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Reporting back: Research mobility and brain circulation

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Section 6

Reporting Back

Research Mobility and
Brain Circulation,
George Washington University,
October 9th 2012,
Washington DC

<http://www.researchtrends.com/research-trends-seminar-mobility-brain/>

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On October 9th **Research Trends** organized a seminar that focused on the current international and local trends in research mobility and its implications on fostering innovation from a Government, Academia and Industry perspective. The seminar attracted deans, policy analysts, researchers, directors, and graduate students, who gathered at George Washington University to hear and discuss the subject with prominent speakers in the field.

Dr. Henk Moed from Elsevier, who conducted extensive research on the subjects of both co-authorship and mobility trends, presented the similarities and differences between the two as can be learned from bibliographic data. Some of his findings included the discovery that political tensions inhibit neither co-authorship nor researcher mobility, as could be found in increased migration and collaborations between them. In addition, his research found close ties between research mobility, geographical proximity and language similarity. This finding opened a discussion regarding the attraction of researchers to centers of excellence and whether that was the motivating factor.

Mr. Ben Wildavsky, the author of the Great Brain Race, answered some of the issues raised during the discussion by emphasizing the fact that research mobility is driven by worldwide phenomena such as the rise in local academic ranking systems and the race to create world class universities that will attract and retain talent. He added that researchers will migrate only when they have good reason to do so, such as going to an exceptional research institute that seeks their expertise or a learning opportunity that can advance their careers. In his presentation, Mr. Wildavsky gave some specific examples of such trends, including Asian university ranking systems and researcher career paths.

Dr. Mark Regets, Project Officer, Science & Engineering Indicators Program at The National Science Foundation, approached the topic from the government R&D point of view, looking at the global capacity for science and technology and showing its rapid growth in most parts of the world. In his presentation Dr. Regets presented data that demonstrated the increased and more complex flows of students, workers, and finances, the increased regional S&T collaboration and links between regions driven by a global labor market for certain research skills.

The seminar's presentations and discussion concluded with the understanding that the move of scholars from one country to another has far-reaching implications for economics, scientific innovation and progress on both local and international levels. Such mobility influences the creation of entrepreneurial networks that lead to economic growth and scientific discoveries. Student exchange, immigration, pursuing career opportunities and other reasons motivating talent to move from country to country are all contributing to the mobile nature of research and the formation of collaborative networks. This phenomenon has been studied in different ways such as bibliometric research looking at authors' affiliations and co-authorships, R&D and immigration patterns analysis as well as funding and productivity. This area has gained attention, and research has seen titles that include topics such as research mobility, brain circulation and brain drain among the few found in this context. In order to better direct research mobility and enable migration as a part of the research policy agenda, there is a need to combine different disciplinary methodologies, both qualitative and quantitative. Combining bibliometrics, economics and social sciences can lead to a better understanding of the subject and enable decision makers to create better policy to support talent attraction and retention that will benefit the country as a whole.