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Purpose – The aim in this paper is to extend Dorothy Smith’s conceptual understanding of work to consider the emerging labor of “knowmads” within internationalization of higher education. Through original research on everyday experiences of internationalization, the authors seek to illuminate the ways individuals develop skills and competencies in relation to these new forms of work in order to address the reproduction of inequities. The authors make a connection between internationalization of higher education and knowmadic labor based on the premise that cross-border education is often pursued in order to develop knowmadic attributes.

Design/methodology/approach – Through a critical institutional ethnography of one mid-sized Canadian university, the paper uses survey and interview data gathered from students and faculty - individuals who are involved in knowmadic labor connected to internationalization – to illustrate some of the study participants’ daily experiences of internationalization coordinated by the institutional structures of the university in times of globalization.

Findings – It is concluded that internationalization and connecting new forms of work involved in becoming and producing knowmads not only bypass and disregard present inequities in higher education, but work to reproduce them in new ways.

Practical implications – The paper provides insight in regards to processes and allocation of work within internationalization, while addressing forms of social inequities that often cut across these practices and concludes with brief comments on the implications of academic knowmadic labor in Western higher education institutions engaged in internationalization.

Originality/value – While research has been conducted on work in international contexts, little has addressed “the labor” that is involved in becoming knowmads, and that of “producing” knowmads. The paper draws connections between the internationalization of higher education and knowmadic work showing that knowmadic labor is often preceded by knowmadic educational opportunities. The cosmopolitan vision of creating globally aware citizens, with international knowledge, skills, and competencies that institutions espouse, are assumed to be good, and to lead to knowmadic qualities and attributes required in a knowmad society. The paper questions these assumptions and the relations of power on which they rest.

Keywords Knowmads, Work, Inequity, Internationalization of higher education, Globalization, Intercultural literacies, Society, Education
Paper type Research paper

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The image shows a musical score for voice and piano. The score is written in a standard musical notation style, including notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The lyrics are written below the notes. The lyrics are: "W T M A M (2012) A". The score is arranged in two systems, with the first system on the left and the second system on the right. The piano part is indicated by a piano symbol (p) and the voice part by a vocal line. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

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