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Academic mobility at the intersection of development aid and research policy: Mobility and career development of Ph.D. graduates in the Swedish development support to research capacity building in Mozambique 1990 – 2013 (0088)

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### *Introduction*

This paper is part of the symposium **Global relations re-cast in the Nordic context: Academic mobility and career development of academic staff, Ph.D. graduates and students in Sweden, Norway and Finland (3830)**. Patterns of academic mobility as well as how mobility is constructed and experienced in a Nordic context runs as a theme which holds the papers together. Therefore this symposium serves as location to share and discuss current research findings as well as to explore possibilities for future research collaboration such as joint publications or fundraising activities.

### *Background*

*“ERA should inspire the best talents to enter research careers in Europe.....enable European researchers to develop strong links with partners around the world, so that Europe benefits from the progress of knowledge worldwide, contributes to global development and takes a leading role in international initiatives to solve global issues.....increase mobility of knowledge workers, supporting training and ensuring attractive careers are central goals of ERA”* (EU Commission. 2012).

Increased mobility of academic researchers is a dominant global policy demand and it is evident that academic staff is recognized as key players in an increasingly competitive global knowledge-economy. Consequently, the strategic and many times resource demanding investment made in these individuals have increased the policy interest of their mobility and career development.

Despite the fact that there is a growing attention among many governments, studies on the scale, direction, driving forces and rationale behind mobility and career choices of Ph.D. graduates are comparably few in number and limited in scope (Hoffman, 2008). The access to research is still both limited and unevenly distributed; much due to the lack of internationally comparable data and because the standard statistical sources are too small to produce statistically robust results for this particular group the individuals (OECD. 2007)<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> “Researcher” is not labeled a distinct category in the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO). Adding to the problem of statistical processing is the fact that there are two accepted international definitions of ‘researcher’, the OECD (Canberra Manual, 1995) definition based around the concept of Human Resources in Science and Technology (HRST) and the OECD Frascati Manual (2002), the basis on which OECD member state R&D statistics are collected.

Not surprisingly, one finds that a majority of existing studies (national, regional and geographically cluster composed), is focusing on patterns of mobility and career development of researchers in the Global North, mainly in the US and in Europe (MORE<sup>2</sup> and the OECD 2007). The representativeness and reliability of existing studies on mobility of Ph.D. graduates are issues for debate (see Tremblay 2009). In this vein we find that Africa is very modestly represented in the research literature on academic mobility and career development. The few studies that do exist mainly deal with mobility as a precondition for an analytic focus on the problem of brain drain - many times based on quite unreliable estimations of graduates outflows. Longitudinal studies on qualitative aspects of mobility and careers development with focus on low-income countries are almost non-existent (Tremblay, 2009).

### *Aim and research questions*

This paper will discuss preliminary findings from a pilot study on academic mobility among PhD holders from Mozambique who have participated in a Swedish development aid supported program for research training. Of particular importance is exploring how everyday academic work is constructed within a larger framework of a donor driven research co-operation program which requires academic mobility as part of the training. Central research questions are: How is academic work constructed in different places (Sweden and Mozambique) and equivalent spaces (different neo-liberal university contexts) and how is this influenced by mobility and mediated by intersections of gender, race and age? How do differently positioned (in terms of gender, race and age) researchers experience this in their academic everyday working life?

### *Data and method*

The research data consists of a survey sent out to 150 academics (47,5 % response rate) and 20 semi-structured interviews with researchers who have spent parts of their research training in Sweden and parts of their training in Mozambique. Data is longitudinal and covers the period 1990- 2013. The individual interviews were semi- structured on themes related to the survey however also encompassing personal experiences of mobility and/or stickiness, academic work and structures of inequality related to gender, age and race. Following intersectional research (West and Fenstermaker 1995) particular attention has been on analysing how mutually constituted power relations construct differing conditions for research and mobility for differently situated researchers.

### *Theoretical frame*

On an overall level, the project will analytically situate academic mobility and careers paths in relation to existing research on the changing role and function of research and higher education in society pointing at greater steering of research priorities, the 'commercialisation of research', and an increased emphasis on accountability and audit - a move from the 'traditional academy' to the 'relevant' academy' (Cummings W K and Finkelstein M J 2012,

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<sup>2</sup> MORE is a project funded by the European Commission (DG Research) and is carried out by a consortium of international organisations led by IDEA Consult. The study builds upon existing data (IISER project) and at the same time collects and analyses new data on the stock and flows of European researchers.

Kogan and Teichler, 2007). Further, the project will relate its objective to existing research on the development of massification, commodification and privatization in the African higher education (Mamdani 2007, Jaishree 2004; Thaver 2004).

In addition, the paper in important aspects builds on gender research in the field of gender in Academia in a global perspective (Morley 2003; 2006, Unhalter 2006, Leathwood and Read 2009). The findings are also discussed in relation to the body of theory evolving around (post)colonial knowledge relations (Said 1978, Harding 2009, Mirza 2009). In this context a critical exploration on how whiteness travels (Lundström 2010) between differently situated university contexts and its implications for how academic work and working conditions are constructed is central.

#### *Preliminary results and implications of the study*

One of the more serious critical comments on existing mobility studies are their strong preference for the use of quantitatively based surveys as the sole method of data collection. While this may be suitable for the mapping of the mobility as a physical movement from one place to another, it has its limitations in elaborating questions related to how mobility is lived and experienced in practice. The research results from this study contributes to nuancing research on how mobility impact on academic work, how these processes are mediated by age, gendered and race and who this is articulated in different neo-liberal academic contexts.

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