities and also on the basis of their productivity and profile and as to whether their stories and sensibilities were likely to illuminate the issues. Their international locations included England, Wales, Scotland, Hong Kong, the USA, Canada, Singapore and the Netherlands. The mobility biographies trace individual researchers' conceptual, cultural and connectivity trajectories over time, space and place. In two sets of formal interviews, participants were asked the following questions (and more): How do their research agendas and disciplinary knowledge travel and translate across countries, cultural spheres and intellectual spaces? How do practices of movement and displacement re/constitute their researcher identifications in relation to 'home' and elsewhere? What role does emotion play in such re/constitutions? And do they see themselves as national, regional or global researchers? The interview transcripts were systematically analysed through a coding scheme devised for the research tool 'Hyperresearch'. The observations in this paper arise from our interpretations of policy and media texts, of secondary historical sources and of our interviews with these professors.

## 3. Global flows of emotions

In the Introduction to their special issue of *Identities* called 'Passions and Powers: Emotions and Globalisation', (2007: 372)

<sup>1</sup> Australian Research Council (Discovery grant 2006–2010), *Moving Ideas: Mobile Policies, Researchers and Connections in the Social Sciences and Humanities—Australia in the global context*.

<sup>2</sup> Australia: Commonwealth of Australia (2005) *They still call Australia home: Inquiry into Australian Expatriates*, Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia. Fullilove and Flutter (2004) *Diaspora: the world wide web of Australians*, Lowy Institute for International Policy, NSW Australia: Longueville Media. Both these policy documents were chosen as they seek to appeal emotionally to expatriate Australians through policy discourse. Singapore: 'Singapore Vision 21' is Singapore's key policy strategy focused on attracting foreign talent. Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong launched it in 1997, but it is still operational today as evidenced by recent references to the initiative in Ministerial speeches (Lee, 2006). Hong Kong: *Higher Education in Hong Kong: Report of the University Grants Committee, 2002* and *Hong Kong Higher Education: To Make a Difference, To Move with the Times*, University Grants Committee, 2004.

Svasek and Skrbis (2007: 368) point out that 'there is a real lack of a specific engagement with emotions in most literature on globalisation'. To address this deficiency they focus on mobility as a feature of globalisation: the movement of people, ideas/practices and objects/images. They argue that emotion is a shaped and shaping aspect of each and that their special issue shows how 'particular structural possibilities and constraints generated by specific globalising forces have influenced emotional discourses, practices, and embodied experiences in concrete cases'.

Many globalisation theorists have argued that the mobility of people and ideologies is crucial in theorising transnational processes. Appadurai is amongst those who have developed valuable theoretical resources for understanding intersecting global mobilities via his notion of the 'disjunctive scapes' of the global cultural economy. In this paper we are interested in what he calls 'ethnoscapes', 'ideoscapes' and 'mediascapes'. Ethnoscapes are 'the landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world' (Appadurai, 1990: 7). Ideoscapes are 'often directly political and frequently have to do with the ideologies of states and the counter-ideologies of movements' (Appadurai, 1990: 9). Ideoscapes involve a growing diaspora of intellectuals who supply new meanings to these ideologies in different parts of the world. Mediascapes refer both 'to the distribution of the electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information...and to the images of the world created by these media' (Appadurai, 1990: 9).

For Appadurai, scapes are 'inflected...by the historical, linguistic and political situatedness of different sorts of actors, nation-states, multinationals, diasporic communities' (Appadurai, 1990: 7). This emphasis on situatedness enables his theoretical framework to be deployed in relation to various colonial and postcolonial scenarios and in relation to various spatial scales including global, national and the human body itself. In contrast to Appadurai and Svasek and Skrbis, Moisi (2009) focuses less on global flows and more on nation-states and the region of the European Union. He explores what he calls the 'geopolitics of emotion' arguing that 'emotions remain crucial to understanding the nature and evolution of the world' (Moisi, 2009: xi) as 'they impact on the attitudes of people, the relationship between cultures and the behaviours of nations' (Moisi, 2009: 29).

Emotion is absent in Appadurai's analysis of the flows of the global cultural economy. However, in his more recent work he talks of global geographies of anger (Appadurai, 2006) and of the global maldistribution of the capacity to hope and aspire (Appadurai, 2004). Building on his work, we offer and deploy the concept *global emoscapes*. This takes up the view that emotions can be seen 'as relational flows, fluxes or currents, in between people and places' (Davidson et al., 2005: 3). We thus seek to enhance the conceptualisation of scapes through the prism of emotion. In proposing this notion we reject the view that emotion only moves *within* an individual's psyche or between individuals in small-scale settings. Instead we agree with Ahmed (2004) who argues that emotions are formed and flow in relation to particular historical, political, social and cultural landscapes.

However, 'a conundrum remains: How to represent that which lies beyond representation?' ask Davidson et al. (2005: 11). Further, Parr et al. (2005) note that emotion is surplus to language; language cannot readily capture it. Conducting empirical research into emotion is not easily done on any scale. How does one observe a mood, an atmosphere, the movement of feeling? How can we read emotional subtexts, intimations? What are the signs and significations of emotional life? Indeed what is the emotional life of signs and how best can we comprehend this?

Emotions may, in some ways, be seen as immaterial and this makes them elusive research 'subjects'. However, they do not float free from material realities and something usually indicates their

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