

Tracing of a wasp: Rhizomatic Knowledge in the process of International Academic Mobility (0132)

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Context

This article explores the major discourses academics constructed about their experiences abroad and the process of returning to their country and how that relates to their construction of knowledge. The main focus of this article is how these scholars negotiate their construction of knowledge in academia after they have returned to Chile. More specifically, it focuses on what were the main challenges they faced in the process of coming back to Chile in relation to the construction of knowledge? Based on the research question outlined above, this study aims to understand the processes of negotiation in their production of knowledge in Chilean academia within the context of globalization.

Chile, the only South American country that belongs to the OECD (OECD & WorldBank, 2010), is a particularly interesting and relevant site of research. Despite belonging to an organization that groups the most industrialized societies in the world, and despite the increasing process of internationalization developed during the past decade, it invests less in research and development than any other country in the OECD (OECD, 2014). This contradiction in the investment raises questions about research policies and the systemic conditions of Chilean academia. While there is a particular emphasis on postgraduate fellowships at national and international universities, the discussion about the process of returning and specifically the ways these scholars negotiate their construction of knowledge within the system of higher education in Chile is still open.

The main argument of this paper is that knowledge construction in academia operates as a rhizomatic process. Adopted from the work of Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1987), the concept of the rhizome indicates a systematic movement that does not have a precise beginning or end and operates in between layers and power dynamics. To think of knowledge

rhizomatically is to view it as "unfinished," "multiple" and "open," and to recognize the existence of different powers that interconnect and split apart knowledge construction constantly (Campbell, 2008). Thus, rhizomatic knowledge has been the concept I have found both to escape the traditional, rational, and logical approaches to knowledge and to explain the systematic

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movement in the construction of knowledge, a movement that is neither linear nor has beginning or end, something that became crucial to understand the results of this study.

Methodology

I conducted a qualitative phenomenological study to understand several common and shared experiences of Chilean scholars who earned a doctorate abroad and decided to return to Chile.. This research was based on 41 semi-structured interviews with Chilean professors in the social sciences and humanities. All the participants work in one of three universities chosen for this study, have completed their doctorate within the past 15 years, and have worked in Chilean universities for at least two years. Three research universities were selected as sites of research: one public university and one private university, both located in Santiago; and a third university located in the south of the country. These institutions were selected based on their commitment to research, affiliation (private or public), and geographical location (metropolitan or situated in the regions). This research also included the analysis of documents and discussions related to academic mobility coming from Congress, different media, websites, historical documentaries and government documents.

Landing in Between in the process of constructing knowledge

Participants were abroad for at least two years, in most cases four years, but for others as long as ten years. The process of coming back after studying abroad, was complex and complicated in multiple ways. To go abroad and come back is not a linear process, and as thinkers, they are always going back and forth between the different ways they have imagined and imagine academia. Past, present, and future merge in a narrative which disrupts a linear temporality. After returning to Chile, one of the common issues that these participants experienced was to feel like "landing in between" First, some participants mentioned feeling divided between two countries. They "*feel here and there*". Feeling divided and belonging between the host and the

home country was also related to the fact that they continued looking for the academic spaces and experiences they had had abroad as well as confronting a conservative academia in Chile. Second, there was an "in between commitments." Commitment to country and family took different forms and got mixed with other reasons that are related to the ways economy and policies works globally, including the idea of being competitive within the framework of

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immigrant conditions abroad. Third, participants feel in a constant movement between negotiation and resistance after they return. For some participants it was complex to deal with the feeling of peer surveillance, where issues such as the complexity of communicating what was learned abroad became relevant, along with the difficulties of finding a job or obtaining grants.

To understand conversations about knowledge and mobility in the process of returning, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) give us a theoretical ground to rethink practices described by these participants. "Going back" means also going 'back' in both space and time. The processes of territorialisation, deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation can usefully be brought to understand the process of internationalization that scholars of this study have been part of. These academics and their construction of knowledge have become territorialised/organized as sets of guidelines, principles, frameworks, outcomes, which may constitute lines of segmentarity. The notion of deterritorialisation enables the possibility of these lines of segmentarity rupturing or exploding into lines of flight, shifting the way in which we look at global discourses on what internationalization means within it. Following the principle of rupture, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) argue that a rhizome might become broken, shattered at a given place, but it will again grow on one of its old lines, or on new lines. They said: "Every rhizome contains lines of segmentarity according to which it is stratified, territorialized, organized, signified, attributed, etc., as well as lines of deterritorialization down which it constantly flees. There is a rupture in a rhizome whenever segmentary lines explode into a line of flight, but the line of flight is part of the rhizome" (p. 9). For that, the authors use the example of the orchid and the wasp to describe movements of deterritorialisation and processes of reterritorialisation to show how the two species are always connected, that is, caught up in one another. **References**

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