Introduction

Mobility in doctoral education – and beyond

Corina Balaban and Susan Wright

This special issue emerged as a result of Universities in the Knowledge Economy (UNIKE), a four-year collaborative research project and training programme for early-stage researchers that investigated the dynamic relationships between universities and knowledge economies in Europe and in the Asia-Pacific Rim. The project was funded by the Seventh Framework Programme of the European Commission (EC) and included researchers based at six different universities in five European countries. Mobility was not only a widespread research interest within the UNIKE academic community but also a reality of the project, which was in itself a practical example of mobility in doctoral education, as envisaged by the European Commission. Many questions emerged as to how mobility became so central to the European Union's policies for higher education, but also as to how the portrayal of mobility on a policy level compared to the actual lived experiences of mobile students and researchers. 'Mobility' can refer to many different things: geographical mobility, social mobility, cross-sectoral mobility or intellectual mobility (inter-disciplinarity). The academic literature mostly treats them separately, with clusters of studies around each concept. In contrast, this special issue sets out to investigate these different types of mobility collectively, with authors covering several parts or the whole spectrum of mobilities. We believe it is valuable to discuss these four different aspects of mobility together for two reasons. First, they are often mentioned together in higher education policy as 'desirable' characteristics of a given education programme. Second, the ideal profile of the new, flexible knowledge worker supposedly combines all these aspects of mobility in one persona. The policy literature produced by influential stakeholders in higher education such as the European Commission and the OECD focuses on how to encourage, foster and support different kinds of mobility, working on the assumption that mobility is inherently good and will benefit countries, higher education systems and individuals. Much of the academic literature has adopted a similar approach, focusing on ways to enable mobility rather than challenge it.

This special issue sets out to provide a more nuanced approach to different kinds of mobility, taking into consideration not only policy perspectives but also the lived experiences of PhD fellows. The four articles focus on aspects of mobility in doctoral education as experienced by different actors in the field. They include an analysis of European higher education policies, a study of mobility in two flagship doctoral programmes in the United States and Europe, a large-scale survey of EU-funded doctoral fellows' experiences of different types of mobility, and the results of an ethnographic writing workshop that captures doctoral fellows' strong emotions about their lived experiences of mobility. The topic is particularly timely, since mobility is becoming a widespread phenomenon in higher education and, increasingly, in doctoral education, where some funders make mobility a requirement for a successful graduate programme.

Pavel Zgaga's policy analysis explores mobility from the perspective of policymakers, showing the evolution of the concept and how it became one of the most widely discussed ideas in the context of European integration post-1970. The analysis focuses on how mobility became central to the EU's idea of doctoral education. Zgaga begins by looking at the discussion about academic mobility from a period when the executive bodies of the European Communities had no major role in the field of higher education. He further shows how the launching of the Erasmus Programme in 1987 marked a significant change in this regard, with the EU becoming gradually more involved in higher education policymaking. A decade later, in 1999, the Bologna Process brought mobility of students and academics to the forefront of policy discussions. Zgaga shows how this was connected with two parallel initiatives: the establishment of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) on the one hand and the creation of the European Research Area (ERA) on the other. Their aims partly overlapped but were not always identical. The author explains how, eventually, the European Commission's efforts to consolidate the ERA have contributed, directly and indirectly, to mobility becoming a central concept in European doctoral education today.

Building on this policy analysis, Corina Balaban's article shows the different forms that mobility has taken in European, as well as in American doctoral education. The concept of 'mobility' is currently used in EU terminology to denote three kinds of mobility: geographical, cross-disciplinary (or interdisciplinarity) and cross-sectoral mobility. Focusing on these three types of mobility, Balaban's article presents the voice of doctoral fellows – and some of their supervisors – by illustrating how they engage with and

negotiate experiences of mobility. In doing this, she provides a more nuanced picture of mobility, which exposes some of the lesser-known aspects of an otherwise popular trend. In particular, the article discusses the mobility features of two types of flagship doctoral programmes – the Innovative Training Network (ITN) in Europe and the Integrative Graduate Education Research Traineeship (IGERT) in the United States. The main finding is that all three forms of mobility across the two programmes were associated by fellows with feelings of homelessness. This has serious implications for the lives of early career researchers, as well as for knowledge production.

The idea of home(lessness) also features in the next article by Lisbeth Walakira and Susan Wright. To explore doctoral candidates' lived experiences of mobility they conducted a survey of 3,410 EU-funded doctoral fellows followed by a selection of in-depth interviews. Their evocative title is based on a statement from one of their interviewees: 'I'm like a snail carrying my entire house with me'. They discuss how EU-funded doctoral candidates are expected to relocate, network internationally, as well as travel for conferences and stays abroad. They discuss how geographical mobility is complemented by cross-disciplinary mobility, cross-sectoral mobility and social mobility. All four features are assumed in EU policies to enable doctoral fellows to become 'knowledge workers' in a competitive global economy. The results of this large-scale survey show that many PhD candidates were excited to engage in different forms of mobility at an early stage in their careers. However, they were concerned about how mobility created tensions between their professional and personal lives, especially as the conditions of knowledge workers seem to assume lifelong mobility.

Brigitte Bönisch-Brednich also explores personal experiences of mobility, but through auto-ethnographic lenses. The UNIKE project was one of three sites for reflective workshops to which she invited fellows to write about, read aloud and discuss their mobility experiences in a manner that could create new ways of analysing and personalising life in transit. Her writing workshops and narrative exploration offer a methodological tool that has immediate effects on the participants. She analyses the fellows' written material and group discussions for the complex array of concepts and narrative tropes they use to describe how they became global knowledge workers, the professional competences involved in strategies for settling and honing hybrid identities, and emotive experiences of loss of control and diminished agency. She shows how several fellows' encounters reveal 'whose accent and whose body fit best into the . . . colonial paradigm that is the

Anglophone knowledge economy'. Besides being a beautiful, sensitive read, her contribution enriches and sharpens the in-built assumptions and bigger picture of higher education policies on mobility.

The special issue closes with three book reviews. Maria Karaulova's review of Qiongqiong Chen's book *Globalization and Transnational Academic Mobility: The Experiences of Chinese Academic Returnees* was written especially for this issue. Although not specifically focused on doctoral candidates per se, the book explores important issues around mobility, such as decisions to return to China, adaptation issues they encountered after their return, and the relationship between mobility and transformative change in higher education. The book provides a rich narrative into the lived experiences of Chinese-born academics who, after having spent some time in the United States, returned to China. It is a book about how they negotiate their professional identities in this transition, and it treats mobility as a process that is part of an individual's wider life course. The book dwells on how the returnees have the potential to become agents of change in China but also details the multiple obstacles they may encounter in their journey. The approach is in line with some of the other contributions in this issue in that it conceptualises mobility as a long-term, non-linear process of constant negotiation.

The other two reviews are by Patrick McGovern of Brian Caterino's *The Practical Import of Political Inquiry* and by Tim Battin of Morten Levin and Davydd J. Greenwood's *Creating a New Public University and Reviving Democracy*. Both books offer important insights into the relationship between academia and the wider society,

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