EXPLORING A SMALL WORLD.

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What a journey!

Wow. I can finally submit this dissertation as an end to four years of research. What a journey it has been! I have truly enjoyed doing this PhD, for this endeavor has challenged and inspired me immensely, but I'm nevertheless happy to submit this work as well.

This thesis would not have been possible without the support of many. I regret that I cannot name all of them here, but this preface gives me the opportunity to bring homage to all those who have contributed to this work in one way or another.

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The last months of finishing this thesis have been especially intense. I would like to thank my friends and family for their backing and patience during this period. I wish to extend my gratitude to my brothers Sam and Dries, my parents-in-law Rita and Dirk, and obviously my parents Martine and Geert, for their wisdom and for unconditionally supporting me in everything I do. And last but not least, I want to thank my wife Marlies and my son Nand, who accompanied me during this great journey. Nand, your contagious joy and enthusiasm means the world to me! Marlies, your patience, understanding and support during these four years have been immense! Thanks for inspiring me, and for reminding me that there is a life beyond this thesis. I look forward to engaging in many other new adventures!

Tom Storme

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'When April with its sweet showers has pierced the drought of March to the root, and bathed every vein of earth with that liquid by whose power the flowers are engendered; when the zephyr, too, with its dulcet breath, has breathed life into the tender new shoots in every copse and on every heath, and the young sun has run half his course in the sign of the Ram, and the little birds that sleep all night with their eyes open give song (so Nature prompts them in their hearts), then, as the poet Geoffrey Chaucer observed many years ago, folk long to go on pilgrimages. Only, these days, professional people call them conferences.

The modern conference resembles the pilgrimage of medieval Christendom in that it allows the participants to indulge themselves in all pleasures and diversions of travel while appearing to be austerely bent on self-improvement. To be sure, there are certain penitential exercises to be performed – the presentation of a paper, perhaps, and certainly listening to the papers of others. But with this excuse you journey to new and interesting places, meet new and interesting people, and form new and interesting relationships with them; exchange gossip and confidences (for your well-worn stories are fresh to them, and vice versa); eat, drink and make merry in their company every evening; and yet, at the end of it all, return home with an enhanced reputation for seriousness of mind'

(Extract from the prologue of 'Small World: An Academic Romance' by David Lodge, 1984, 223).

- 1 - INTRODUCTION

1.1 Main objective of the dissertation

Short-term travel has become a significant component of work for many academics. This brings about new challenges for the individual academic, academic institutions, but also society more generally. Regular short-term travel is bound to have an impact on the work-life balance of the traveller and his or her family, while the high environmental costs and possible gender/social inequality associated with this mobility raise questions about the value and necessity of the practice. There is however still a surprising void when it comes to research examining the role, function and necessity of short-term academic travel.

This dissertation helps filling this gap by exploring academic travel mainly as a *social practice*. By drawing on the recent mobilities turn in the social sciences, an understanding of the main motivations and obligations to travel is offered in light of the nature of contemporary academic work and careers. Moreover, by engaging in mixed methods research at Ghent University, some of the issues with respect to work-life balance and the gendered aspect of travel are addressed. The focus is on academic travel in a Flemish context (Belgium), which is currently characterised by an internationalising higher education system, which has in turn acted as a catalyst for academic travel. Such an exploration of the intricacies of academic travel is needed, as it provides insights into how academic travel is a stratified practice, and highlights how academics cope with work-related travel across life and career stages.

The remainder of this introductory chapter is organised as follows. First, we briefly sketch the outline and rationale of this dissertation. Second, we provide an overview of the theoretical background adopted throughout this study, while the subsequent section provides a contextualisation of this research. In section five, data and methods are discussed. Finally, we formulate four research questions, and indicate how these questions will be answered throughout the dissertation.

1.2 Academic travel – a primer

The title of this dissertation refers to David Lodge's well-known campus novel, 'Small World: An Academic Romance' which was written thirty years ago. In this novel, several academics are followed as they travel around the

world on the 'conference circuit', 'to meet and to lecture and to question and to discuss and to gossip and to plot and to philander and to party and to hire or be hired' (Lodge, 1984, 546). When the main characters in this novel meet and re-meet each other at different places around the world, they utter '*It's a small world!*' This 'world' of academics offers an entry into an often overlooked, but nonetheless vital aspect that allows the world to be small in the first place: short-term travel.

Throughout history, academics have always been recognised for having high levels of personal mobility (Altbach, 2004; Teichler, 2004). In fact, the character of the itinerant or wandering scholar, in endless pursuit of new knowledge has been widely present in historical novels (Welch, 1997). Past patterns of academic mobility are nonetheless expected to differ from how and why academics are travelling today. For one thing, in part fuelled by the spread of instantaneous communication technologies, increasingly more academics at different career stages seem to be travelling on a short-term basis now (see Lassen, 2006; Lassen, 2009). This particularly applies to academics of the global north (Parker and Weik, 2014).

In the remainder of this dissertation, we define academic travel as the non-routine, work-related practices of academics that involve short-term and corporeal mobility. This definition encompasses a number of elements that deserve further scrutiny. First, it captures corporeal or bodily movement, implying that people are effectively travelling in person across space. Generally, the primary mode of transportation is the airplane, but also cars, trains or boats are used, especially for shorter distances. These geographical movements allow experiencing normally distant places, times, objects and other people with all bodily senses (see Urry, 2007). Corporeal travel is nonetheless highly interdependent with other types of travel, not in the least with virtual travel or the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) (Sheller and Urry, 2006; Faulconbridge et al., 2009). Second, the practice does not refer to daily or weekly home-to-work travel or commuting. The time spent travelling and the distance that needs to be overcome is often so significant that the trip is seldom confined to a single day (see also Gustafson, 2006). Moreover, the destination of a trip regularly varies over time, which distinguishes academic travel from long-distance commuting and rotational assignments as well (see Welch & Worm, 2006). Thirdly, academic travel differs from longer-term research visits or stays, such as sabbaticals, as there is no temporary relocation required. The period of travel studied here is a matter of days, a few weeks at the most, and the length is generally determined by the purpose of the trip. We recognise that using a threshold in

terms of duration can be problematic as the distinction between mobility types may get blurred. However, and as has been pointed in other research, short-term work-related travel seems to fulfil distinct purposes and, therefore, spatio-temporal criteria are useful for defining the practice (Millar and Salt, 2008; Jones, 2013). Fourthly, it is important to define 'academics'. In this dissertation, academics refer to students and academic staff, engaged in research and/or teaching and employed by an institution of higher education and research. The academic workforce thus comprises of doctoral candidates, postdoctoral researchers, lecturers and professors.

This definition of academic travel has much overlap with the more general 'business travel' concept (see Davidson and Cope, 2003; Jones, 2007; Welch et al., 2007; Aguiléra, 2008; Lassen, 2009; Beaverstock et al., 2010). However, the research by Ackers (2005) on academic mobility suggests that the travel of academics is characterised by a couple of peculiarities vis-à-vis other 'sectors'. First of all, academics do not tend to enjoy the formal support provided via 'organisational channels', in the sense that there is limited assistance for arranging transport, accommodation and administration prior to their trip and while on the move; nor are there any specific remuneration packages in place (Peixoto, 2001, 1030; Ackers, 2005; Salt and Wood, 2014). Tenured academics manage their own personal travel budgets, while untenured academics often negotiate their travel activities with a direct supervisor. Perhaps as a corollary, academics are often found 'in the back of a plane', travelling economy class. Only frequent travelling academics are sometimes rewarded by an airline with an upgrade, like for example an exit seat or 'premium economy' ticket. The same accounts for long-distance rail travel.

Moreover, academic work in itself is generally more individualised (Enders and Musselin, 2008), which comes with two implications: on the one hand, academics – particularly those in tenured positions – are more self-directed, in the sense that they can more freely choose and prioritise how to cope with work demands and expectations (see Mahroum, 2000; Lassen, 2006). This suggests that their mobility decisions may rather stem from proactive behaviour (see for example Richardson and Mallon, 2005). On the other hand, academics are also more individually accountable for their work when their performances are assessed (see Enders and Musselin, 2008). This is especially relevant for ambitious, early career academics without tenure. Because these performances are nowadays often measured by criteria valuing an 'international' dimension of their work (Ackers, 2008), this gives a clear incentive to extend their activities across space. Moreover, and similar to practices of moving jobs in academia, we could expect short-term travel to

occur more on the basis of personal '*ad hoc* networks' (Williams et al., 2004; Ackers, 2005; Lassen, 2006). Mahroum (2000, 26) has made clear that many movements of academics and scientists take place because of a desire for 'professional socialisation' (Mahroum, 2000, 26). Together, these differences might explain why the mobility patterns of academics and scientists are often classified as a distinct type of highly skilled 'moves' in the wider migration literature (see Mahroum, 2001; King, 2002).

What is expected to be largely similar to business travel in general terms is the fact that the practice is 'cursed' with significant costs (Beaverstock et al., 2009). It is a costly activity because it involves making use of different transport modes and infrastructures, insurance, communication technologies, hotels and meeting rooms, bars and restaurants, and the like. Apart from financial costs, travel is also associated with an opportunity cost, as it involves spending scarce resources (time, effort, money) which could have been put to use elsewhere. Moreover, corporeal travel involves significant environmental costs as well (Gössling and Peeters, 2007; Larsen et al., 2007; Lassen, 2009; Denstadli et al., 2012; Urry, 2003; 2010; Nevins, 2014). Especially air travel is responsible for vast quantities of fossil fuel use and human-induced carbon emissions, which is generally believed to have an important influence on global warming (Jardine, 2009; Urry, 2010; Nevins, 2014). In addition, several scholars have suggested that work-related travel might both positively and negatively affect a work-life balance, and it is therefore considered an ambiguous activity (Kesselring and Vogl, 2010). Repeated and sometimes unexpected absence from home might be a source of stress and frustration for the traveller and his or her family (Espino et al., 2002). On the other hand, work-related travel can also be enriching, stimulating and motivating (Gustafson, 2014).

Business travel has also been associated with different forms of societal inequality. The travel of some 'privileged' people is facilitated by a large number of immobile 'little people' that help smoothen the movements of their mobile counterparts, such as personal assistants, taxi drivers, airport staff and security, hotel employees, bartenders, and many more (Elliott and Urry, 2010; Scott, 2014). These 'little people' may also refer to the partners of the travellers, who are responsible for a higher share of household and/or caring duties (Bergström, 2013). Empirical studies across all business sectors have revealed that business travellers are often men, adding a gender dimension to the practice (see Gustafson (2006) and Bergström (2013) in a Swedish context; Jeong et al. (2013) in a US context). In academia, early career researchers engaging in long-term research stays are similarly predominantly men with or

without 'trailing' partners or children (see Ackers (2004) in a EU case-study; Moguérou (2004) on French post-docs; Leemann (2010) on Swiss doctoral students; Jöns (2011) on visiting scholars in Germany). Taken these insights together, it seems likely that academic travel has got gendering effects as well.

Given its marked growth, its high costs, and its association with the (re)production of societal inequality, it is somewhat surprising that short-term travel as a work practice has only recently been given much attention (see Faulconbridge et al., 2009; Beaverstock et al., 2009; Beaverstock et al., 2010). Moreover, apart from the work of Lassen (2006; 2009), Ackers (2010; 2013) and Parker and Weik (2014), little or no empirical research has been devoted to academic travel.

The research by Lassen (2006, 2009), who compared the long-distance air travel activities of employees in Hewlett-Packard and in Aalborg University, may well be among the first attempts to explore this phenomenon. Jöns (2008) has engaged in a discussion on the topic of academic travel as well, but her definition is very broad because it encompasses journeys that 'may last between a few days and a couple of years, but they are in principle temporary absences' (Ibid., 339). Such a definition rather resembles long-term movements, such as research visits and sabbaticals. As the survey results in the research of Lassen at Aalborg University (2006) show, almost 70% of all respondents had engaged in international travel within the same year, and some travelled frequently. Likewise, Parker and Weik (2014, 167) stress that academics are '[l]ike business executives and politicians [...] part of the super-mobile population' but nonetheless remark that this might only be the case for academics of the global north.

1.3 Theoretical framework

This research studies academic travel by drawing on theoretical insights emerging out of the recent mobilities turn in the social sciences (Sheller and Urry, 2006; Urry, 2007). Sheller and Urry (2006) explain that the mobilities paradigm is found at the intersection between transport research and social research, as both literatures seem to have overlooked some important insights from the other literature. This section elaborates on these neglected aspects and ventures into related and on-going debates on mobilities and travel.

First, the paradigm invites transport researchers to look beyond the common-held perspective on travel as a mere functional tool or a necessary evil to engage in activities elsewhere (see also Faulconbridge and Beaverstock, 2008; Gustafson, 2014). When it comes to business travel for example, the

practice has often been studied as an activity undertaken by employees of transnational firms to take part in training sessions, to negotiate, secure and complete economic deals, to brainstorm new ideas, or to produce custom-made services to clients beyond a spatial fix (see for example Welch and Worm, 2006; Jones, 2007). Little research has addressed the fact that travel – and especially repeated travel – is a socially significant practice in and by itself. For example, travel shapes the lives of many workers nowadays, who spend an important amount of time 'on the road', within taxis, petrol stations, airport terminals, planes, hotel rooms, and the like (Gustafson, 2014). Such a life on the move can take a physical and mental toll on travellers and also affects the lives of families and friends (see for example Espino et al., 2002). Travel delays, safety concerns or unmet family responsibilities can be a source of stress and frustration (DeFrank et al., 2000; Welch and Worm, 2006) and can generate feelings of travel tiredness (Gustafson, 2014). However, regular travel can also be a welcome break away from the everyday routine work and family life and can become a part of one's lifestyle (Welch & Worm, 2006). As a consequence, travel can in fact be perceived as a highly positive aspect of work (see Gustafson, 2014).

In addition, transport researchers generally neglect the social motivations and obligations that necessitate or 'demand' face-to-face meetings and hence corporeal travel over time. Urry (2003, 2004) has coined the notion of 'meetingness' to analyse the ways in which extensive travel has become quasi-compulsory in a number of settings. This notion refers to 'meetings' in a general sense, that is, not only as formal professional assemblies, 'but also [as] informal contingent meetings that happen in all sorts of more informal practices around friendship and family' (Urry, 2009, 5). Indeed, face-to-face proximity and social activities are a vital characteristic of much formal and informal social life, in the sense that on specific occasions, and intermittently, people can feel an urge to spend (social) time together with others in specific places. Boden and Molotch (1994) refer to this urge or desire as a 'compulsion to proximity'. To give a clear-cut example of such an urge, people undeniably feel a compulsion to attend weddings and funerals of close friends and family. In other words, one can deliver a strong message by being close to others at particular times and places. This message also holds in a work context, as it allows amongst others generating and maintaining trust between people, and displaying commitment and engagement (see Beaverstock et al., 2009).

However, it should also be emphasised that corporeal travel as a socially significant practice is hard to put into simple categories – such as work, play or leisure - as transport researchers often tend to do (Urry, 2003). Travel is not

instigated from a single rationale, and much corporeal travel is best understood as involving a complex mix of work, life and play. A,s such, travel can significantly affect a person's identity (see Lassen, 2006). In addition, focussing on the different types and forms of transport might shift the attention away from what really matters: understanding the complex connections between geographically dispersed people (see Urry, 2003). Moreover, Urry (2003, 161) emphasises that it is not the absolute number of ties that people possess that matters. Rather, it is the 'degree of meetingness' that is crucial, referring to the frequency and significance of these meetings, the quality of exchanges that occur, and 'the degree to which weak ties extend through such intermittent but selective meetings' (Ibid, 161). Moreover, as social networks are increasingly extending across time and space, this 'meetingness' is much more visible nowadays, as it requires a significant amount of resources and thorough planning (Urry, 2009).

Simultaneously, the mobilities paradigm calls for putting 'mobilities' more centre stage in social research, as the latter was deemed far too a-mobile in the past (Sheller and Urry, 2006). Three contributions to the literature are especially relevant here. Sheller and Urry (2006) first call for challenging *sedentarist* theories in geography, anthropology and sociology, where stability, meaning and place are treated as normal, while distance, change and placelessness are thought of as abnormal. Sedentarist theories consider bounded places, regions and nations as the basic building blocks of social theory, while societies should be seen as movement-driven (see also Urry, 2007). The mobilities paradigm rather aims at 'going beyond the imagery of 'terrains' as spatially fixed geographical containers for social processes, and calling into question scalar logics such as local/global as descriptors of regional extent' (Sheller and Urry, 2006, 209). These insights largely resonate with theories challenging the certainties and stabilities of first modernity - like Bauman's Liquid Modernity (2000) or Beck's Risk Society (1992) – in which 'nomads' are favoured over 'settlers' and 'citizenship'. The former being free to move and choose how and where to live their lives, while the latter are too much rooted and constrained by traditions and habits (see Bauman, 2000). Being rooted too much can particularly be harmful when 'new chances crop up elsewhere' (Bauman, 2000, 13). This is also reflected in the work of Kesselring (2008, 80) on the 'mobile risk society', whereby abandoning the previously solid structures of modernity (work, family, nation, place) is valued: 'a shift can be observed from a directional to a non-directional concept of mobility. In first modernity, movements in spaces were conceived as point-to-point measurable and unambiguous status changes. They were conceptualized as movements to

be channelled and controlled. In second modernity, the uncontrollable, non-linear and non-directional character of mobility and migration is obvious. This changes the social strategies of actors to tackle mobility constraints and chances.' Due to the advent and spread of technologies (such as the Internet and the mobile phone, but also cheaper air travel), increasingly more individuals are somehow living the life of a nomad, able to compare and challenge their beliefs, norms and values.

Following from this championing of geographical and social mobility, the mobilities paradigm also calls for understanding mobilities as a source of power, and hence, inequality, in the sense that the hyper-mobility of some privileged groups of people is strengthening the immobility of other, less privileged ones (see also Massey, 1993; Kaufmann et al., 2004). In other words, not everybody has equal access to the (finite) resources that allow one to be hyper-mobile. Elliott and Urry (2010) emphasised the importance of 'little people', referring to a large group of often 'low-skilled' individuals, employed in petrol stations, vehicles, airports, hotels, and the like, and as such, smoothening the mobility of the privileged others. Rather recently, the debate about power and inequality has been given an additional ethical dimension in the paper by Nevins (2014), who stressed that the hyper-mobility of a minority generates negative outcomes that affect the less privileged ones first. He explained that (long-distance) travel should be considered an 'ecological privilege', and more specifically the 'appropriation of an unsustainable and socially unjust share of the biosphere's resources'. Indeed, several scholars have addressed the fact that (especially air) travel consumes oil and generates large volumes of carbon emissions, and as such, contributes to global warming (see Gössling and Peeters, 2007; Lassen, 2010), but only few linked this to ethical concerns.

Finally, the mobilities paradigm calls for studying mobility and travel not in isolation, but rather as a complex assemblage between myriads of interdependent mobilities (Urry, 2007). Mobilities not only refer to physical movements of people, but also virtual interaction practices or interacting via e-mail, telephone, SMS instant messaging, myriads of communication apps on mobile phones, videoconferencing, and the like (Urry, 2007). Moreover, the physical movements of objects and the imaginative travel through the images of places and people all play their part and should be taken into account (Urry, 2007). In addition, the paradigm argues that the complex interplay between (transportation and communication) technologies have allowed social networks to be geographically extended in the first place. In a social context, corporeal meetings with distant others can be carefully planned in advance

through communication technologies, while long periods of absence can be 'bridged' by in-between virtual meetings.

There has been a longstanding debate across several literatures on the relationship between corporeal and virtual travel (see for example Mokhtarian, 2003; Haynes et al., 2005, Denstadli and Gripsrud, 2010; Denstadli et al., 2012; Julsrud et al., 2014). Mokhtarian (2003) suggested four possible cross-mode relationships between the two: first, substitution or the replacement of corporeal travel by virtual meeting practices. The potential for substitution has been heralded, particularly in light of the high costs of corporeal travel; Second, modification or the influence one practice has on the other, without generating additional demand; Third, neutrality, or when there is no relationship between both; And fourth, complementarity when the use of one mode facilitates or accompanies the use of another mode (see also Denstadli & Gripsrud, 2010). By reviewing the literature, Mokhtarian (2003) suggests that substitution might take place on the short-term for specific applications, but that there is evidence that the interplay between both modes generates ever more travel in the long run (see also Lassen, 2009). It may be clear now from the literature that a simple, overall substitution effect is indeed highly unlikely (see Aguiléra et al., 2012).

Aguiléra et al. (2012) explain that the spread of portable, personal communication tools (and more specifically mobile phones) has recently reinvigorated the interest in this debate. They nonetheless argue to move beyond the question of the exact relationship between these practices, but rather call for developing a more nuanced understanding of how both travel practices are sequenced over time and change the nature of trips (see also Beaverstock et al., 2009). More specifically, it makes more sense to try to understand how virtual travel 'gradually enrich[es] our spatial and temporal practices' (Aguiléra et al., 2012, 665), for example by allowing more flexibility in daily life. In a social context, this for example includes analysing to what extent social networks increase in size, quality and spatial extension. It further builds on the premise that corporeal travel remains necessary for creating and maintaining relationships between dispersed people over time (Urry, 2004; 2007). Face-to-face communication is understood to be the richest and most natural way of interacting, because it allows producing instant feedback, transmitting multiple cues at once, generating a personal atmosphere and the like (see Beaverstock et al., 2009; Denstadli and Gripsrud, 2010). However, the question is not simply about geographical proximity alone, it is also about 'time-distanciated proximity', enabled through virtual travel practices as well

and generating new configurations of social networks over time (Urry, 2007; Aguiléra et al., 2012).

In sum, this dissertation engages with issues of proximity, social obligations and 'meetingness' in relation to academic travel (see Larsen et al., 2007). The specific work-related sector under study is academia, which has got a number of peculiarities vis-à-vis other sectors of work, already addressed in section 1.2. Such an approach makes sense, because many movements of academics and scientists take place because of a desire for 'professional socialisation' (Mahroum, 2000, 26). Lassen's work (2006) on Danish academics also suggests that academics travel primarily to meetings[1]. However, much in line with the work of Urry (2009), we take a broad perspective on meetings, by including the more informal and social meeting practices that are associated with much professional travel. Moreover, this work-related travel will not be analysed as an isolated category, but also other spheres of life (family, leisure, career) will receive considerable attention.

1.4 Academic work and travel in a Flemish context

Academic travel has not yet been systematically studied in a Flemish[2] higher education context. It is important to provide some institutional and regional context of our case study, as higher education systems vary across national contexts (see Musselin, 2004). Although a limited part of the qualitative research reported here was conducted in Denmark (11 interviews, see Chapter Three), this dissertation largely centres on the Flemish higher education system. This section will provide relevant contextual information with respect to Flemish internationalisation strategies, academic careers and mobility incentives. In addition, relevant background information is offered on Ghent University as well, as it constitutes the empirical focus of this dissertation.

Altbach (2004, 6) defines internationalisation in a higher education context as the 'specific policies and programmes undertaken by governments, academic systems and institutions, and even individual departments or institutions to cope with or exploit globalisation.' He stresses that higher education systems and institutions can cope 'with much room for initiative,' but cannot ignore global developments and trends, such as English as the *lingua franca* in academia, and the rapid spread of information technologies (Altbach, 2004). In addition, Enders and Musselin (2008, 18) suggest that inclusion or exclusion from the international academic community depends on a region's 'economic and political power, its size and geographic location, its dominant culture, the quality of its higher education system and the

international role played by its language.' On the basis of these characteristics, Boyer et al. (1994; in Enders and Musselin, 2008) have identified four approaches to internationalisation. We assume the Flemish higher education system to conform to the 'generally developed but small' type, where 'international communication, co-operation and recognition are considered indispensable' (Enders and Musselin, 2008, 143). Moreover, the 'system seems to be perceived as either too small or too limited to strive only for national visibility' (Ibid.,143).

These observations are for example reflected in the way in which Flanders organises its inter-university funding (BOF, with an annual budget of approximately 150 million Euros). Since 2003, the so-called 'BOF-key' takes international research output into account (Debackere and Glänzel, 2004; Luwel, 2010). For example, bibliometric indicators – which refer to international publication[3] and citation counts – now account for 37% in the distribution key. As such, Flanders was one of the first regions to explicitly recognise and reward publication performance (see Debackere and Glänzel, 2004). Flemish academics can also compete for support from other funding agencies through grant applications, which have a peer review mechanism. The main government-sponsored funding instrument (the Research Foundation – Flanders or FWO, approximately 200 million Euros annually) for fundamental research and mobility/travel grants similarly requests an international orientation of applications with regard to published papers in international journals. Moreover, its policy plan for 2012-2016 states that a 'researcher can no longer afford to be immobile' (FWO, 2011, 39). As a corollary, the FWO also provides travel grants to predoctoral researchers to attend conferences and symposia, even outside Europe. All in all, it may be clear that the Flemish higher education system to an important extent values and rewards international collaboration, mobility and visibility throughout an academic career.

With respect to academic careers in Flanders, it is important to stress that the number of temporary and fixed-term positions for early career researchers has experienced a steep rise over the last decades. The number of doctoral degrees awarded in Flemish universities has quadrupled between 1995-1996 and 2008-2009 (Groenvynck et al., 2011). The large inflow of early career researchers has however not been accompanied by a similar rise in tenured positions, which obviously leads to increased competition for jobs on the next sports of the academic career ladder. Moreover, appointment modalities have changed as well: increasingly more researchers are employed on externally funded, project-based funding. While academic career patterns in Flanders

used to be characterised by internal recruitment, there is a trend to increasingly recruit academics from outside the own institution. The number of foreign doctoral candidates for example increased five-fold in only twenty years, from 6% in 1990/91 to 30% in 2008/09 (Vandevelde and Leyman, 2012). As a consequence of increased job competition, job mobility and a lively internationalisation-discourse, mobility and travel are increasingly expected to be career assets for ambitious (early career) academics.

This dissertation's empirical focus are academics affiliated with Ghent University (UGent), which is the second largest university in Flanders, consisting of over 40.000 students and employing approximately 5.500 academics on a total of 8.000 employees. About 25% of all academics have a tenured position. The university currently has over 130 departments across eleven faculties.

According to its mission statement, Ghent University defines itself in a broad international perspective. The Strategic Plan of Ghent University aims to further reinforce its leading position in an international, competitive arena. This shows, amongst others, from a large number of bilateral collaboration agreements, international education programmes, strategic cooperation platforms (Africa, China and India Platform), and the like. Moreover, they have created a central office - the international relations office - to implement the international policy of the university and inform, support and counsel the academic communities to shape their international endeavours. This policy for example aims at structurally embedding the mobility of students and staff and wants the university to become a strong international brand[4]. Ghent University is the first Belgian university to have established a physical overseas presence, by opening a branch campus in Songdo, a district close to the city of Incheon, in South Korea. In the 'Songdo Global University Campus', specific discipline-oriented Bachelor's programs are offered by – according to the press release of 28 August – a 'flying faculty' of Ghent University professors, complemented with permanent academic staff. The fact that Ghent University is a major global institution can also be seen from its position in various world university rankings (Jöns and Hoyler, 2013). In 2014, Ghent University rose from place 85 to 70 in the Shanghai ranking – a ranking that mainly 'measures' research productivity - making it the highest-ranked Belgian University in this list. Also in the ranking by Times Higher Education 2013-2014, Ghent University featured in the top 100, being ranked on place 85.

Mobility-related issues fall under the responsibility of the centrally managed Environmental Department, because Ghent University aims at reducing the carbon emissions from the mobility of their employees. However, Ghent

University still lacks a central management office or policy responsible for international travel. Nonetheless, the Board of Directors approved a 'sustainability pact' at the beginning of 2014 to show more engagement with regards to environmental awareness. By signing this pact, individual departments can engage in undertaking efforts to reduce carbon emissions, for example originating from air travel, but the engagements are non-binding. The majority of academics have a personal bench fee to cover travel costs, while those who lack such personal funding can apply for travel grants. Since 2009, all travel with at least one overnight stay are centrally stored in a dataset by the Financial Department for reimbursement purposes. The specificities of these data will be discussed in the next section, as we received permission to analyse these.

1.5 Data and methods

This study engaged in mixed methods research, by combining both a quantitative and qualitative research approach in multiple phases of this work. Given the general lack of literature on the practice of academic travel, and hence, the exploratory nature of this study, tackling the issue from different angles by combining methods is valuable, as it offers a more balanced and complete understanding of the practice (Cresswell and Plano Clark, 2007; Bryman and Bell, 2011). It allows exploiting the strengths of both methods, namely the fact that exploratory qualitative research provides in-depth, contextualized, but less general insights on the matter, while quantitative research is less rich in interpretative terms, but more efficient and generalisable (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2003). As such, collecting both 'numbers and words' offers a logical, intuitive and practical alternative to monomethod approaches (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2003; Cresswell and Plano Clark, 2007). In particular, the study engaged in a 'convergent parallel design', in the sense that quantitative and qualitative strands were used in the same phase of the research process, the methods were prioritized equally and kept independent during analysis (Cresswell and Plano Clark, 2007). The main purpose was to obtain complementary data on the same topic. The results were then mixed during the overall interpretation (see Cresswell and Plano Clark, 2007). In what follows, the data used in this research will be discussed separately.

Permission was granted by the university management of Ghent University to analyse quantitative data from two centrally-managed datasets. The first dataset was retrieved via the Financial Department, and contains data on travel applications. We were allowed to analyse the time, duration and country

of destination of these travel applications in 2009 and 2010. At a later stage, data from 2011 and 2012 were provided as well. After data cleaning, more than 35.000 travel applications from approximately 5.500 different academics were retrieved. This dataset could then be linked to data from the Department of Personnel and Organisation. This department provided information on work-related and personal characteristics of the academics. More specifically, we gathered information on the career position (which allowed distinguishing between doctoral candidates, postdoctoral researchers and lecturers/professors), faculty or discipline, age, gender and household composition (single/partner, children/no children). This data collection specifically aimed at exploring a possible stratification amongst travellers. As such, data on personal characteristics were considered, but due to privacy reasons, these needed to be collected at the aggregate level. For example, we did not dispose of destination data on the city level, but the collection was limited to information on country level. A preliminary understanding of the database occurred through visually inspecting the data and performing a descriptive analysis. In later stages, the first data collection (2009-2010 data) was analysed through performing several cluster analyses on all travel applications from tenured academics (see Chapter Four). The second dataset capturing all travel applications from 2009 until the end of 2012 was analysed by means of a count regression analysis and specifically focused on untenured academics (see Chapter Five).

This quantitative data was complemented with 42 in-depth interviews to further investigate the underlying mechanisms and peculiarities of academic travel in more depth. The study focused on unbounded, individual views of academics, rather than on an organisational or institutional perspective. As a corollary, qualitative research was conducted with individual and relatively 'independent' academics, rather than on the managerial-institutional level. Semi-structured interviews were deemed most appropriate, given the stature of the respondents: Aberbach and Rockman (2002) argued that highly-educated people do not like the restraints of closed-ended questions. Moreover, semi-structured interviews allow the interviewer to pose additional, follow-up questions on relevant themes that emerge during the interviews. The interviews were conducted in Dutch or English, according to the respondents' preferences. Our judgment was that the interviewees were truthful in their answers and confident in their anonymity. The interviews were carried out between March 2010 and August 2013, with academics working at Ghent University (31 interviews) and Aalborg University in Denmark (11 interviews).

We first sent interview invitations to heads of department, because they were bound to have experienced shifting travel demands over time and are expected to set out day-to-day research policies. Moreover, it included an element of variation in terms of disciplines as well. At later stages, invitations were sent through snowball sampling, with the aim to interview more early career and female academics. Eleven interviews were carried out at Aalborg University during a research stay, and drew on the personal contacts of the host. This 'convenience' sample neither claims to be random nor representative for the total population of academics within these institutions. However, replicability and generalisability are seldom the goals of such qualitative research (Harwell, 2011). The emphasis rather lies on discovering and understanding the perspectives and experiences of respondents, which could then be used to contextualise the findings of quantitative work (Harwell, 2011). The interviews covered all but the first research question. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analysed in NVivo 9 and 10. NVivo is a qualitative data analysis software program that enables labelling text segments manually with codes. Coding in an iterative process allows to condense the data significantly, and to identify key pointers in the data. More detailed descriptions of respondent characteristics can be found in the third and fourth Chapter.

1.6 Objectives and overview of this dissertation

Based on our brief introduction to academic travel, we formulated four interrelated research questions. These questions look at the practice from different angles and are addressed in this dissertation's four formative chapters.

Given the paucity of research on short-term academic travel, the first purpose of this dissertation is to provide a broad, but critical review of past work on the (geographical) movements of the highly skilled, in order to identify promising directions of future work. The specific research question asked is: *How does the short-term travel of academics fit into wider debates about the movements of the highly skilled in past and current research?* This research question is addressed in Chapter Two of this dissertation. Particular attention is given to the relationship between mobility and knowledge generation/transfer, which is believed to be at the heart of what defines the academic profession.

The third Chapter explores the most important benefits generated by academic travel and the social 'meetingness' it facilitates in terms of work and

career. As such, it focuses on the following questions: *What roles do meetingness and travel play in academic careers? How does corporeal meetingness sit alongside and/or in synergy with virtual meetingness?* This question is answered through a thorough analysis of qualitative data. In doing so, this chapter not only aims at opening the 'black box' of academic travel, it also indirectly contributes to the debate on sustainability in academia and society more generally.

The fourth Chapter explores the phenomenon of academic travel in detail, based on both quantitative and qualitative data. In doing so, answers to the following questions are sought: *How many academics actually engage in academic travel? How great is the compulsion to internationalise and, hence, travel? What are the main travel constraints, and which incentives encourage travel? How do 'self-dependent' academics cope with compulsions and constraints when they are 'off balance'?* This chapter aims to contribute to the debate on the impact of repeated travel on the work-life balance of the travellers. Work-related travel requires a high capacity or potential to move. By exploring the coping strategies of individual academics, we aim to understand why particular academics can or cannot find a balance between obligations at home and away.

The fifth Chapter then engages with the fourth and final research question underlying this dissertation: *What are some of the inequalities emerging out of this 'valuing' of travel? How do family obligations affect academic travel for men and women (and the other way round)?* To this end, a dataset of travel applications is analysed to find out whether or not, and to what extent the practice of travel is gendered and stratified. As a corollary, this chapter studies the link between travel and inequality.

Chapter Six reports the main findings and conclusions drawn from the combined research findings of the chapters, and puts forward some avenues for further research. The first, second and final Chapter of this dissertation is solely my own work. I have also completed the data collection, analysis and interpretation, together with the bulk of writing in the third, fourth and fifth Chapter.

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[1] More specifically, half of all academic travel in a Danish context occurs in the context of conferences, while other important incentives include travel to do research, to teach or supervise and to engage in meetings (Lassen, 2006).

[2] In Belgium, higher education is organised at the community level (there is a Flemish and French-speaking community) and all universities are publicly funded.

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- 2 - EVOLVING PERSPECTIVES ON THE MOVEMENTS OF THE HIGHLY SKILLED: A REVIEW

Abstract

Debates surrounding the emergence of a so-called 'global knowledge-based economy' have reinvigorated scholarly interest in the movements of highly skilled professionals and how these relate to processes of knowledge transfer and generation. This article presents the crux of the debates surrounding the knowledge/mobility nexus through a genealogical discussion of two broad and interrelated shifts: (1) the changing centre of gravity in the form and function of this nexus and, related to this shift, (2) the changing ways in which this nexus has been conceptualised, understood, and studied. In other words, throughout the discussion, the 'dominant' types of knowledge movements are linked with the meta-narratives that have sought to make sense of these movements. These shifts relate to certain 'types' of mobilities becoming more prominent, the functions served by this mobility being altered, and subsequently, new forms of mobilities becoming a key focus of research. There is thus eventually an increased focus on the role of mobilities in the networked nature of knowledge.

2.1 Introduction

This article is concerned with the movements of highly skilled professionals in general and their interrelations with processes of knowledge transfer and generation in particular. Because of a growing scholarly interest in the so-called 'global knowledge-based economy', the mobilities of highly skilled professionals have received increased attention across disciplines, including human geography, demography, sociology, political sciences, higher education studies, management and human resources studies, and transportation studies. It might be argued that the 'mobility of the highly skilled' is to some degree an example of a chaotic conception, i.e. a concept that brings together phenomena that have empirical similarities but are, in fact, the product of different social processes. For instance, the concept may encompass both the permanent migration of an engineer with knowledge of a very specific set of skills that are

applicable to a specific piece of technology *and* that of a scientific researcher travelling to an academic conference to engage in discussions-cum-'social talk'. It is clear that in both examples, the mobility and the 'knowledge processes' involved are quite different. However, for the sake of the present article, the key point is that both examples *are* related in the sense that they lead to similar sets of pertinent questions concerning how the act of 'being mobile' is related to knowledge generation and diffusion. These questions are addressed throughout this article.

The crux of the debates surrounding the knowledge/mobility nexus is presented through a genealogical discussion of two broad and interrelated shifts: (1) the shifting centre of gravity in form and function of this nexus and (2) the changing ways in which this nexus has been conceptualised, understood, and studied. In other words, throughout the discussion, the 'dominant' types of knowledge movements are linked with the meta-narratives that have sought to make sense of these movements. For the sake of clarity, this article uses a broad definition of highly skilled professionals, referring to technicians, physicians, consultants, business executives, academics, IT professionals, accountants, engineers, and the like (see also Salt, 1997) and will use random examples from case-studies to support the arguments throughout this article. The remainder of this article is divided into four main parts. In the next section, we shortly revisit how the mobilities of the highly skilled were conceptualised prior to the 1990s. The dominant form and function was that of permanent migration from one state to another and the meta-narrative that of 'brain drain or gain'. The following section narrates the emergence of a more open-ended perspective on mobility and its interrelations with knowledge generation and diffusion, which is captured by the 'brain circulation' meta-narrative. Section four discusses some of the emerging limitations of this 'brain circulation' perspective, after which the final section highlights how these limitations may inform future research agendas.

2.2 The brain drain-debate and three key assumptions

> *The General Assembly '<u>notes with concern</u> that highly trained personnel from the developing countries continue to emigrate at an increasing rate to certain developed countries, which in some cases may hinder the process of economic and social development in the developing countries' (United Nations General Assembly, 1968, 33, original emphasis).*

Prior to the 1990s, the literature on the movement of highly skilled individuals   focused   largely   on   interrelated   debates   on   'brain

drain/gain/exchange', (see for example Adams, 1968; Berger and Webb, 1987; Salt, 1988), 'brain overflow' (Baldwin, 1970), or 'brain waste' (Rhode, 1993). Despite a number of nuances, these debates shared a focus on the *permanent movement* of *educated people* between *nation states* (Williams et al., 2004). From the literature that describes the limitations of this narrow theorisation (see Meyer and Brown, 1999; Saxenian, 2002; Meyer, 2001; 2003; King, 2002; Vertovec, 2002; Williams et al., 2004), three important premises can be distilled that set this era's meta-narrative apart.

(1) Migration as permanent movement

Although many movements somehow have a permanent character (e.g., settler migration or guest worker migration), migration studies prior to the 1990s had a tendency to study all flows as single and permanent 'events' captured in time and space along a particular direction (as argued by Gaillard and Gaillard, 1998; King, 2002; Ackers, 2005). This was due partly to data availability, as migration data were often collected alongside population data at the national level (see, for example, Baldwin, 1970). As a corollary, Ackers (2005) explains that early research on flows of skilled workers mapped and interpreted the geography and unevenness of these flows at particular times.

(2) A national reference frame

According to Teichler (2004) and Kim (2009), the nation state and 'national societies' have, to a large extent, conditioned and constrained the movements of the highly skilled for almost two centuries. State efforts to control internal labour markets through selective immigration or taxation policies, together with national prestige and power, heavily impacted the flows of skilled professionals (Meyer and Brown, 1999; Mahroum, 2001; Kim, 2009). Moreover, 'national belonging' had long been considered both natural and desirable, whereas migration was considered to be exceptional, marginal and abnormal (Malkki, 1992; King, 2002). As a consequence, prior to the 1990s, migration was above all studied in the context of political conflicts - a notorious example being the forced movements of Jewish scholars towards the US during the second World War (Kim, 2009) - or in the context of the international 'battle for highly skilled talent' (Iredale, 2001). Although the concept of 'brain drain' was first coined in the 1950s by the British Royal Society to describe the outflow of UK scientists to the US and Canada (Cervantes and Guellec, 2002), the academic and political interest centred on the economic impact of the foreign recruitment strategies of skilled workers from developing countries (see Ghosh, 1984; Koser and Salt, 1997; UNGA, 1968).

(3) Migrants as 'human capital'

Meyer and Brown (1999) explain that skilled migrants were conceived to be 'human capital', which is reflective of the general idea that investments were made in their education and training and that these investments were lost when migrants moved away (see also Meyer, 2001). The relationship between human mobility and knowledge transfer was understood to be straightforward: all knowledge was 'embodied' or 'embedded' within the individual, so that migrants were logically referred to as 'knowledge carriers' (Meyer, 2001; Williams et al., 2004). As a consequence, mobility was treated as a 'zero-sum game': expertise flowed in the same direction as that in which the person migrated (Ackers, 2005; Kim, 2010).

The debate on migration patterns as a source of global inequality is, of course, still alive, particularly in light of the commonly held view that 'knowledge' is a key potential source of economic advantage (see Altbach, 2004; Cantwell, 2011). In addition, national migration policies still affect and channel the flows of the highly skilled (see, for example, Reiner, 2010; Leung, 2012). As a consequence, it is still common in empirical studies to refer to 'brain drain' patterns and to build upon one of, or sometimes even all of, the three features of this meta-narrative (e.g., Mountford and Rapoport, 2011; Leung, 2012; Ifanti et al., 2014). Overall, then, this perspective is still valuable in some cases when clarifying some of the knowledge aspects that are related to the mobility of the highly skilled.

However, from the 1990s onwards, both in-depth empirical research and a range of global socio-economic trends began to undermine the validity of the framework. For example, in an era of globalisation, the traditional understanding of migration as permanent movement was abandoned (King, 2002; Williams et al., 2004; Ackers, 2005). Fast and affordable transportation technologies and infrastructures had facilitated temporary and circulatory movements (Findlay, 1988; Koser and Salt, 1997; Peixoto, 2001). A number of new dimensions came to the fore (e.g., in the work of Saxenian, 2002; Meyer, 2001; 2003; King, 2002; Williams et al., 2004), which resulted in a shift towards a new meta-narrative for studying the mobility of academics, namely the 'brain circulation' concept (see Saxenian, 2002). The major dimensions of these concepts are shown in Table 1 and form the basis of the discussions in the following sections.

Table 2.1: Overview of different conceptualisations of the movements of the highly skilled.

	Brain drain	Brain circulation	Brain mobilities
Time period	From the 1960s onwards	From the 1990s onwards	From the 2010s onwards
Reference frame	National	Supranational/ Regional/Corporate	Actor-network
Conceptualisation of mobility	International; Permanent; Unidirectional; Geographical;	Transnational; Long-term; Circulatory; Geographical;	Interpersonal; short-term; frequent Circulatory; Geographical and virtual;
View on migrant	Education; 'human capital'	Learning; 'social capital'	Knowing; 'network capital'
Perception about movement	Ambiguous; Steered or forced	Mutually beneficial	Necessary and normal

2.3 The brain circulation debate as a complement to earlier perspectives

> *'Against the background of growing competition at world level, the development of an open European labour market for researchers free from all forms of discrimination and the diversification of skills and career paths of researchers are crucial to support a beneficial circulation of researchers and their knowledge, both within Europe and in a global setting. Special measures to encourage young researchers and support early stages of scientific career, as well as measures to reduce the 'brain drain', such as reintegration grants, will be introduced' (Rationale of the 'People' Programme[1] - 7th Framework Programme EU – Time frame: 2007-2013 – Budget: 4.7 billion Euros)*

This section illustrates how the concept of 'brain circulation' has broadened theorisations on the three major assumptions underlying the 'brain drain' reading of the knowledge/mobility nexus.

(1) A circulatory process instead of permanent movements

King (2002) argues that migration should not be studied as an end-product; rather, more attention should be given to the 'act' of migration. 'Brain circulation' thus captures the circulatory movements of skilled persons in terms of a long-term stay, visit or assignment and involves returning (knowledge) home afterwards (see Saxenian, 2002; Meyer, 2003; Moguerou, 2006, 1; Dente, 2007; OECD, 2008; Milio et al., 2012). Such an approach co-opts the time dimension in the analytical framework as it tries to understand how time interacts with space, for example, in the case of return migration, repatriation, temporary visits or internships. Concepts such as 'place polygamy' (Beck, 2000) and 'dual lives' (Portes, 1997; in Vertovec, 2002) were introduced to explain that migration was considered an ongoing process whereby permanently settling was sometimes an option, but not a necessity. From such a view, the term 'mobility' may be preferred over 'migration' (see for example Findlay et al., 2006).

(2) Additional and juxtaposed reference frames

Empirical research within the brain circulation framework has shifted its attention away from the state. Three additional scalar reference frames were deemed pertinent. The first reference frame was the study of intellectual or scientific diaspora networks, first described by Meyer and Brown (1999) and influenced by studies on the sociology of science and technology. One important insight that emerged from the observation was that such social networks, which are clearly 'transcending' nations, were not only products of migration but instead constituted 'scapes' that 'reconfigure the dimensions of time and space' (Urry, 2000, 35). They do so by mediating and channelling the migration decisions of others and keeping connections with the sending country alive (see Meyer and Brown, 1999; Urry, 2000; Séguin et al., 2006). As a corollary, in some cases, outward migration became valued rather than scorned, as sending countries could tap into the knowledge and expertise of these networks from a distance. Saxenian (2001), for example, reveals how Asian-American networks linked Silicon Valley socially and economically with the Hsinchu region of Taiwan and thus contributed to the economic success of the region. Meyer (2001, 94) even suggests that these social networks and spaces are most likely more powerful at the international level because 'institutional alternatives are less abundant'. Together, these insights both

formed and were formed by a wider 'transnational turn' in the migration literature (Faist, 2004; 2008; Gustafson, 2004; Olsson, 2004).

Second, other territorial scales – mainly supra-national scales such as the European Union – were increasingly used to study student and staff mobility (see Ackers, 2005). This shift has much to do with the fact that academic mobility was stimulated and valued in a European context because of the perceived benefits for both sending and receiving regions and institutions. The ERASMUS Student exchange program, for example, promoted temporary academic mobility between institutions because it reinforced 'the concept that the exchange of academic staff is not just an occasional interaction, but part of a regular cooperation among institutions' (Enders, 1998, 47). These policies were part of a wider effort to generate longer-lasting cross-fertilisation between institutions of higher education and research (Enders and Musselin, 2008). Particular attention was given to critical evaluations of the benefits of long-term mobility experiences (Barjak and Robinson, 2008; Edler et al., 2011; Fontes et al., 2013) and the consequences of championing academic mobility in terms of gender inequality (Shauman and Xie, 1996; Moguérou, 2004; Ackers, 2004; Jöns, 2011; Leyman, 2009).

Third, the use of a corporate reference frame for studying the migration of the highly skilled started to gain momentum as well, primarily in the international human resources management literature. From the 1990s onwards, and following the international expansion of business activities, multinational enterprises (MNEs) and transnational corporations (TNCs) started mobilising their skilled employees in order to control and coordinate operations in their geographically dispersed office networks or branch plants (see Salt, 1992; Beaverstock, 1999; Peixoto, 2001: Collings et al., 2007; Millar & Salt, 2008) or as a knowledge transfer mechanism (Bonache and Brewster, 2001). From the very beginning and generally speaking, these companies staffed 'expatriates' elsewhere for periods ranging between one year and several years (Beaverstock, 1999).

(3) Migrants, skills and learning processes

In addition, the perspective on the migrating individual and his or her relation with skills and knowledge changed. Williams et al. (2004) make clear that the conceptualisation of a migrant as a 'stock of skills and knowledge' embedded or embodied in the mover was also problematic. They call for a broader interpretation of the skills of migrants, not only as human capital that was accumulated before the move but also involving more 'transferable' skills (e.g., language skills, interpersonal skills) that can be learned elsewhere. Moreover, they link migration flows with the transfer of 'tacit' knowledge[2],

generally referring to knowledge that cannot readily be transferred between individuals via words or symbols. However, they did not fully engage in the important debate concerning whether tacit knowledge has a territorial dimension.

In regional and urban studies, it has long been emphasised that geographical proximity, face-to-face contact and local buzz are fundamental for the spreading of such tacit knowledge (see, for example, Maskell and Malmberg, 1999; Storper and Venables, 2004). As a result, it has long been assumed that long-term geographical proximity or co-presence was required for successful tacit knowledge transfer but that the transfer of codified knowledge transfer could occur at a distance (Amin and Cohendet, 2005). It can also help clarify why most empirical research on the mobility of the highly skilled 'has been implicitly characterised as involving an extended period of residence abroad (often 2-3 years)' (see Ackers, 2010, 3).

2.4 The times are changing, again: shortcomings of the brain circulation literature

'Times have changed, and both jobs and their associated 'career ladders' appear more temporary, and more elusive, than before. Yet people still seek certain fundamentals – security, community, and self-fulfilment – from their working lives. How can we still help to provide these fundamentals in a time of greater uncertainty? One answer lies in finding continuity in what we used to see as discontinuous events. People may change jobs, but retain the relationships and support systems that they had before' (Arthur, 2003, preface)

Ackers (2010, 1) explains that empirical research on the mobility of academics still lacks research on the ''far end' of the mobility continuum', meaning that research has tended to neglect 'shorter-term' mobilities. For instance, in his paper, Mahroum (2000, 24) mentions the existence of 'temporary mobility associated with very short-term business or academic trips to attend a conference or a business meeting' but subsequently does not address these mobilities. Similarly, Williams and Balaz (2008, 12) address temporary migration, but their definition 'excludes business trips and visits but includes short-term work assignments'.

In this section, we briefly readdress insights from the international human resource management (IHRM) literature, because their focus on 'transient' professional migration has taken forward the debates on brain drain and circulation in a number of ways. These 'transient' migrants refer to skilled

employees of transnational corporations who regularly move between countries for shorter periods of time, without ever settling (see Beaverstock, 1999). The crux of the argument is that insights on 'transient' migrants open up avenues for future research on the mobilities of the highly skilled, although a corporate reference frame still obscures insights on unbounded, emerging patterns of movements.

(1) From 'expatriation' to 'flexpatriation' and 'portfolios of mobility'

A highly interesting aspect of the IHRM literature is that – unlike most research framed in the brain circulation debate - it started distinguishing shorter-term alternatives to traditional expatriation assignments, such as 'frequent flyer' assignments (Petrovic et al., 2000), flexpatriate assignments (Mayerhofer et al., 2004) and international business travel (Davidson & Cope, 2003; Welch and Worm, 2006; Beaverstock et al., 2009; Faulconbridge et al., 2009; Beaverstock et al., 2010). All of these refer to assignments which involve frequent travel, without relocation of the traveller. Both cost containment and staff immobility (due to a rise of dual career couples) lie at the basis of such alternative assignments (Welch and Worm, 2006; Millar and Salt, 2008; Meyskens et al., 2009). In a similar vein, Millar and Salt (2008) have argued that distinct types of mobility play different roles in transnational companies, resulting in corporate 'portfolios of mobility'. According to Beaverstock et al. (2009), the very short-term business travel becomes familiar to growing numbers of skilled professionals to the extent that the practice has become 'normalised' across several sectors of work (see Kesselring and Vogl, 2010; Gustafson, 2014).

Salt and Wood (2012, 426) observe that 'in all sectors, expatriation is being complemented, or even replaced, by other means of knowledge transfer and corporate control. [...] These include short-term assignments, regular business travel and intensified virtual communications.' This accounts for both intra- and inter-firm activities (Jones, 2013). Predominantly the high financial, environmental and social costs associated with frequent travel have received attention (see Beaverstock et al., 2009). However, especially the relationship between short-term travel and knowledge exchange is of interest to this article.

(2) Temporary clustering and knowledge exchange

Recent work on the broader concept of 'business travel' has revealed that repeated meetings brought about by frequent corporeal travel can be an important practice for producing and transferring knowledge (see Faulconbridge et al., 2009; Salt and Wood, 2012). Research in regional and urban studies has shown that continuous geographical proximity is 'neither a

necessary, nor a sufficient condition' for learning and innovation to take place (see Boschma, 2005, 61; Amin and Cohendet, 2004). Geographical proximity alone is no guarantee for successful knowledge transfer because distance across other dimensions can hamper these processes, including institutional, organisational, cognitive or social distance (see Morgan, 2001; Faulconbridge, 2006; D'Este et al., 2013). In addition, permanent co-location or clustering is not necessary because regular 'temporary clustering' can act as a suitable alternative in which intensive human mobility is a prerequisite (Rallet and Torre, 1999). For example, such temporary clustering occurs in the framework of transnational and inter-firm project meetings or in the case of get-togethers such as trade fairs, ceremonies or conferences (Maskell et al., 2005). Moreover, too much proximity in clusters can be problematic because there is a risk of over-embeddedness, termed a situation of 'lock-in' (see Boschma, 2005; Bathelt et al., 2004). As a consequence, a certain amount of 'distance' between workers in knowledge organisations also becomes important (see Grabher and Ibert, 2006). Corporeal travel is then valuable not only for its capacity to bring people together but also because it allows people to be separated from time to time. Based on a study of professionals in advertising and law firms, Faulconbridge (2006; 2007) shows that geographically stretched social interaction is not only important for transferring 'tacit' knowledge but also because it 'transforms' the knowledge base of those who interact.

The empirical research by Lassen (2006; 2009) reveals that most travel occurs in the context of meetings and is related to 'loosely connected and individualised network collaborations which are established and maintained by each individual employee' (Lassen, 2006, 305). As Lassen (2006) clarifies, such work trips are related to both formal and social obligations to meet face-to-face with distantly located colleagues from time to time and, as such, are socially significant practices (see also Urry, 2003; 2004; 2009). This largely resonates with findings from research on travel in professional services firms, undertaken by Faulconbridge (2006; 2007) and colleagues (Faulconbridge and Beaverstock, 2008; Faulconbridge et al., 2009). Faulconbridge and Beaverstock (2008) have analysed the travel activities of lawyers within globalising law firms and focus on these social obligations. Their analysis revealed that obligations of face-to-face meetings – along with virtual encounters – can transform organisational spaces towards 'social spaces', which prove to be important spaces for generating globally stretched network capital (see also Jones, 2009). Virtual travel practices appear important for interaction in between corporeal meetings and, as such, can help reduce the need for corporeal travel (see Beaverstock et al., 2009).

[46]

(3) A corporate reference frame

Williams (2007; but also Williams and Shaw, 2011) argues nonetheless that analyses of the mobility of the skilled still tend to be too much 'bounded' within organisational networks. This can be problematic, because an organisation is – not unlike the state or other territorial scales – not a homogeneous entity. A knowledge-based view of the firm emphasises the complexity and diversity of knowledge practices and routines. Amin & Thrift (2002) for example consider organisations as 'constellations of distributed know-how and reflexivity within communities of practice operating at different spatial scales' (see also Amin & Cohendet, 2004). As such, the success or the failure of an organisation is believed to depend on some (core) workers (see Wittel, 2001). This especially holds true for knowledge intensive firms, where 'employees possess the core competence of the company – and can carry it out of the organisation if they choose to resign' (Larsen, 2004, 860).

The wider literature on the sociology of work even suggests that such 'emerging', 'unbounded' and interpersonal networks are gaining in significance due to an increased individualisation of work (see Bauman, 2000; Sennet, 1998; 2007). Sennet (1998; 2007) points out that the nature of work in large corporations has transformed towards more 'precarious' work arrangements, in the sense that jobs are increasingly short-term, unpredictable and insecure, resulting in lower institutional loyalty and higher job mobility (see also Castells, 1996; Bauman, 2000). In a similar vein, Defillipi & Arthur (1996) emphasised the increase of 'boundaryless careers', whereby the traditional notion of a career involving job security and a climb up the corporate ladder, is supplemented by individuals choosing and changing between jobs in an effort to remain 'employable' by continuously updating their knowledge and skills (see also Arthur, 2003). As a result, increasingly more workers in boundaryless careers are investing in interpersonal ties beyond the organisation, rather than in loyalty for the firm, because strong networks constitute 'a safety net which diminishes the need for long-term strategic planning' (see Sennet, 2007, 80).

Following from this, a corporate reference frame still would seem to obscure two aspects: first, the role of 'emerging' relational networks (see for example Teigland, 2003; Faulconbridge, 2007); and second, the role of self-directed, individual agents and their 'do-it-yourself' biographies (see for example Grabher & Ibert, 2006; Findlay et al., 2006; Ho, 2011; Williams and Shaw, 2011; Ryan & Mulholland, 2014).

2.5 Concluding remarks

Although the archetypical examples of engineers migrating permanently and academics going to a conference were empirically 'present' both four decades ago and today, there seems to have been a broad shift in the knowledge/mobility nexus underlying such movements. This shift relates to both the mobility as such (from permanent migration to short-term and ad hoc mobility) and the dominant way in which it has been linked with knowledge generation and diffusion (from 'brain drain or gain' to 'brain circulation'). The underlying shift, it would seem, is that there is an increased focus on the role of mobilities in the networked nature of knowledge. This shift relates to certain 'types' of mobility becoming more prominent, the functions served by these types being altered, and subsequently, new forms of mobility becoming a key focus of research. My review of the evolving mobilities of academics in particular has sought to capture the shifting centres of gravity of the shape and function of and research on the knowledge/mobility nexus and subsequently used these findings to highlight a number of emerging issues.

This article concludes by discussing some avenues for further research in this regard. One possible field of study would address these new directions through a qualitative and micro-level perspective (see Richardson and Mallon, 2005; Cantwell, 2011). Such a perspective focuses on relational actor-networks of movers, which considers the movers' multi-faceted insertion in a diverse set of inter-personal networks, whether organisational, occupational, or familial (see, for example, Ryan and Mulholland, 2014). Providing sufficient contextual information about how they negotiate mobility, career and family gives back to migrants their 'human face' (Smith and Favell, 2006; Harvey, 2011). It considers the interdependency of different mobility types, going from long-term to short-term travel and virtual travel (the use of ICTs) (see Salt and Wood, 2012). In addition, it analyses the role of mobility and specifically recurrent short-term travel in transferring and generating new knowledge.

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[1] http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/people/home_en.html. Accessed 15 May 2014.

[2] According to Amin & Cohendet (2004), transferring tacit knowledge requires a certain amount of time, practice and shared understanding before it can be fully mastered by an individual, and it necessitates (regular) activation.

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- 3 - ACADEMIC TRAVEL AND THE CHANGING NATURE OF SCIENTIFIC WORK

Abstract

This article sets out to explore the peculiarities of work-related travel for academics in internationalising higher education systems. Using John Urry's notion of 'meetingness', the article reveals how academics depend on corporeal and virtual travel to create and maintain a networked professional life outside their own institution. To this end, the article first ventures into the changing work conditions for academics. Next, drawing on qualitative research (42 interviews) in a Flemish and Danish context, the article argues that in spite of the obvious costs associated with corporeal travel, changing conditions of work imply that being mobile remains a highly significant work practice in academia for a number of reasons. The paper distinguishes between straightforward and 'soft' obligations that necessitate travel. With regards to the soft obligations, the article makes a distinction between network capital that derives from dense and from sparse ego networks. In addition, the article distinguishes situations in which corporeal presence and absence are negotiated and where 'virtual' meetingness can support and transform a professional life at a distance. Our discussion seeks to open up opportunities for future research on the relationship between work-related mobilities, network capital and career success.

3.1 Introduction

As higher education systems internationalise, transnational travel has become an important aspect of work for academics[1], in the global north in particular (Kim, 2009; Parker and Weik, 2014). Academics across all career stages are travelling around the globe to attend conferences and meetings of peers within their discipline to engage in project work, to deliver guest lectures and speeches, etc. (Lassen, 2006; Storme et al., 2013). Early career researchers are increasingly inclined or expected to undertake a research stay abroad at 'places of excellence' (Ackers, 2008; Jöns, 2011), and senior

academics are staffed at campuses overseas (Salt and Wood, 2014) or assigned to multiple institutions at once, which generates even more travel.

However, corporeal travel is a costly practice in terms of time, money and effort, and it is 'burdened' with significant social and environmental costs (Beaverstock et al., 2009). Socially, travelling can be a source of stress and frustration for the traveller and his or her family (Espino et al., 2002) and can also impinge on work/life balance (Gustafson, 2006, Bergström, 2013). With respect to the environment, corporeal travel has been linked with high carbon emissions and therefore significant contributions to climate change (Gössling and Peeters, 2007; Lassen, 2009; Denstadli et al., 2012; Urry, 2010; Nevins, 2014). In addition, it has been argued that corporeal travel has an ambiguous relationship with career mobility (Dickmann and Harris, 2005) and continuing gender inequality (Ackers, 2008; Leemann, 2010; Parker and Weik, 2014). These high costs and inequalities make scholars question the value and necessity of corporeal travel (Ackers, 2008), especially when innovative communication technologies—referred to here as virtual travel—seem to offer ways to reconcile these costs (Urry, 2002; Ackers, 2008).

Empirical studies that set out to explore what compels academics to travel are rare, especially those that study the complex interplay between corporeal and virtual travel (Ackers, 2010). This article seeks to help fill this research void by providing insights into the value of 'meetingness' (Urry, 2003; 2004) for academics in internationalising higher education systems. We are not so much concerned with the question of how virtual travel can substitute for corporeal travel; rather, we aim to add to the understanding of how corporeal and virtual travel are integrated to minimise the frequency of 'meetingness' in the first place. To this end, we draw upon qualitative research at Ghent University (Belgium) and Aalborg University (Denmark), where one of the authors conducted a total of 42 semi-structured interviews. In doing so, the article contributes to a growing body of literature on the broader concepts of business travel and mobility (see Jones, 2007; 2013; Aguiléra, 2008; Faulconbridge et al., 2009; Beaverstock et al., 2009; Gustafson, 2014).

This article first uses insights from the mobilities paradigm (Sheller and Urry, 2006; Urry, 2007) to conceptualise work-related mobility and travel beyond their traditional understandings. This is followed by an overview of important global and regional trends in academia, which are bound to affect the way academics work and travel. We then discuss the data and methods used in this qualitative study, followed by a results section consisting of four parts: The first part distinguishes a number of straightforward compulsions that require travel, while the following two sections put emphasis on 'softer' meeting

obligations. Soft obligations are evident in regard to the practices and network capital that derive from social meetings in dense social networks—discussed in the second section—and sparse social networks, discussed in the third section. Finally, the fourth section distinguishes situations in which corporeal presence and absence can be negotiated and possibly substituted by virtual meetingness. After summarising our main findings and discussing some of the implications for academia in general, the article is concluded with an overview of some possible avenues for further research.

3.2 Conceptual considerations

The existing literature on work-related mobility has approached this topic from different perspectives. One approach, very common in transportation and management studies, considers travel to be a necessary evil, a price to pay to do work beyond a spatial fix (Urry, 2003; Faulconbridge and Beaverstock, 2008; Gustafson, 2014). From this perspective, mobility is primarily considered a functional practice that is undertaken, for example, to secure and complete assignments, to negotiate and sign agreements with distant partners or to produce custom-made services to clients (Jones, 2007). The task at hand is bound to determine the duration of travel, which results in a corporate 'mobility portfolio' (see Millar and Salt, 2008). In its most rigid definition, business travel is considered to be 'briefcase travel' or corporeal travel by employees in the course of their business to engage in face-to-face meetings (see Mackie et al., 2003; Lyons, 2013). Such a definition alludes to the fact that the effectiveness of a business trip can be measured by the economic value or return it generates. As a corollary, mobility is deemed predictable and manageable, and measurements can be taken to rationalise the costly corporeal travel practices (see Kesselring and Vogl, 2010), for example by substituting part of it by videoconferencing technologies (VC) (see for example Denstadli et al., 2012; Julsrud et al., 2014).

A different view, and the view that will be the starting point of this article, is more closely aligned with the mobilities paradigm as developed by Sheller and Urry (2006). It puts 'the social into travel' (Urry, 2003, 155) by starting the analysis from 'the complex patterning of people's varied and changing social activities' (156). This approach emphasises that all social networks generate a number of obligations for the people involved to meet each other in person, at various and irregular points in space and time. When people live nearby, this 'meetingness' is such an obvious, invisible and normal practice that it is neglected and unrecognised, but when social networks are stretched across space, organising and managing 'meetingness' becomes a very visible and

important feature of social life (Urry, 2009). Such a networked life at a distance requires intermittent corporeal encounters 'both to 'establish' and to 'cement' at least temporarily those weak ties' (Urry, 2003, 161).

Such a perspective emphasises that it is impossible to define or examine clear-cut 'categories' of mobility. First, mobility is not restricted to geographical or corporeal movements alone: It also incorporates other means of transcending geographical distance, for example through virtual (via technologies, such as mobile phones and computers) or imaginary travel (Urry, 2002, 2007), and it is precisely the interplay between these different 'mobility modes' that makes social life at a distance possible. In addition, meetingness and travel are not restricted to face-to-face obligations alone but also comprise face-to-place, face-to-object and face-to-time obligations (Urry, 2007). And finally, no explicit distinction is made between mobility for work, career, family or leisure purposes, but rather mobility is conceptualised as a combination of different purposes (see Urry, 2003, 2004). This conceptual recasting implies that studies of mobility should not be conducted within a single organisational framework but also should focus on employees' preferences, contexts and backgrounds. Within such a framework, it is hard to measure the economic value of a single trip because mobility is an ongoing process comprised of moments of both presence and absence over time.

It is interesting and valuable to study work-related mobility from a mobilities paradigm because of the socially embedded or 'relational' nature of economic activity (Granovetter, 1985; Yeung, 2005). Economic geographers have long recognised that face-to-face contact, local 'buzz' and strong social networks can be important in explaining the success of firms within regional clusters (Storper and Venables, 2004). In addition, it is also clear that firms not located in geographically close regions can be very successful by 'clustering temporarily', in which intensive human mobility is a prerequisite (Rallet and Torre, 1999; Maskell et al., 2005). However, as Grabher and Ibert (2006) note, such analyses tend to commit an ecological fallacy by confounding interpersonal relationships with inter-firm links, thereby neglecting the intricacies and varieties of professional networks of individual workers, for example.

Hence, rather than focus on organisational mobility portfolios, this article will explore networked mobility obligations and expectations, which are subject to career stage, family life and personal circumstances and shaped by contexts and relationships (see Collin, 1998; in Richardson and Mallon, 2005, 411). The extensive literature on communities of practice (Wenger, 1998), networks of practice (Brown and Duguid, 2000) and occupational communities

(Van Maanen and Barley, 1982) has shown that work-related networks that emerge without much corporate support are essential for our understanding of the firm and its success. Moreover, several authors have argued that extensive interpersonal and networked ties beyond the organisational frame of reference are becoming increasingly important career assets (DeFilippi and Arthur, 1996; Arthur, 2003).

Social networks outside the firm appear to be vital for globally operating knowledge workers because knowledge production and reproduction are in essence social practices (see Brown and Duguid, 2000; Faulconbridge et al., 2009; Heinemann, 2014). In their empirical analysis of project ecologies in software and advertising firms, Grabher and Ibert (2006) distinguish between multiple personal networks that are characterised by different degrees of social embeddedness: communality, sociality and connectivity ties. Although they do not explicitly refer to the concept of 'meetingness', their analysis indicates that these ties rely on different modes of meetingness and travel, primarily physical in the case of sociality ties and above all virtual in the case of connectivity ties. In his analysis of global advertising firms, Faulconbridge (2006, 526) stresses that globally stretched social learning is a practice that uses social interaction 'to inform understanding and develop new logics.' Such a practice recognises the fact that tacit or 'sticky' knowledge is interpreted differently by people embedded in different social and cultural contexts, but advertising employees use this ambiguity to their advantage. Faulconbridge and Beaverstock (2008) draw on insights from interviews with workers from globalising law firms and show how obligations of meetingness create social spaces outside a formal work context. This article nonetheless focuses on knowledge workers in academia.

3.3 Networks, travel and work in the academic sector

The academic sector is generally recognised for having a high degree of tacit knowledge (Storper and Venables, 2004) and a mobile workforce (Lassen, 2006; Ackers, 2008; Storme et al., 2013; Parker and Weik, 2014). In addition, in contrast to workers in many other sectors, academics have a relatively high degree of freedom and independence to reap mobility opportunities, or to challenge the difficulties in light of their own context, motivations and ideas. As a consequence, we cannot expect all mobility decisions to be purely work-related. A number of intersecting trends have transformed the nature of academia during the last few decades, and three trends seem especially pertinent for our understanding of academic mobility and travel in this article.

First, there is an (increasing) abundance of codified knowledge on the Internet. This comprises not only knowledge in the form of peer-reviewed publications in indexed electronic journals[2] but also increasingly more unfinished, often overlapping, sometimes contradictory or outright unreliable but always fast-changing information sources and channels (see Brown and Duguid, 2000). This abundance creates challenges for academics, not least of all in terms of sense-making and keeping abreast of the knowledge base within a particular subfield (see Meyer, 2010; Billig, 2013). Similar to other knowledge-intensive sectors, we can expect much of the sense-making and understanding to occur via networked social interaction and 'meetingness' (see for example Faulconbridge, 2006; Jones, 2007).

Second, transnational collaboration and competition are increasingly valued and strengthened by the neoliberal 'internationalisation-cum-benchmarking' discourse in higher education (Yeung, 2001). The mobility of students and staff and a scientific *lingua franca* lie at the heart of these processes (see Altbach, 2004, Williams et al., 2004; Ackers, 2008; Kim, 2010). Transportation and communication technologies have clearly affected this process because they open up opportunities for faster and spatially dispersed communication and collaboration (Altbach et al., 2009; Urry, 2007). The advent of fast and less expensive transportation technologies led David Lodge thirty years ago to declare in his famous novel *Small World* (1984, 459) that during conference season, '[t]he whole academic world seems to be on the move. Half the passengers on transatlantic flights these days are university teachers.' While clearly exaggerated, the quote does point to the fact that increasingly more academics are mobile for work-related purposes, including conference travel or foreign project work (see also Lassen, 2006, 2009; Parker and Weik, 2014). Meanwhile, *not* engaging in corporeal travel is perceived to be problematic (Storme et al., 2013).

Third, universities are centre stage in globalised, knowledge-intensive service economies (Altbach et al., 2009). They are increasingly seen as potential engines of regional economic growth (Rutten et al., 2003) because of their capacity to generate both highly skilled people and top-notch, innovative research. As a consequence, there is a trend towards more 'entrepreneurial', 'strategic' and 'market-led' behaviour of institutions, departments and individual academics (Etzkowitz, 2001). Universities thus move towards the 'logic' of private companies, providing resources in return for production and performance objectives (Enders and Musselin, 2008). This performance of individuals, departments and universities is partly ranked and evaluated based on bibliometric data[3] (Frey, 2003; Lawrence, 2003). In some institutional

contexts, including the ones in Flanders and Denmark, which form the empirical background for this study, this performance partly determines the allocation of funding between institutions of higher education and thus explicitly promotes the practice (see also Debackere and Glänzel, 2004; Adler and Harzing, 2009). Because formal output is the end product of an often long and informal communication cycle (Lievrouw and Carley, 1990), these rewarding mechanisms are bound to have an effect on the entire communication cycle.

Therefore, research groups increasingly behave similarly to firm-like entities in the sense that they become highly organised and hierarchically structured and are competing with others over additional resources (Etzkowitz, 2001; de Boer and Goedegebuure, 2001). In this context, it is increasingly common to employ early career researchers on a fixed-term project basis, which entails reduced job security. Accordingly, similar to other sectors, there is a trend towards more 'boundaryless' careers (DeFillipi and Arthur, 1996) in which employees show little or no organisational or institutional loyalty (Sennet, 1998; 2007). They seem to be on the lookout for permanent positions or better job prospects elsewhere. Against this background, DeFillipi and Arthur (1996) stress the importance of personal networks outside the formal work setting because this becomes the only certainty and support a person retains when changing jobs. Working practices increasingly become networking practices whereby 'the commodification of goods and services becomes secondary to the commodification of human relationships' (Rifkin, 2000; in Wittel, 2001).

Taken together, it is clear that the changing nature of academic work has different ramifications for the study of the meaning and nature of academic mobility. However, to the best of our knowledge, the literature on transnational academic mobility has only recently begun to analyse mobility apart from its traditional, restrictive meaning as isolated and geographical movements (Ackers, 2010). In this article, we will focus on two key questions that emerge from these shifts:

(1) What roles do meetingness and travel play in academic careers?

(2) How does corporeal meetingness sit alongside and/or in synergy with virtual meetingness?

The remainder of this paper seeks to provide tentative answers to these questions by drawing on qualitative research. In the next section, we discuss our data and methodology.

3.4 Data and methods

Between March 2010 and August 2013, 42 semi-structured interviews were carried out with academics working at Ghent University in Flanders (Belgium, 31 interviews) and Aalborg University in Denmark (11 interviews). By drawing on interviews at two different universities, we seek to cover a broader spectrum of travel practices in academia. That said, both universities are part of higher education systems with considerable similarities, not least of all with respect to their internationalisation strategies (see Enders and Musselin, 2008): They are located in small high-income countries where international communication, co-operation and recognition are indispensable due to a lack of strong scientific communication and publication networks in their own (regional) language. Academics within these universities form part of the 'super-mobile population of the global north,' as discussed in the work of Parker and Weik (2014, 167). Indeed, one can expect different mobility patterns and rationales for students and staff from other regions, for example, the mobility of Chinese scholars (see Leung, 2012).

We sent 50 random invitations to the 131 heads of departments at Ghent University to take part in a research project on the changing interplay between physical and virtual mobility in academia. We chose to interview heads of department because Ghent University's day-to-day research policies are primarily shaped at the departmental level. Fifteen of them responded positively, and 4 of them suggested other members of the professoriate within their department for us to interview instead. Another 12 respondents were invited through snowball sampling and also included early career academics. The 11 interviews at Aalborg University were carried out during a research stay of one of the authors and drew on the personal contacts of the host. Our 'convenience' sample obviously neither claims to be random nor representative for the total population of academics within these institutions. However, we believe that the interviews can shed light on the relevance of travel as a practice in academia given the stature of the respondents. The final sample consists of 42 interviews across academic disciplines. Thirty-one respondents were male, and the age of respondents ranged from 26 to 63 years. All respondents, regardless of age or career stage, had already travelled in person for work-related purposes. Senior academics (two-thirds of the respondents) refer to academics with a 'tenure track' or tenured position, and junior or early career academics refer to (post-)doctoral researchers, employed under fixed-term conditions.

Aberbach and Rockman (2002) argue that highly educated people do not like the restraints of closed-ended questions. Therefore, we used face-to-face semi-structured interviews where interviewees could respond to open-ended and follow-up questions on their 'mobility' experiences and thoughts in a broad sense, articulate these in full and add complementary issues they considered to be relevant. This implies that the questions were not always asked in the same order and that some interviews were lengthened, thus allowing maximising response validity (Aberbach and Rockman, 2002). The interviews were conducted in Dutch or English, according to the respondents' preferences. Our judgment was that the interviewees were truthful in their answers and confident in their anonymity. All interviews were tape-recorded to ensure minimal information loss and lasted on average 59 minutes. The manuscripts were analysed in QSR NVivo 10, which is a software package built for qualitative data analysis and, more specifically, transcription analysis, coding and text interpretation. The data were coded manually in an iterative process to identify key pointers in the data. For example, based on the transcripts, we identified seven obligations for corporeal meetingness which were manually coded in different thematic 'nodes.' The coding procedure offers a way to index the transcripts and to support the analysis.

3.5 Results

The first part of this results section argues how travel was taken for granted by our respondents and draws upon Urry's (2003) types of obligations to single out a few situations that simply require academics to be mobile. The second and the third part go on to distinguish more 'soft' obligations to travel to enable social interaction. The fourth part explores how both proximity and absence are negotiated over time.

3.5.1 Travel as an unquestionable part of the job

Physical travel was taken for granted by the large majority of academics and simply considered as part of the job. Although respondents were aware of the fact that corporeal travel results in a large carbon footprint, their 'mobility privilege' (see Nevins, 2014) was hardly called into question. For example, when interviewees were confronted with estimations of carbon emissions that resulted from the transnational travel of their department, several academics felt proud rather than ashamed when topping the ranking. Similarly, academics who placed at the bottom end of the ranking felt disappointed or started questioning the estimations. Although this does not apply to all academics in our sample, only one academic responded that his research group aimed to

reduce the carbon footprint from its travel activity. Most of the academics simply saw no viable alternatives for (especially long-distance) travel (see Lassen, 2009).

According to our respondents, a significant part of their travel was inextricably linked to work activities at the destination. A first category comprised the trips undertaken for what might be termed 'economic' reasons. When the anticipated gains of a trip are high, physical presence is expected and necessary, even if it comprises a short meeting and a transatlantic flight: *'I went to the US for half a day […] If there's a meeting of [important global funding agency], then you need to be there. You make sure that you are there because if you're not there, then you're wrong: "les absents ont tort"'* (#20, male, senior). Corporeal travel was also deemed necessary for studying objects, places or events, trips to libraries, machines, laboratories, observatories, landscapes, monuments, buildings, etc. In the case of events, the trips had to occur within a particular time frame, for example, when studying volcano eruptions or cultural ceremonies. The following respondent had to make sacrifices to make a study trip, as illustrated by the following quote: '*Last year, I unexpectedly received an invitation to spend a week in New York to study the diaries and so forth of [famous artist]. I had to change my entire summer schedule to be able to go*' (#34, male, senior). Some academics mentioned face-to-place obligations as well, for example, in the course of fieldwork of a few days or weeks on-site, followed by a period of non-travelling to explore and analyse the results and report on the findings: '*we effectively did fieldwork in the forest [in Chili]. It is often very hard to explain to a foreign partner how the research has to take place in a scientific and controlled way. There's no laboratory environment, so it is key to go find the right location for sampling and doing research. We really needed to go there once in a while*' (#18, male, junior).

Much meeting attendance can be traced to the significance and 'role' of the meetings and their attendants. Hence, we refer to these obligations as 'role' obligations. More specifically, when an 'Annual Meeting of American Geographers' is organised, all American geographers and/or those who associate with American geographers feel an urge to attend these meetings. One respondent, for example, justified his talk on a very Scandinavian topic at a conference in Croatia, simply by stating that '*the whole Scandinavian research community will be there*' (#40, male, junior). Similarly, another respondent expected to see his British colleagues all at once at an annual meeting in the US, which spared him *'a tour of Great Britain*' (#33, male, senior). Therefore, everybody who is active within a particular research field is somehow expected to attend such meetings. Meetings and intermittent corporeal travel

are equally expected on the basis of specific 'roles' or duties assumed by certain people. For example, a manager of a transnational project considered not going to one of the project meetings, but figured that his absence would not benefit the project outcomes: '*I often organise joint steering committee meetings. Sometimes I know beforehand: "what am I... What's it going to be this time?" (sigh). But, if I don't go, then there will be no milestones set this time... Somebody has to say: "it's not OK". So that's why I need to go*' (#29, male, senior). Another respondent was appointed president of an international network within a subfield and expressed a need to attend all meetings organised by that network. His presence gives authority to a meeting and increases the likelihood that the gathering will be of importance (see also Lampel and Meyer, 2008).

3.5.2 Social meeting practices in dense professional networks

In addition to these straightforward, 'hard' mobility obligations, there are also—and perhaps above all—'softer' motives for academics to be mobile. These motives for meetingness can be traced back to the development and sustaining of the transnational, networked lifestyle that seems to increasingly go hand in hand with the new academic work practices described in the previous section. We made a distinction between dense and sparse social networks. 'Dense' professional network structures have many direct connections between its members, while in 'sparse' social networks, actors do not have much interpersonal connections (yet). The latter will be the subject of the next subsection. These networks require different meeting practices and generate distinct forms of network capital.

An important element of face-to-face proximity is that it allows meeting people socially during coffee breaks or dinners, at a bar or in a hallway. These are socially significant occasions, generally in a playful context, allowing people to develop or reaffirm intimacy and trust (Urry, 2003; 2009). Social meetings offer an opportunity to *'really get to know each other'* (#1, female senior) or to catch up on earlier conversations in the past (see Wittel, 2001). The following respondent emphasises that such socialising simply has to happen outside the normal work setting, away from the everyday routines: *'Well, in our research group, we have members from [another city within the country]. ...Most of our meetings are through videoconference, but at least once a year or maybe twice a year, we try to meet. But it's not only to meet the people from [the other city], it is also to be out of office, and have a nice meal, walk in the forest or along the beach, to socialise. Because... also here, OK. You don't get to know people if you haven't been spending time informally. So once or twice a*

year, we go somewhere else. It's not staying here, it's staying somewhere else' (#14, male, senior). As this quote illustrates, when it concerns such social and informal get-togethers, the precise location is of secondary importance. Urry (2004, 30) refers to such places as 'neutral territory'. As long as it is away from the work setting and has at least some leisure and social opportunities, any location will do. When the number of attendants grows, neutral territory is found in big cities with easy access, enough meeting space and leisure opportunities within reach (Faulconbridge and Beaverstock, 2008).

Social gatherings are often arranged within an organisational framework but are recurrent practices on a trans-organisational level, as well. In research teams, 'time off' is epitomised in the context of so-called 'team building' activities or weekends. They are organised to stimulate the bonding between team members. Within trans-organisational project teams, often consisting of geographically dispersed academics with a more heterogeneous background (cultural, professional, etc.), social meetings are organised to reconcile the many individual perspectives and interests to ensure an optimal running of the project and can even act as the sole justification of a trip (see also Faulconbridge and Beaverstock, 2008). In addition, informal social meetings are important for the circulation of key information and knowledge: *'Informal talks the night before an important meeting are the ideal moments to sound out how far you can go during the official meeting'* (#32, male, senior). Above all, the sense of security and control felt in co-presence is valued because it allows access to resources that would be hard to gain through virtual travel: '*Once a year, we have an on-site meeting with our industrial partners, followed by a dinner. Well, so much more happens during those events. You can check on things, which are simply not done during a telephone conference. Teleconferences do not allow you to deviate from the norm. You will not take any risks'* (#8, female, junior).

On an interpersonal, dyadic level, it is common to invite fellow academics from time to time to spend a few hours or days in each other's company. Hospitality and reciprocity turn out to be very significant social practices. This 'social' time is spent engaging in activities outside work (drinking, eating, sports, sightseeing, etc.) to reaffirm the ties (Urry, 2003): *'In Malaysia, we played badminton. So being together and doing something else and… She had kids and we have kids of the same age and so… Also sometimes staying in the family house, we did that over there and she did that with a colleague at our place, so…'* (#14, male, senior). Spending time together is most obvious when respondents mention that they arrive earlier or stay longer at the destination when travelling for work, precisely to invest time in their distant relationships

(Faulconbridge and Beaverstock, 2008). One of the respondents argued that her physical travel increasingly had social goals: *'As often as it is economically and practically possible, I come here primarily for the social reasons. For example, if I am here for a one-day meeting, quite often I come the day before or stay one day longer. And then I sleep overnight at one of my colleagues' place. So I spend some time on continuing the relationships, because I think it's important to do that'* (#24, female, senior). These interpersonal connections can develop, over time, into long-lasting partnerships that also involve other people: '*And we send students to them. We have three students who went to [foreign country] last year. And we will have two from them the upcoming semester. So you create a platform for other types of collaboration. And they - PhD students - from there have been here. [...] And now we are expanding our collaboration agreements and stuff like that. So we also build the infrastructure to do it more easily*' (#2, male, senior). Interpersonal ties are maintained and strengthened over time through the practice of sending and receiving recommended people, as well.

On a group level, organising and hosting meetings also occurs among 'invisible' and informal circles of befriended colleagues, working within a particular subfield. Crane (1969; 1972) refers to such circles as 'invisible colleges,' defined as 'a communication network of a subgroup of researchers within an area' (Crane, 1972, 35). Such networks are small enough to allow dense, all-channel interpersonal communication between its distributed members. Intermittent meetings of (part of) the network are often organised and hosted by one or several of its members. This involves securing the necessary funding to reimburse (part of the) travel and accommodation costs to all attendees, arranging and scheduling formal and informal meeting places, inviting participants, etc. Get-togethers of part of the network also occur in the shadow of more formal activities, such as a doctoral thesis defence, organised workshops or conference sessions. However, at least part of the time is specifically assigned to socialising and strengthening the ties. One of the respondents was therefore not keen on admitting 'virtual' jury members to PhD defences where he was the supervisor, because socialising and networking time for the candidate is lost: *'a doctoral thesis defence is also a crucial time for networking for the candidate. You are in a situation where a renowned expert has to scrutinise your work. And I know quite some cases where it resulted in publication opportunities. Where in fact one of the jury members plays a role in intermediating with a publisher to have the work appear in book form'* (#39, male, senior). As it turns out, these invitations are hard to decline because there is a risk of losing out on the benefits associated with such temporary get-togethers.

Our interviews suggested that communication and interaction within such networks are highly important for an academic: *'You can sit here in your own research group or department or whatever and invent the wheel or the fire or whatever and then you go out into the world and you see: everybody has done it. So I think it's important to meet other research facilities and share ideas and you know, build on top of each other. Instead of doing everything yourself'* (#23, female, junior). Moreover, there was even evidence that increased specialisation within local research teams makes internal, local sharing increasingly insufficient, as exemplified by the following quote: *'In your own research group, you are the specialist and internal conversations are not always far-reaching. This can be solved through communicating with external experts in your field'* (#18, male, junior). Therefore, an academic is expected to combine both formal and informal communication processes: *'Somebody who can combine… being active [in publishing] and being visible from time to time… is according to me doing a very good job. That's… Yes. You have to be able to tell what you're doing. And if you're merely writing stuff, you have a much higher risk that someone will misunderstand you… I think many brilliant ideas were rejected or at least curbed this way [by journal reviewers]'* (#12, male, senior).

Such personal networks provide access to 'network capital' (Larsen et al., 2007) in a number of ways. First, it proved to be a complementary source of information and knowledge vis-à-vis more formal knowledge exchange through publications: A peer-reviewed article is merely a passive, finished product that conforms to the norms and demands of a journal (see also Frey, 2003). There is a risk that people will misinterpret a part of the research when only reading its codified format. Talking about work on an informal basis makes it a two-way process that welcomes active involvement and feedback. Many respondents said that they received new inspiration, insights and ideas from conversations with colleagues, which sped up their progress and productivity: *'Without these meetings, you can gain few new ideas and your progress is hampered. Travel and networking make research and publications possible'* (#4, male, junior). These new insights are then reassessed and studied in depth during periods of non-travel, and academics seem to exploit the advantages of social learning upon their return (see also Faulconbridge, 2006). Moreover, there generally is a communication lag that lasts from months up to a few years for publication in scientific journals, whereas 'networked' knowledge is received much more quickly and kept up-to-date (see also Price, 1963; Burt, 2000).

Next, network capital also includes exchanging judgments, narratives and stories about the discipline, publications and their producers (see also Brown

and Duguid, 2000). These judgments of other people not only benefit sense-making and somehow function as a post-publication peer review, but they are also a way to keep abreast of the latest and most important developments (in terms of funding, jobs, etc.) in their field. Lawrence (2003, 260) nonetheless warns against these inter-organisational structures because they can work against objectivity when there is 'a tacit understanding between some leading scientists: they invite each other onto committees, to conferences, nominate each other for prizes and awards, and support publications of each other's papers.' Such meetings can also have great motivational value: '*as a researcher, you are very often working on your own. Just the fact that you see that others are also working on that topic, you need that somehow, I think. That you don't start thinking that you're the only one on this planet agonising over a particular* problem' (#33, male senior).

3.5.3 Social meeting practices in sparse professional networks

Academics also travel to larger, more formal and recurrent gatherings, for example, an annual meeting of an occupational community. For the sake of clarity, we consider such gatherings to have a network structure different from the interpersonal communication network defined above: They are larger in scope, which means there are more weak and latent ties involved, and the background of attendees might be quite diverse (culturally, scientifically). In addition, such get-togethers are often attended by (powerful) third parties, such as publishers, editors or funding agencies. They are generally formally organised, encompassing an entire field and open for all to participate, although it is common to pay an attendance fee. The majority of academics acknowledged that despite the advertised formal objectives of such get-togethers, attendance is most important for the social meetings and the networking it enables (see also Lassen, 2006; Storme et al., 2013).

Annual meetings offer opportunities to create ties with previously unknown people and to tap into new resources. Mitchell et al. (1999) developed the notion of 'planned happenstance' in career theory to emphasise that chance events can develop into opportunities. What matters is not actively striving for a particular result or strategically between different options but, rather, the ad hoc seizing of an opportunity that comes along by engaging in particular activities. Some respondents have emphasised the benefits of this 'surprise' effect of annual meetings, arguing that such events offer the opportunity to meet people whom you have never heard of before but are doing work similar to yours.

This 'bumping into each other' is organised and cultivated by event organisers, who create the best conditions for maximum 'mingling' between attendees: *'When we organised the conference here, we got good feedback about the networking opportunities and so you make these long lunch breaks and you have these too little tables and standing tables, so small cocktail-like and you have to walk around and mingle. It's even nice if there is a queue, because… then you start talking to the one in front. So it's better than sitting around a nice table and being served at your seat. Because then you're fixed. So it's through constant movement, that you are introduced by someone: "ooh, you have to meet this guy, may I introduce …"* So that's part of the game' (#14, male, senior). Mingling is harder to organise via virtual travel because those meetings need to be planned beforehand, and the subject of the conversation is often already outlined.

Apparently, this 'bumping' is also beneficial for gathering knowledge. Searching for inspiration through the Net proves to be rather path-dependent: *'When you sit behind your computer, and watch your screen, then you no longer get surprised. You always look in the direction you are used to. And I think in that sense an important function is attributed to conferences. You hear new things, you hear new arguments you've never thought about before […] Few people read articles in the context of: "I am going to read something about…" No, today, people read articles bearing their own publication in mind'* (#33, male, senior). By listening to a presentation or participating in a conversation on an unexplored or unfamiliar topic, one might discover a new idea, technique, research method, etc. One of the respondents compared it to listening to a radio instead of an iPod: *'Suddenly you hear something that you wouldn't have tuned into if you had compiled your own playlist from the Internet. So, it broadens your scope and keeps the curiosity'* (#14, male, senior).

These meetings, moreover, provide a quick and easy overview of a particular topic or network. It is obviously important for everyone working in a field to have an idea of where the newest developments take place and to take the 'pulse' of what is going on, but it simultaneously allows academics working on short-term projects or contracts to quickly become acquainted with the field, to locate and penetrate the most recent knowledge about an unknown topic. One of the respondents, for example, liked the serendipitous character of poster presentations for this reason and used his PDA to collect this information: *'a poster often depicts the newest findings, which have not been published before. And within half an hour, you have seen forty posters. I then immediately put their mail address in my PDA, attach a standard mail more or less saying "send it to me" and I receive a hundred posters'* (#29, male, senior).

The collected information is once again analysed in greater detail during periods of non-travel.

In accordance with our definition of sparse networks at the beginning of this section, it is impossible to engage in conversations with all participants. Hence, attendance is also aimed at 'visibility' and 'representation' towards unfamiliar others. An opportunity is offered to perform and represent centre stage in front of a group of people 'outside' one's everyday community. It is clear from the interviews that scientific recognition has a formal and informal dimension. A few respondents argued that they became much more successful at networking after winning a formal award (e.g., best paper award) or after successful publication or translation of a book. One respondent, referring to early career academics, emphasised that in such a context, meeting attendance '*provides them the opportunity to make their grain of sand develop into a desert rose*' (#29, male, senior).

According to many respondents, increasing visibility towards the gatekeepers of publication channels—namely journal editors—may result in publication opportunities. According to one of the respondents, there is a running gag in academia about this: '*how can you recognise the editors of Nature at a conference?*' and the answer is: '*by the number of academics following them*' (#38, female, senior). In a commentary in *Nature*, Lawrence (2003) referred to the practice as 'courting editors.' Editors—especially from leading journals—have the challenging task of determining what is worth peer-review amidst the abundance of manuscript submissions, and their evaluation of reliability and trust seems to be influenced by previous personal and 'authentic' contact.

Being visible to the wider research community can augment publication opportunities in an indirect way as well, as the following quote illustrates: '*if you want to publish a peer-reviewed paper, you are often asked to suggest three or four persons to read your work. And... of course, it's also a strategic choice when you suggest people... Of course they should have some knowledge on the area, but there may also be some personal relations that people that agree with you or you know that this person is definitely... we always disagree in discussions and so on... so that's also when you join and are visible as a chair person, you send some signals on what you can and how you prioritise, that may also lead to people, putting you on the list of people that they ask for reviewing*' (#24, female, senior). From a more cynical point of view '*you have to make sure that you connect with the right people to get cited and to receive new articles. And this has today more importance than the quality of your research and publications.*

You have to have seen the right people at the right time at the right place' (#34, male, senior).

As the quote above suggests, feelings towards this strategic visibility are mixed: *'[T]here is a lot of conference travel that is a waste of time. [...] if it's in order to help career planning in order to find somebody who will say that you are a good guy and make a good evaluation, when you make an application, then it's useful for the person, but not for society'* (#11, male, senior); *'Our director thinks I do much too little on my visibility. I feel sick to my stomach when I merely hear the word... In my opinion: I'm doing a good job already'* (#38, female, senior). Several respondents mentioned they were not very keen on augmenting their personal visibility, because they considered such practices to be anti-academic (see also Lawrence, 2003).

For fixed-term and early career researchers, visibility is also necessary to increase job chances, which has been referred to by one of the interviewees as 'pushing your luck' (#4, male, junior): Becoming known and recognised within the wider research community as a talented and able person makes people with a job vacancy eager to notify you with their job positions personally. Apparently, one can enhance her or his chances through personal networks outside the institution (see Arthur, 2003)[4]. Note, however, that meetingness not only offers the opportunity to excel but also to fail in one-off performances: *'As an academic, you have to stick your nose out and get the door slammed against it. Or you have to dare to accept heavy criticism. Not only a review on a paper, but also by people who say it in your face'* (#29, male, senior).

Because informal communication and increasing visibility are deemed vital for early career academics without many network ties yet, they tend to prepare well for a trip. One of the respondents (#22, male, senior) explicitly mentioned that during his doctoral research, each trip functioned as a new milestone where a talk had to be given or an article had to be finished. Hence, a trip can act as a beacon that academics live up to. This suggests that engaging in travel means intensified and informal learning through social interaction with others who are normally absent, while non-travel is associated with incremental learning through conversations with familiar peers and through reading.

3.5.4 Negotiating corporeal presence and absence

Some respondents noted that there are situations where corporeal presence and meetingness must be negotiated. Maintaining a remote social life at a distance increases the likelihood of overlapping and conflicting meeting

obligations. Jones (2013) coined the concept of 'nested business mobility' whereby corporate expatriates travel within their travels. Virtual meetingness proves to be a viable alternative to corporeal meetingness when multiple obligations conflict unexpectedly (see also Haynes, 2010). For the following respondent, economic obligations arose while being abroad: *'Even now, I was in India and still. Our research group was in the midst of a dispute over resources with [another university]. Well then… That has to happen via the telephone. That is… The job… You can't avoid that'* (#29, male, senior).

Although many respondents recognise that 'something gets lost' when interacting virtually, this type of meetingness does not necessarily have to be problematic at all times. In other words, within a time perspective, not all consecutive get-togethers need to happen face-to-face: *'if you have a project in an international group, I think it's OK to say, well, we don't need to meet physically each month, but we should meet twice a year, something like that'* (#24, female, senior). It is possible to organise 'in-between' meetings virtually. For example, when it concerns a very routine and clearly defined message (e.g., a spreadsheet), virtual meetingness suffices. The fact that some academics had fully equipped videoconference technologies can be understood from their intense collaboration with strong ties in distant research facilities. The first respondent with such technology belongs to one of the many geographically spread research groups of the CERN (i.e., the European Organisation for Nuclear Research based in Geneva) and engaged in weekly meetings with other member groups through an internal VC-system, alternated by periods of geographical proximity on-site. Other respondents mainly use such technology for tele-education/supervision purposes or for meetings between research groups at other intra-national campuses, which transformed the everyday work arrangements: *'we are quite free when to work and where to work from and we have… Good access from home. Just before you came here, I supervised an Icelandic student via Skype. So some of these overseas supervisions, I take that at home, in the morning, the afternoon or in the evening. It's very flexible, it's not that you have to be at the office from eight to five'* (#24, female, senior). Within such circumstances, corporeal and virtual travel practices go hand in hand.

As a consequence of these 'multimodal' travel agreements, it seems that the emphasis of engaging in physical travel is increasingly on informal, social get-togethers, under playful circumstances, whereas virtual meetings are organised to effectively get things done (see also Weber and Chon, 2002; in Urry, 2009). The concrete writing, revising and editing process of a formal publication occurs primarily through the use of technology, particularly sending e-mails back and forth, even between members of co-located research

teams. Simultaneously, project meetings can be more effective through the use of VC, as the following respondent argues: *'in a way you can do more work, because you can have a short meeting and say: ok, go back and do some work and then we meet again in five hours and see what we've come up with. So you can have a better type of meeting, virtually'* (#11, male, senior). Obviously, the clearer the purpose and benefit of a trip, the easier it is to make an informed choice about the appropriate travel mode.

Several respondents even raised the point that conversations at conferences quickly become too informal. Communicating via e-mail can therefore be more appropriate for purposeful collaboration because it allows skipping the small talk. According to one respondent (#27, female, senior), it suffices to shortly introduce yourself and your research before going to a direct call for help. Although such a strategy implies a smaller chance of success, it can turn out quite positive: *'I contacted someone else first, but he requested more information. I told him: "if something comes out, no problem, co-authorship and so on"… But he didn't trust it. He wanted to keep the knowledge to himself. So it did not work out, but luckily for us, another and bigger shot wanted to participate'* (#27, female, senior). Several respondents had co-authored a paper without meeting their co-writers in person. Hence, virtual travel opens up opportunities to communicate with more distant partners and to increase geographical coverage over time.

Finally, what is also evident is that increasingly more online (virtual) platforms for collaboration are developed, especially when collaboration is goal-oriented: *'But everybody agreed that we should have a kind of online platform to communicate with each other more fluently. It is simply impossible to meet each other every half a year. What an insane loss of time! […] We were brainstorming to organise this in a more digital way: still a closed community, because posting a draft of your paper on the Net, that's not something academics want. Rather in a closed community, where everyone can trust the other… Under certain conditions of course, but there was a real need for such a platform'* (#27, female, senior). This respondent argued that although virtual meeting technology has existed for some time now, she found it striking that only now are the first signs of implementation evident within her discipline.

Senior and powerful respondents thought about mobility not only in terms of the length and number of times they must be present but also about the moments they can remain *absent*. This is especially true for powerful academics. One respondent (#29, male, senior), for example, considered it inappropriate to initiate collaboration with a head of department or chancellor virtually. Presence and absence are even negotiated when taking on job duties.

[80]

Per one respondent: '*The fact that I'm also president of [Inter-University Board]... when the rector asked me to do this, I said: "no, I will not be able to do that job properly". And he still asked for my conditions to take up this role anyway. And then my conditions were that I as a president could – when it really mattered, for the most essential management duties – chair the meeting, but when it concerned other tasks, that members of the Board could replace me*' (#32, male, senior).

As a corollary, '*separation*' becomes a socially significant work practice, as well (see Parker and Weik, 2014). As the following respondent suggests, 'separation' is necessary to avoid the problem of 'lock-in' (cf. Boschma, 2005): '*Incest is the worst thing that can happen. I mean, symbolic incest, not leaving your own nest. You have to go outside, you have to meet other colleagues, you have to be confronted with them, you have to experience it*' (#34, male, senior). Moreover, there was also evidence that absence from work duties is expected: '*when I will give up my responsibilities here at the department again – I think within a year – I will travel again, because I think it is necessary, mentally. I don't mean that it is not possible to live without travel, but given my type of research and subjects... [...] People have not gone outside, and they don't know what is happening in the world. For that reason and given my research subject, it is recommended to travel much*' (#13, male, senior). As such, and similar to corporeal meetingness, separation is negotiated. For example, in the case of sabbaticals, academics often choose to take an extended leave to achieve another objective, for example, finishing a book or immersing into a new topic. It could be interpreted as a strategy to 'buy time' by foregoing demanding everyday commitments at the home institution (see Ackers et al., 2008). Two respondents simultaneously referred to repeated short-term travel as 'scientific holidays' in the sense that they acted as short periods '*where one can fully devote his or her time to science*' (#38, female, senior), away from their localised obligations and routines.

3.6. Concluding discussion

This article explored the crux of academic mobilities under changing work conditions, as experienced in two institutions of higher education. Meetingness and corporeal travel were shown to be socially significant practices that play important roles within the institutions studied here because they help overcome some of the challenges posed by the use of information technologies, an ever-expanding academic sector and institutional incentives. Professional relationships outside academics' own institutions are not optional but, rather, essential facets of contemporary academic careers because they allow for

network capital accumulation (see Urry, 2004), in both dense and spare social networks. In line with the research of Parker and Weik (2014), this research also argues that 'separation' can turn into a significant practice that can be avoided, negotiated or valued. It can provide the means to be 'freed from' work, social or familial obligations at home (see also Parker and Weik, 2014) and deserves much more attention in the literature on business travel.

Moreover, if the academic 'gatekeepers' of publications (Lawrence, 2003) or jobs (Cantwell, 2011) depend on corporeal meetings to inform their judgments and decisions, an academic cannot ignore such events if they hope to advance an academic career. Hence, many work-related obligations require a certain flexibility, fitness or potential to be mobile, which has been referred to as 'motility' (Kaufmann et al., 2004). This 'motility' implies that those who cannot frequently travel due to high (economic or social) costs are disadvantaged. Similar concerns have been raised in the research of Ackers (2008) and Leemann (2010) for long-term academic travel and in Parker and Weik (2014) for short-term academic travel. Work is likely to interfere with private obligations. This may lead to people feeling constrained to travel during particular life and career phases, for example, when caring obligations are high or job duties at the home institution are demanding (see Storme et al., 2013). It is not a coincidence, then, that academics tend to postpone either family or mobility obligations (Leemann, 2010).

At such moments, virtual meetingness can, to some extent, offer an alternative, albeit one that is especially suited for intermittent interaction with already strong ties or via routine messages. In the former case, corporeal travel primarily fulfils social goals, whereby academics spend time together outside a formal work context, while virtual travel can be used for professional objectives and actually getting work done. It allows exploiting 'the best of both worlds' through a rational combination of corporeal and virtual interaction. Therefore, virtual travel is not only limited to a supporting role, but it also leads to new working practices that are bound to further transform the way academics work. When the risks of miscommunications are further minimised and people become more aware of the strengths of virtual travel, such practices will perhaps become more common. Currently, the risky and uncontrollable features of virtual travel keep academics relatively conservative in their choice of travel modes.

There are a number of obvious limitations to our study. First, as suggested by Enders and Musselin (2008), the concept of an 'academic profession' may be an illusion. For example, we can easily assume that travel occurs under different conditions in 'entrepreneurial' disciplines vis-à-vis 'intellectual'

disciplines. Academics from the former disciplines produce commercial and marketable knowledge in the form of patents and spin-offs (see Etzkowitz, 2001) and may be less interested in the role of informal communication, for example. How these differences work out in practice may therefore be the focus of further research. Next, our research design has limitations because 'snowballing' and drawing on personal contacts make generalising to the wider academic population problematic. The selection of host countries was, to some extent, based on the institutions where one of the authors was working, which facilitated access. Given that the study thus only focuses on Belgian and Danish academics, the findings presented here may not be applicable to other (and particularly non-European) contexts. Finally, the accounts in this analysis describe the opinions of the respondents, which often can be just one version out of many.

This research opens up a variety of new questions to address in future research. Undoubtedly, the role of virtual travel can be studied in more depth. More specifically, it would be interesting to explore the phenomenon of 'virtual visibility' more thoroughly because only a limited number of respondents referred to practices such as academic blogging, use of social media, personal websites, etc. These practices are bound to affect more traditional channels, as well. Moreover, it would be interesting to focus more on work-related mobility in the context of family obligations. It is highly likely that family life will, to some extent, influence the prevalence, duration, degree, frequency and even direction of work-related meetingness and will shed more light on the practice of 'separation.' Additional research should focus on the differences in travel according to the life or career stage of the traveller. Lastly, insights into the explicit geography of academic travel would be of great interest.

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[1] Academics are defined as the employees of an institution of higher education who study and/or teach as part of their occupation. They consist of PhD students, research assistants, postdoctoral students, lecturers and professors.

[2] To give an idea of the magnitude of this development, Scopus—the largest abstract and citation database of peer-reviewed research literature across disciplines —contains over 32 million records published after 1995 http://www.elsevier.com/online-tools/scopus/content-overview. Accessed April 2014.

[3] Bibliometric data refers to publications and citations in international, peer-reviewed and preferably 'leading' journals.

[4] The high importance of personal networks for job advancement in academia has been addressed before (see for example Van de Sande et al., 2005, Cantwell, 2011).

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- 4 - HOW TO COPE WITH MOBILITY EXPECTATIONS IN ACADEMIA: INDIVIDUAL TRAVEL STRATEGIES OF TENURED ACADEMICS AT GHENT UNIVERSITY, FLANDERS

Abstract

The production and exchange of knowledge are inextricably linked to different compulsions to corporeal proximity and therefore travel. As primary producers and transferors of knowledge, academics are no exception to this rule, and their compulsions seem to be further propelled by institutional discourses regarding the alleged virtues of 'internationalisation.' Tenured academics, moreover, have a high degree of independence and can therefore easily choose how to cope with compulsions and constraints to internationalise. However, the business travel literature has paid scant attention to academics and their individual contexts. In an effort to rectify this situation, this paper explores a travel dataset of tenure-track academics (N=870) working at Ghent University. The insights emerging from this analysis are then contextualised by complementing them with in-depth interviews of tenured academics (N=23) at the same institution. This paper argues, first, that varying compulsions and constraints at home and abroad lead to distinct non-travel and travel-intensive academic roles. And second, that academics who have difficulties coping, try to rationalise their corporeal travel behaviour and their mobility behaviour to meet the needs and expectations to internationalise. These strategies give an indication of how travel-related working practices can become more efficient and sustainable in the future.

4.1 Introduction

During the last two decades, our society has been shaped by ever-increasing and spatially extended travel, enabled, amongst others, by a wide array of efficient and affordable modes of transportation and communication (Urry, 2007). Extensive physical travel has thus burgeoned and evolved 'from a

luxury form of mobility for the wealthy few into a contemporary form of hypermobility' (Gössling and Peeters, 2007, 402). Although business travel may constitute only a limited part of all corporeal mobility, being able to travel frequently has proven to be a very important asset for workers in today's globalising economy (see Aguiléra, 2008; Millar and Salt, 2008; Wickham and Vecchi, 2009, 2010; Beaverstock et al., 2009; Faulconbridge et al., 2009). Many have argued that despite the various possibilities of 'virtual travel' (i.e., the use of information and communication technologies), certain work practices, especially those that are informal and tacit, simply require corporeal proximity (Lassen et al., 2006; Urry, 2007; Aguiléra, 2008; Beaverstock et al., 2009; Faulconbridge et al., 2009), which Urry (2007) referred to as the 'mobility burden'. Therefore, employees are increasingly undertaking work outside the formal workplace (Beaverstock et al., 2009).

The compulsions to physical proximity are also evident in the knowledge-intensive academic sector, and, more specifically, in order to produce and exchange scientific knowledge (Jöns, 2008; Cantwell, 2011; Edler et al., 2011, Julsrud et al., 2014). And although more 'conventional' businesses can benefit from the creation of distance, for instance, to exploit labour-cost advantages (see Millar and Salt, 2008), the emphasis in knowledge-generating institutions, by contrast, is believed to rest largely on seamless knowledge diffusion and, therefore, the creation of proximity. Moreover, since the end of the 1990s, European institutional discourses are favouring 'internationalisation' of the higher-education sector and, as a consequence, championing the mobility of students and staff (Ackers, 2008). Thus, the propensity and expectations to travel seem to be greater than ever for academics.

However, according to many authors, regular work-related travel is considered to be unsustainable, as it is 'cursed' with high economic, ecological, and social costs (for an overview, see Beaverstock et al., 2009). Short-term academic travel is particularly undertaken by tenured staff who are embedded locally at a specific institution and are obliged to seek a suitable balance between their duties at the home institution and abroad. Moreover, a particular feature of tenure-track academics is their high degree of freedom and low degree of control (Enders, 2001; Lassen, 2006). This implies that they can, with relative ease, trade off the benefits and costs of trips and cope with changing contexts, which can lead to diverse 'internationalisation' strategies. Apart from the work of Lassen (2006; Lassen et al., 2009) and Ackers (2010), short-term academic travel has not yet been the subject of much scholarly attention. A better understanding of academic travel and alternative coping strategies can, however, benefit both travellers and travel management across

other sectors seeking to increase their level of internationalisation, while retaining sustainability both from a social and environmental point of view.

In the heat of the institutionalised internationalisation fury, this paper tries to contribute to this research hiatus by addressing the following questions: (1) How many academics actually engage in regular short-term travel? (2) How great is the compulsion to internationalise and, hence, travel? Which travel constraints exist, and which incentives necessitate travel? (3) How do 'self-dependent' academics cope with compulsions and constraints when they are 'off balance'? This paper tries to answer these questions by analysing the travel-application data of lecturers and professors (N=870) at Ghent University (UGent), one of the largest Flemish institutions of higher education and research. Patterns emerging from this dataset are then contextualised by complementing this information with qualitative data from 23 semi-structured interviews with tenured academic staff at the same institution.

Two key arguments are made in this paper. First, we show that the increased travel incentives lead to specific non-travel and travel-intensive roles in academia. Two travel-intensive roles stand out increasingly nowadays: (1) the role of the 'project manager,' managing (several) foreign research projects from project scope to evaluation, which requires regular face-to-place and face-to-time proximity (see Urry, 2007); and (2) the role of the 'research team manager,' with a particular emphasis on face-to-face proximity. These managers accumulate 'network capital' (Elliot and Urry, 2010) by putting together a network of widespread contacts. They do so not only for themselves but also for the entire research group. Travel for this latter category of academics is deemed necessary to seek research funding, to set up international collaboration, to scout for talent, etc. on a global scale. Second, we argue that those academics who have difficulties coping with the compulsion to corporeal travel seem to rationalise their corporeal travel behaviour, and simultaneously their mobility behaviour, by a more-efficient choice between travel modes for distinct purposes.

4.2 Internationalisation and travel at Ghent University

The empirical focus of this research is the approximately 5.500 academics working at Ghent University (UGent). This Flemish institution of higher education and research actively positions itself in the global higher-education arena: UGent was positioned 148th in the 2012 QS World University Ranking (http://www.topuniversities.com) and 89th on the 2012 Academic Ranking of World Universities (www.shanghairanking.com). Furthermore, according to its

mission statement, UGent defines itself in a broad international perspective. This stems, amongst other causes, from bilateral collaboration agreements with partner countries such as China, Russia, Vietnam, and Argentina and, more recently, from opening a branch campus in Songdo, South Korea, where it offers educational programmes to students in the wider region.

Ghent University and the main government-sponsored research funding agency in Flanders (FWO) have oriented their 'internationalisation' strategy to the policy guidelines and directives of the European Commission towards the European Higher Education Area, where mobility 'in and by itself' is heavily supported (Ackers, 2008). The main consequence of these strategies is perhaps best captured by the recent FWO action plan for 2012–2016: 'a researcher can no longer afford himself to be immobile' (FWO, 2011). The line of reasoning behind this stimulation of mobility is that international collaboration and competition amongst academics is believed to lead to higher quality in research (see Ackers, 2008; 2010; Leemann, 2010) and to avoid scientific provinciality (Kyvik et al., 1999). As a corollary, mobility is being funded intensely through the Erasmus Exchange Programme and Erasmus Mundus, amongst others, of which UGent claims to be one of the forerunning participators.

Not unlike other institutions of higher education and research, there is no central office in charge of the travel management of UGent academics (see also Lassen, 2006). This implies that international travel is not covered by official policies or even general rules, which leaves senior academics at UGent a high degree of freedom and flexibility. Aspects of international mobility can be shaped at the level of the department and research group but are mostly determined at the individual level. We are aware that the focus on the UGent example engenders some specificity, as the institution has a particular profile in terms of travel budgets, employment structure, and workforce characteristics, but we nonetheless believe our case study allows us to tease out some more general patterns about other medium-sized European institutions of higher education and research.

4.3 Data and methods

4.3.1 Quantitative data analysis

Travel data are increasingly tracked and stored (Urry, 2007). This holds true for academic staff at Ghent University as well. Since 2009, all employees are required to register work-related journeys with at least one overnight stay in

an online central-management database, mainly for reimbursement purposes. The information we have at our disposal from this dataset relates to the time period and country of destination of journeys over a two-year time span (2009–2010). Academic travel in this dataset is highly comparable to 'short-term business travel,' which is the shortest corporeal mobility type in the mobility portfolio of organisations, according to Millar and Salt (2008). Those journeys involve at least one overnight stay but may last up to one month (see Millar and Salt, 2008). Of all registered trips, 97.5 percent meet these criteria, while 2.5 percent of trips last longer than one month.

For the purpose of this paper, we extracted the travel applications (N=7.388) of the lecturers and professors (N=870) because this group of senior academics share many job characteristics (i.e., relatively high levels of job security, autonomy, authority, income, etc.). Travel differences in the analyses are then expected to be independent from these job aspects. The results of the analyses will be less relevant for younger, doctoral academics, who lack a tenured position and are therefore expected to have fewer options of choice when seeking to advance up the career ladder; for them, travel may to a large extent be insurmountable. Although lecturers and professors represent only 21.8 percent of all academics in the dataset, they account for approximately 42 percent of all travel applications. Approximately 10 percent of all lecturers and professors at UGent are not represented in the dataset. Their exclusion can be understood in two ways: either they did not travel during the two years under study, or they did not register their journeys because no reimbursement by the financial department of Ghent University was needed. Statements about the travel pattern of academics in this dataset may in the first case lead to overestimation, but they are expected to have some level of underestimation in the latter case as well.

This trip dataset was transformed into a dataset of 'travelling academics.' For each individual academic, we measured different aspects of travel by calculating the following, easily interpretable 'travel variables': (1) total time spent abroad during the two years (in days); (2) average time spent abroad during one trip (in days); (3) total number of trips in a two-year period, a measurement of travel frequency; (4) average distance travelled for a trip (in km)[1]. These data were complemented with personal characteristics of the travellers, more specifically, two family-related characteristics (having a partner[2] and/or children[3]) and two background characteristics (gender and age).

A cluster analysis allowed reducing the complexity of the dataset and, in this case, grouping similar academic travellers together in a number of clusters

based on a combination of the above-described standardised travel variables. There are various algorithms to determine the homogeneity of similar cases and the heterogeneity of distinct cases. The SPSS TwoStep Cluster method (SPSS version 19) was chosen because our dataset has a relatively large number of cases (N=870) and contains both continuous (the travel variables) and categorical (gender, age class, family obligations) attributes. The SPSS TwoStep cluster procedure[4] is more capable of handling these dataset characteristics than, for example, more traditional hierarchical or k-means cluster methods (Norusis, 2011). We chose to interpret five clusters because the clustering was characterised by a good overall goodness-of-fit (average SMCS of 0.5), and all travel variables contributed equally to the formation of clusters (minimum variable importance of 0.84 for travel variable 'average time spent abroad,' while the maximum importance of 'average distance travelled' is 1.00).

4.3.2 Qualitative data analysis

The results of the quantitative analysis above are subsequently contextualised by means of qualitative data. Forty-five (45) invitations were sent to randomly selected heads of departments at Ghent University, asking them to take part in a semi-structured interview or to recommend another tenured academic within their department for interview participation. Between March 2010 and March 2012, 23 interviews (14 heads of department and 9 other lecturers and professors) were conducted. The intention was neither to make the sample an accurate representation of the wider academic population at Ghent University nor to select academics based on the clustering outcomes. However, by selecting heads of departments for these interviews, we assured that the respondents had already successfully achieved a senior rank in their academic careers, and that they had experienced the growing expectations to internationalise. Moreover, these academics had often established the travel policies within their departments or research groups.

The characteristics of the interview respondents are shown in Table 1. The respondents were assigned to clusters based on the first set of questions of the interview, which explored the travel behaviour of the individual respondent at the time of the interview. We interviewed more frequent-travelling academics than expected, based on the clustering outcomes, and we did not interview any academics with characteristics conforming to the fourth cluster. The next set of interview questions was structured around travel policies and the travel behaviour of academic colleagues within the research group. At the end, in-depth questions were asked about alternatives to physical mobility and the

future of academic interaction. The interviews were conducted face-to-face, audio-recorded, transcribed, and analysed in QSR NVivo 10, a software package for qualitative analyses. Nodes were created based on the themes of the questions and were added during the coding of the interviews. The quotes presented in this paper have been made anonymous in order to maintain confidentiality. Abbreviations for cluster labels can be read in Table 1.

Table 4.1: Characteristics of the interview respondents (F=Female; M=Male). Source: Authors.

	All	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Cluster 3	Cluster 5
Cluster name		Minimal travel - local	Regular travel	Hyper-travel	Long-term travel
		ML	RT	HT	LT
Total number of respondents	23	4	11	7	1
%	100	17.4	47.8	30.4	4.3
Work characteristics					
Head of department	14	2	8	4	
Personal characteristics					
Gender	5F 18M	2F 2M	3F 8M	7M	1M
Partnering	4F 16M	2F 2M	2F 8M	5M	1M
Parenting	4F 17M	2F 2M	2F 8M	6M	1M
Age class					
31-35	1			1	
36-40	5	2	2	1	
41-45	6		4	2	
46-50	2		2		
51-55	3	1	1	1	
56-60	3		1	1	1
61-65	3	1	1	1	

4.4. Results

4.4.1 Variations in academic travelling behaviour

In this first part of the results section, the outcomes of the cluster analysis are explored. More specifically, we show that different work-related types of travel behaviour exist amongst our sample of academics. Cluster averages for the travel and personal variables under study are presented in Table 2, while Figures 1–4 show the cluster box plots for each travel variable separately. These visuals show that almost 90 percent of all lecturers and professors are to be found in the first three clusters. Clusters four and five represent a minority of travellers but have some peculiar characteristics. Each cluster has been given a label that captures the most important travel feature of its cases. The interpretation of the clusters can be summarised by discussing the following three main observations.

Observation 1: A fairly large group of academics have relatively low-travel behaviour.

Almost 30 percent of all senior academics (N=255) are represented by the travel behaviour of the first cluster, which could perhaps be described best as a low and local travel behaviour (ML). The cluster averages are low for each travel variable in the analysis; these academics journeyed on average merely 1.5 times a year, spent less than five days per year abroad, and travelled mainly to neighbouring countries. These lecturers and professors seem to cope with the compulsion to internationalise with the absolute minimum amount of travel, and when they do travel, they journey locally. An interpretation of the personal characteristics of the academics in this group reveals that there are more female academics represented than expected, and that a greater number of academics have a partner and/or child(ren).

Table 4.2: Cluster averages for all travel variables and personal characteristics of the travellers during the period under study (2009-2010). Source: Authors.

	All	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Cluster 3	Cluster 4	Cluster 5
Cluster name		Minimal travel - local	Regular travel	Hyper-travel	Minimal travel – global	Long-term travel
Total number of travellers	870	255	373	141	75	26
%	100	29.3	42.9	16.2	8.6	3.0
Travel variables						
Average Duration Abroad (days)	5.8	3.2	4.6	6.0	7.4	41.8
Total Duration Abroad (days)	46.5	9.4	36.4	108.7	26.0	277.8
Average Distance travelled (km)	5,074	1,719	5,377	5,167	13,684	8,176
Travel frequency (trips in 2 years)	8.5	3.1	8.3	21.3	3.6	8.1
Personal characteristics						
Gender (% Male)	80.3	72.5	81.8	90.8	84.0	69.2
Partnering (%)	76.4	79.2	78.8	75.9	65.3	50.0
Parenting (%)	77.6	82.4	79.4	75.9	62.7	57.7
Age	47.9	49.0	46.9	49.5	46.7	46.5

The fourth cluster also consists of travellers (N=75) with very modest travel behaviour, but they differ from the first cluster in that these academics have undertaken at least one long-distance trip, bringing their average distance

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travelled above 10.000km. Consequently, they have spent a little more time abroad too, approximately 13 days a year. But with a travel frequency of 1.8 trips a year, this group of academics can also be characterised by a relatively low amount of travel, although with a more global orientation (MG). Slightly more male academics are represented in this group, and the individuals have considerably fewer family obligations. Taken together, there are a considerable number of tenured academics (38 percent) with low travel behaviour in the dataset. We expect these academics to have high obligations at (the) home (institution).
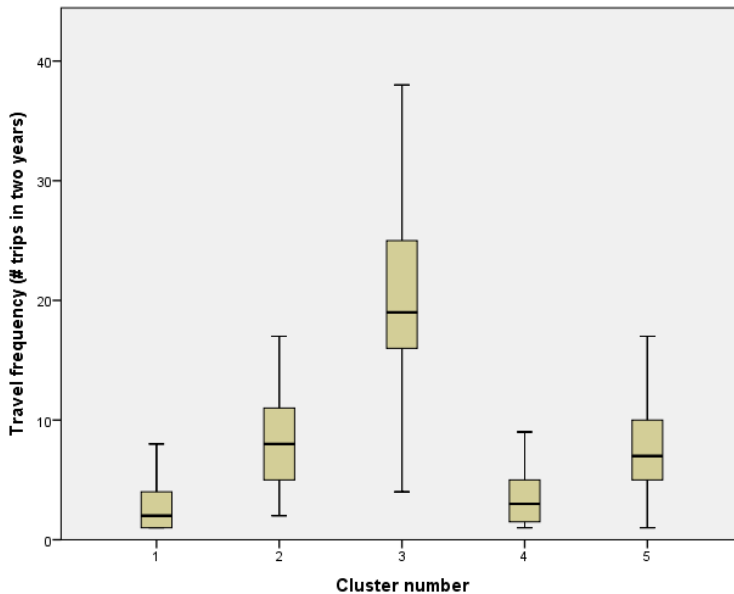
Figure 4.1: Cluster box plots for travel variable 'travel frequency'. Outliers excluded. Source: Authors.
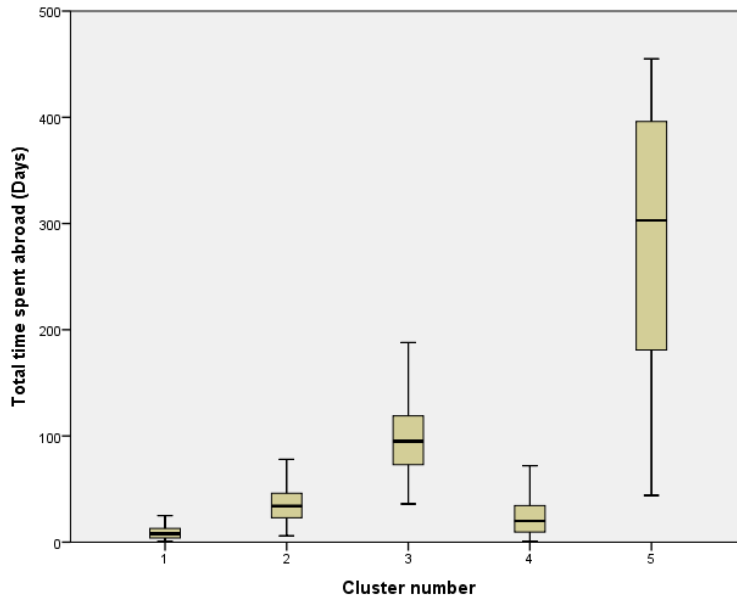
Figure 4.2: Cluster box plots for travel variable 'total time spent abroad'. Outliers excluded. Source: Authors.
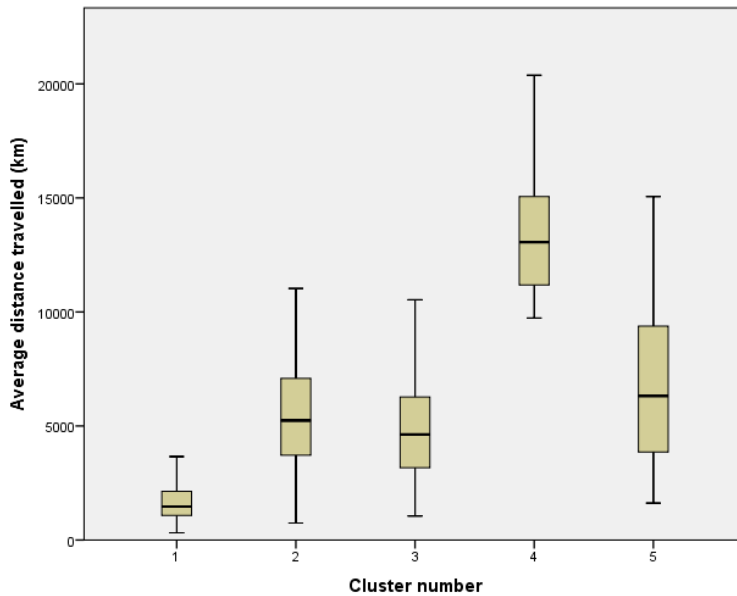
Figure 4.3: Cluster box plots for travel variable 'average distance travelled'. Outliers excluded. Source: Authors.
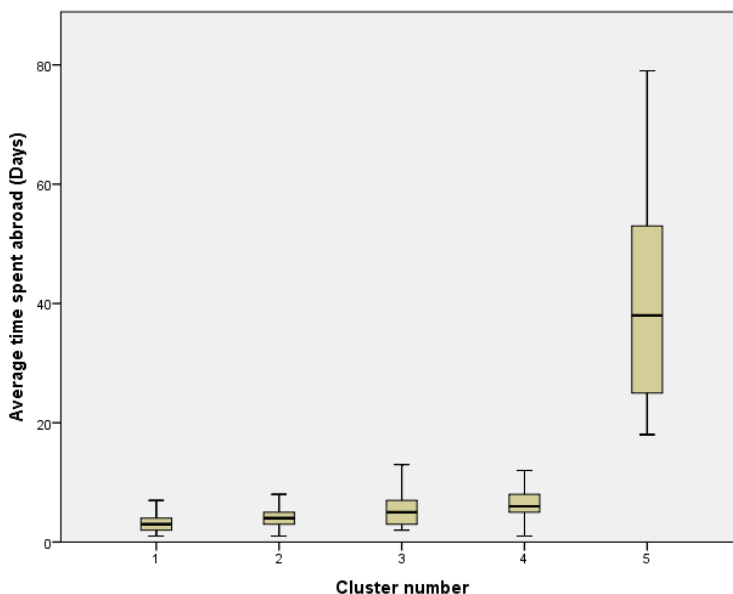
Figure 4.4: Cluster box plots for travel variable 'average time spent abroad'. Outliers excluded. Source: Authors.

Observation 2: The largest group of academics travels regularly.

The second and largest cluster (N=373; 43 percent) consists of academics spending, on average, 18 days abroad in 4.2 trips each year. They undertake trips outside Europe but do not tend to stay very long at the destination. Consequently, we will call these academics 'regular travellers' (RT). The personal characteristics of the academics in this cluster are fairly close to what we expected, based on the average values of all the academics. It seems fair to state that this group of academics copes with the base expectations to internationalise by travelling regularly.

Observation 3: A small group of academics travel a lot.

As a third and final observation, there are two clusters with considerably high travel activity, namely cluster three and cluster five. There is, however, a clear distinction between both groups of travellers. The 26 academics of the fifth cluster (3 percent) are characterised by a considerably high amount of time spent abroad during long-term trips, lasting on average more than 40 days each. During the two years under study, they remained abroad for more than 275 days on average. This group can therefore best be categorised as 'long-term travellers' (LT). Note that not all trips lasted a long time, but at least one of the trips did. Only a limited number of senior academics belong to this

cluster, as an academic with a tenured position is somehow obligated to regularly fulfil (research and teaching) duties at the home institution. There are more female academics in this group than expected, and more academics than expected have no family obligations (either a partner and/or children).

A larger group of academics (16 percent) are represented by the travel behaviour of cluster three, the cluster with the highest travel frequency (on average more than 10 trips each year) and an average total time spent abroad of almost two months a year. As their average trip duration is short, we expect this group of academics to have high obligations both at home and abroad. They will consequently be termed the 'hyper-travellers' (HT). This group of frequent short-term travelling academics appears to consist predominantly of older men.

4.4.2 A compulsion to internationalise? Purposes and constraints to travel

It is clear from the cluster analysis that not all lecturers and professors travel to the same extent. This second part of the results builds on qualitative data and distinguishes the main purposes for and constraints to travel. Moreover, it attempts to offer an answer to the question of how the compulsion towards internationalisation is experienced by the interview respondents.

The interviewees have mentioned several activities that can be performed at a distance and then necessitate regular travel. We have categorised them into four groups: (1) attending conferences, workshops or symposia, which are short-term (mass) get-togethers of academics who perform research in a similar area. The emphasis of these gatherings is clearly on face-to-face (F2F) proximity. Similar to the research of Lassen (2006) on academics at Aalborg University, the largest share of trips in this category is undertaken for conference travel; (2) foreign project work, or the often labour-intensive and longer-term activities at specific places or in particular time periods. The need to travel very much derives from what Urry (2007) calls face-to-place and face-to-time proximity. The project work ranges from manual fieldwork to specific use of specialised equipment or research stays in order to study indigenous people; (3) F2F meetings and gatherings originating from membership of an international network. Some activities and opportunities are 'accessible' because the academic is part of such an international network. This includes, amongst other things, journeys to perform consultancy tasks, to give guest lectures, to be a member of the jury of a doctoral thesis defence, or to join a round-table discussion with experts; (4) F2F meetings and gatherings in the

context of the management of international research teams. Managing these people, whether an internationally oriented research group at the home institution or a foreign project team, necessitates regular travel.

Minimal travel

The majority of interview participants indicated that there was a travel 'threshold,' that is, a minimum amount of travel necessary for academics in order to be successful. The actual need did not stem from the transfer of formal knowledge during, for example, 'presentation shopping' at conferences or a lecture to a critical audience. Rather, according to the majority of participants, the real compulsion to travel derives very much from building and sustaining network ties with 'potential partners in future projects,' as one of the respondents referred to his foreign colleagues. '*You can't stay away for too long, because colleagues or friends [...] if you don't see them for five years, you no longer know them and they no longer know you. You have to maintain those contacts. And I think two years of absence is more or less the limit' (7, RT, male, early forties).* This statement echoes Urry's (2007, 230) observation that network ties can only be sustained through periodic meetings to 'cement the weak ties.' This minimal amount of travel is needed to ensure the transfer of *tacit* knowledge or the know-how and know-who during informal meetings (see Aguiléra, 2008; Elliott and Urry, 2010). Network activation (Elliot and Urry, 2010) can provide access to significant opportunities, from collaborating on funding proposals and publications to even-better job prospects: *'My best opportunities always came via contacts on conferences [...] These are opportunities that let you grow as a researcher' (6, RT, male, early forties); 'There are a lot of research and publication initiatives that originate from informal contacts at conferences. They never harmed my career – quite the contrary' (23, LT, male, late fifties).* Moreover, not travelling to an event or meeting can involve an opportunity cost too, as it might mean losing out on potentially interesting opportunities: *'With respect to the annual conference in the US, I do not have to be there, but when I don't go, it will cost me. It's not only about going, it's also about not going' (16, HT, male, late thirties).*

To ensure this highly valued access to opportunities in the future, there is a consensus that academics need to be regularly 'in the picture' internationally. This is especially true for younger researchers who still have to put themselves on the map and who still need to get involved in international networks. Older, experienced researchers have built strong ties over time and travel mainly in order to maintain the existing contacts. However, particularly for younger academics, networking proves to be difficult. It requires regular interaction and building up recognition. Only after a while does 'the ball start rolling,' and

networking turns out to be much easier: *The first time at a conference, it is impossible to network, because you don't know anyone. After attending the same conferences a few times, you start to know people and then it's much easier. Only after a while, it starts getting advantageous' (16, HT, male, late thirties).*

Some respondents don't believe the role of formal knowledge transfer to be relevant at all. They rarely consider listening to presentations to be of any importance, unless it is seen as efficient for evaluating the expertise, competencies, and skills of the presenter. And if they themselves present, they are well aware it is a way of being 'visible.' These academics see the formal practices as a way of gaining reputation, what Bourdieu (1975) called 'scientific capital,' and credibility within their field. They put more effort in meeting and seeing colleagues, which is, according to them, also a very active and planned activity: *'When I attend a conference, I am very selective: I only go to presentations of people I want to meet afterwards. Listening to his or her presentation is then an important conversation-starter' (18, HT, male, early forties); 'Eventually, you're an opportunist. When you speak to somebody, you already think in the back of your head: maybe I can use this person for something' (2, ML, male, early sixties).*

However, many respondents point to obligations that limit their travel activities. First, certain work obligations at the home institution are bound to have a constraining effect on travel. A heavy teaching load, for example, makes travel difficult during the academic semester. Other academics with daily management tasks (of a department, laboratory, or clinic, for example) made it clear that their journeys were limited in the amount of time they could be absent. Second, almost all academics argued that the duties of caring for young children or elderly parents at least complicate frequent travel. Again, these obligations have an effect on the timing and duration of a trip, as the following quotes illustrate: *'You will not see me travelling at the first of September' (19, HT, male, late forties); 'I always try to avoid being away from home for two consecutive weekends' (20, HT, male, early fifties).* Finally, some physiological characteristics can (temporarily or permanently) prevent academics from travelling, such as pregnancy, short- or long-term physical disability, or fear of flying. Moreover, a basic level of fitness is necessary for frequent short-term travel, and more specifically to cope with jetlag issues and sleep difficulties. This appears to be more worrisome for older academics.
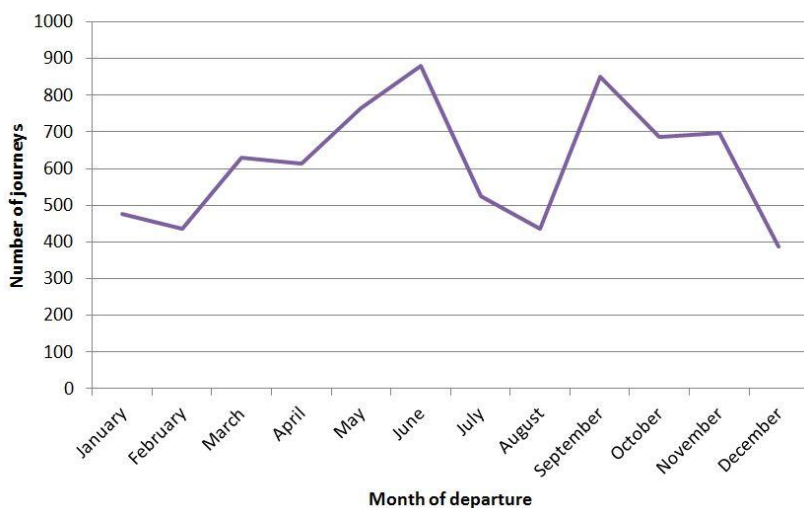
Figure 4.5: Seasonal variation of departure time of journeys of UGent lecturers and professors. Source: Authors.

These constraints on frequent, short-term travel are no different from what Ackers (2008) observed when it comes to long-term academic mobility of younger researchers. Note that most constraints can be temporary or related to the life stage and/or career stage of the academic. Family obligations, for example, are highest when children are young and need the most care. Academics with older children or a retired partner, for example, can even find within their families incentives to travel again: '*Since my wife can accompany me during travel, I increasingly like going on a trip' (8, RT, male, late forties).* The significant effect of work and family obligations is not only clear from our qualitative analysis but also from our quantitative data. The visualisation of the departure time of trips (see Figure 5) indicates that academic travel is particularly undertaken outside teaching and holiday periods. Its peaks are in the examination months of June and September, while summer and winter breaks are periods of low-travel activity. Academics are, in this respect, not very different from 'business class travellers' in the study of Derudder et al. (2011). Moreover, the individual and family characteristics of the academics in the clusters give an indication that academics with family obligations (both a partner and/or children) are more likely to be found in a cluster with low-travel activity (especially in terms of average duration of a trip and trip frequency), while the others are slightly better represented in the hyper-travelling cluster.

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One academic mentioned the exceptional situation—in his eyes—where non-travel behaviour was not perceived to be problematic: *'We have a post-doctoral researcher who doesn't travel. He doesn't want to. I asked him more than once to go and travel. He has enough money, but no interest. But the man is that good [in performing research] that others travel to him' (9, RT, male, late forties).* In this peculiar situation, the non-travelling academic had already built up recognition by performing excellent research. A lot of the respondents, however, made it clear that travelling academics have an advantage as opposed to their non-travelling counterparts, especially when seeking international recognition: *'If you want international recognition, then you need to travel. You are invited to give a lecture in Australia? Well, you have to go. […] (If you want to do internationally oriented research and want recognition, then this involves travelling' (21, HT, male, late fifties); 'The fact that you've been somewhere, gives you a kind of recognition […]. Those who go to more conferences are doing better. Don't ask me why, but it's true in an implicit way' (16, HT, male, early thirties).*

While it seems that tenure-track academics are somehow allowed to be off the radar temporarily, non-travel is believed to be especially harmful for one's career over longer periods and for untenured academics: *'Today, in promotion committees, they will no longer only look how good you are in your discipline—it still is one of the conditions obviously—but they also look [at] to what extent you are active internationally. It increasingly becomes one of the preconditions' (2, ML, male, early sixties). 'We are currently in a system where being away a lot is praised. You are a better researcher when you can present a semi-foreign scientific résumé. There are actually no supporting arguments for [it], but that's the label you get' (3, ML, female, late thirties).* One respondent even took it one step further by explicitly stating that non-travel behaviour is problematic for all researchers: *'I wouldn't say there is a status attached to being mobile, but it's a stigma when you're not' (10, RT, male, early fifties).*

Although non-travelling academics are not necessarily disadvantaged and can be very satisfied with their travel behaviour, some of them express feelings of frustration and of being undervalued: *'I am limited now, but when I will give up my job responsibilities—possibly next year—I will travel again, because I think it's necessary mentally […]. The current situation can't last' (12, RT, male, early sixties); 'At the university, people still perceive it as… You are inferior if you travel very little' (3, ML, female, late thirties).* Additionally, academics who have travel constraints tend to criticise the extensive travel behaviour of some of their colleagues, thereby wondering how these academics manage to perform their duties at the home institution when they are constantly on the go: *'In all honesty, there are people here, I can show you their files, who are solely occupied*

with giving lectures abroad. I always wonder: how do they still perform research? What do you sell during your speeches? Is it mostly research from a while ago then?' (2, ML, male, early sixties).

Maximum travel

At the other end of the spectrum, there are those academics travelling to a high extent. We distinguish two particular categories of travellers. First, long-term travel appears to be undertaken by younger people with few family obligations who are flexible enough to travel for longer periods abroad. The academics of the fifth cluster seem to meet most of these characteristics. Although this gathering or 'discovery' of knowledge abroad has a long tradition within certain academic disciplines, only a small number of tenured academics (approximately 3 percent) are members of this group. Most of the project workers are apparently younger pre- or postdoctoral researchers with much less work and fewer family obligations at (the) home (institution). It cannot be ruled out, however, that many of these lengthy journeys are not registered in the central travel database because they are often not reimbursed or paid for by the home University.

Next, there are the frequent short-term travellers. As we learned from our interviews, the highest-travel compulsions are related to specific travel-intensive management duties, be they the management of (multiple) foreign project teams or the management of an internationally oriented research team at the home institution. We assume cluster three to consist mainly of this type of academic. Managing foreign (project) teams involves the entire process from project scope to project evaluation without the need to be physically present all the time. Therefore, an academic can even manage multiple foreign projects at the same time. However, these project-management tasks still require a high amount of 'commuting,' especially to meet the project team(s) abroad. Other hyper-travelling team managers are managing an internationally oriented research group at the home institution. Travel then becomes an activity to heighten the visibility of the research group, compete and lobby for resources, set up research collaboration abroad, scout foreign talent to join the research group, etc. It involves network activation for the benefit of the entire research team. Cantwell (2011) emphasised their role as 'gatekeepers' in the global competition for talent because they try to recruit 'the brightest and the best' on a global scale.

These academics are in many ways seen as the 'ambassadors' of the research teams. One of the respondents, for example, mentioned that he networked for many others and thereby set up virtual meetings between persons who never spoke to each other before: *'I said to my contacts in Saudi Arabia: "Look, I'm*

talking about what happens in these research teams, but I'm not the specialist, so I will arrange a virtual meeting." Then they can have their very technical *discussion, in preparation of a first visit'* (22, HT, male, early sixties). In this way, being in an international research group is important, but it does not imply that all members of the team need to travel continuously: *'Eventually, there is a hierarchy, where everyone gives feedback to the manager, and it is this manager who travels around the world and translates the stories of his researchers. So you get another kind of role. It's a kind of... missionary, who goes to tell stories. But informed, of course. The person no longer performs research, but he transfers the knowledge of his people'* (3, ML, female, late thirties). Even the non-travelling academics can thus be very 'internationalised,' and that is what Ackers (2008) points out when she explains the difference between 'internationalisation' and 'mobility.'

Hyper-travelling academics with too many compulsions, simultaneously at home and abroad, can become 'off balance' and no longer able to meet demanding travel needs. There appears to be a very personal travel 'limit,' or maximum number of trips, as well. This maximum seems to be reached when people become tired of travelling: *'When the 'exotic' aspect of a certain destination fades away because you've been there often, then the total image is transformed, and it increasingly becomes a burden'* (20, HT, male, early fifties). Another frequent-travelling respondent stated that he preferred to spend his summer holidays at home precisely because he travelled so much. Both these groups of academics are therefore more inclined to look for travel alternatives compared to those who enjoy occasional travel. This corresponds to a high extent with the research of Julsrud et al. (2014), where corporeal 'travel tiredness' was the strongest motivation for using videoconference technologies.

4.4.3 Searching for a balance between obligations at home and obligations away

Some academics clearly experience difficulties coping with their obligations at home and away. Besides the obvious strategy of not meeting the demands and expectations abroad by, for example, not participating in foreign research projects, a first coping strategy seems to consist of 'rationalising' corporeal travel behaviour. However, unlike in the work of Kesselring and Vogl (2010) on business travel, the main rationale behind rationalisation was not to cut costs but was simply a manner of coping with demanding individual contexts. Amongst the prime examples of rationalisation of corporeal travel is limiting the duration spent abroad by eliminating leisure activities at the destination.

As Lassen (2009) argues, travel—and especially conference travel—is not purely instigated from work rationales but can also involve tourism and pleasure. Conferences are often held at 'exotic' destinations or in big cities in an effort to attract as many attendees as possible: *'Yes, I am influenced by the destination, although at the end it does not really matter. You see the hotel and the airport, but not much of the country itself' (15, RT, female, late forties).* As there is a lot of tourism involved in travelling, there is also some critique associated with this. These tourist activities at the destination, either prior to or after work, can therefore be one of the first aspects that people choose to let go. Other examples of rationalising travel behaviour include travelling less frequently by more carefully selecting and weighing the activities abroad or combining multiple activities in time and space: *You have to plan to see different groups of people. You have to go to a lecture where the Asians are and one which the Americans will attend. So, you have to manage to have... sort of maximum coverage' (7, RT, male, early forties).*

Many academics also increasingly rationalise the choice of travel mode by opting for different travel modes when interaction risks being cancelled otherwise (see also Haynes, 2010) and/or the return (on investment) of a particular trip is not high enough. As one of the constrained respondents explained, e-mail collaboration can be an even more efficient mode of interaction for specific objectives: '*Much more direct communication, without the small talk, with a solid question, like: "this is what I do, can you help me?" [...] But it wasn't a problem at all. It is very direct and you have the feeling: we are already collaborating; eventually we were already in the next phase' (3, ML, female, late thirties).* However, virtual travel between academics increasingly occurs via other practices as well, such as via closed, digital platforms, academic listservs, or Skype conferencing: *'During those three months [of not travelling], I've done presentations in Jakarta, Dubrovnik, and two other places on conferences from my desk at home, via videoconferencing. I said to them: "It is impossible to travel". They said: "You are the keynote speaker". I say: "OK, via videoconference". At three o'clock in the morning, with a shirt and my pyjamas, in front of my PC' (22, HT, male, early sixties).* These Skype meetings are also increasingly used for 'attending' doctoral thesis defences when members of the jury cannot make the trip in person. Thus, travel modes seem to increasingly become 'tailored' to work objectives Jones (2003) argued.

Moreover, when an academic is unable to travel for various reasons, there are two other coping strategies worth mentioning. First, one can invite other people to travel to one's location instead: *'I was thinking, I cannot make the trip myself, so I'll invite everybody here. Of course, you need some money, but OK,*

there is funding available for this and it worked out well' (3, ML, female, late thirties). Second, a constrained academic can send someone else: *'There are conferences where we need to be represented, but he can't go and I can't go. Can you present something? But this has to be discussed in the group... It's not something you can impose' (2, ML, male, early sixties).*

We emphasise, as one of the respondents did, that virtual-travel practices are not merely a substitution. They do foster increased network activation, but the mere virtual network ties are not the same as those networked in person: *'It's not only substitution, it's more than that, because it enables you to have more contacts, although you'll never get the maximum from those contacts, no. Because nothing substitutes for personal contact' (22, HT, male, early sixties).* Moreover, these 'early adopters' seem also to generate new work practices through the combined use of virtual technologies and local contacts, for example: *'We organise informative, virtual sessions, where [our Chinese colleagues] can react upon to one of my longstanding, local contacts over there. There is no instant, live communication, because they will only tell you half you need to know. But let them discuss it on their own, and let us extract the useful information via our contact abroad—somebody who knows both cultures—then you make good use of virtual communication technologies to advance much faster in your project (22, HT, male, early sixties).* Virtual interaction serves here as a way to improve the dialogue between people of different cultures and to advance much more quickly in foreign project work. Although many academics believe that virtual interaction will never be a substitute for corporeal travel because of a variety of reasons (see Faulconbridge et al., 2009), there might be more virtual travel in the future as a way to facilitate and structure these corporeal work practices.

4.5 Business and management aspects of the research

Studying this academic workforce with its high degree of autonomy sheds some interesting light on the widely documented 'curse' of business travel across economic sectors (see Beaverstock et al., 2009) because academics can trade off the benefits and costs of travel. Other workers do not always have this luxury and studying them merely reveals the array of problems they face. This study, therefore, suggests that academic workers effectively handle the pressures surrounding travel, and the lessons learned from the academic case are thus more widely valuable in terms of understanding business travel across all sectors.

Although a large group of academics seem to have found a proper balance between responsibilities at home and away and, furthermore, enjoy the travel aspects of their jobs, our analysis also suggests that there are academics who are 'off balance': these can be either academics who (temporarily) do not reach a 'travel threshold' or academics who are above a certain 'travel limit.' These academics are inclined to look for alternative coping strategies by rationalising their corporeal travel behaviour or increasingly shifting their focus to other, virtual-travel modes. When organisations or institutions are seeking more sustainable alternatives to corporeal travel in order to reduce the costs of regular corporeal travel, travel managers should focus on these two particular categories of workers and develop new practices which can be efficiently undertaken via virtual-travel modes. Although not all corporeal travel practices can be substituted with virtual travel practices, especially not when face-to-place proximity is needed, we believe that many practices concerning face-to-face proximity can increasingly be dealt with via virtual travel.

Moreover, based on the critiques raised by academics and the feelings of undervaluation noted by infrequent travellers, we argue that there is still a lot of incomprehension associated with the diverse functions of business travel. It is therefore necessary to increasingly understand and value these different roles. We stress that although there seems to be a basic obligation to travel for all academics, non-travelling behaviour is not necessarily problematic, particularly when the academic has already build strong network ties and a reputation in his or her field or is part of an internationalised research team. We also emphasise the important role of hyper-travellers and especially the managers of international research teams, be they foreign or home-based. These workers, amongst others duties, take care of network building for their non-travelling colleagues as well.

4.6 Conclusions

In this paper, we presented an empirical assessment of the travel strategies of tenured academics at Ghent University, derived from both quantitative and qualitative travel data. We showed first of all that the individual lecturer or professor is, to varying extents, compelled and constrained to travel, which leads to roles with diverging travel intensity in academia. We argued that some academics have difficulties coping with the compulsions abroad and are, therefore, inclined to look for alternatives to corporeal travel. Academics with too many compulsions at home and/or too many compulsions abroad seem to rationalise their individual corporeal travel behaviour by, for example, dropping the leisure aspect of trips or combining multiple purposes abroad.

Simultaneously, they are on the lookout for more efficient uses of travel modes, thereby increasingly substituting inefficient travel and no travel with virtual-work practices.

Although this study has a limited scope, as it focuses only on senior academics at Ghent University, we believe this case study to be valuable more widely in terms of understanding business travel across economic sectors. Our findings may be less relevant for untenured academics, as they are less self-dependent and increasingly need network capital for career advancement. The paper did not elaborate on the geography of trips, as previously done in the study of Jöns (2008). She showed that distinct work practices have distinct global geographies. Both a focus on the travel activity of untenured academics and studying the geography of academic trips may, therefore, be interesting avenues for future research.

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[1] Because of a lack of more detailed data, distances were measured from Ghent to the destination country's centre. These are rather crude estimations, especially to large countries such as the US or China, but they still allow distinguishing between academics with a rather 'local' or 'global' orientation. Distances are two-way and calculated 'as the crow flies' via the Google distance calculator (see http://www.daftlogic.com/projects-google-maps-distance-calculator.htm).

[2] We did not distinguish between cohabiting and married academics, nor did we differentiate between unmarried and divorced academics.

[3] We are aware that, from a certain age, having children no longer implies much caring duties, as children leave the house. However, our data did not allow taking such differences into account.

[4] There are assumptions that should be met in advance to attain the best clustering results. First, the travel variables on which the clustering is based should be independent. Second, all continual travel variables are assumed to have a normal distribution, and categorical variables should have a multinomial distribution (Norusis, 2011). It is clear that the mobility variables in this analysis are to an extent related to each other. Norusis (2011) states that these two assumptions are seldom met in practice, but nonetheless, the algorithm is 'thought to behave reasonably well when the assumptions are not met.' Moreover, the degree to which these assumptions are met and the overall goodness-of-fit of the cluster procedure is measured by the 'silhouette measure of cohesion and separation' (SMCS) and varies between -1 and 1. More specifically, a SMCS between 0.2 and 0.5 gives a fair cluster solution, while a SMCS above 0.5 indicates a good cluster quality.

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- 5 - ACADEMIC TRAVEL, GENDER AND CAREER ADVANCEMENT: THE CASE OF GHENT UNIVERSITY, FLANDERS

Abstract

Regular work-related travel has become fundamental for career progression in academia. The ensuing 'compulsion' to mobility seems however hard to balance with family obligations at the individual level. Based on a dataset covering 35.000 travel applications by almost 5.000 academics employed by Ghent University (Flanders, Belgium), this article empirically analyses the effect of gender and family obligations on short-term travel frequency, controlling for work-related (academic position, discipline) and personal (age) characteristics. The results indicate that having a partner stimulates short-term travel slightly for both sexes, while having children plays out differently per sex: it significantly decreases the number of trips female academics make, while it stimulates the number of trips undertaken by male academics. This paper argues that the diminished propensity to engage in short-term travel is a rather 'invisible' contributor to persisting gender inequalities in academia, and discusses some avenues for further research.

5.1 Introduction

Frequent and long-distance travel has increasingly become a reality for a growing number of workers (Aguiléra, 2008; Haynes et al., 2005; Jeong et al., 2013; Beaverstock et al., 2009). Such travel is undertaken to perform team work, attend meetings, trade fairs or conferences, visit clients and suppliers, etc. (Gustafson, 2006), and seems especially pertinent in globally operating, knowledge-intensive sectors so that for many people working in these sectors travel has evolved into a normal, even an ordinary part of the job (Jones, 2009; Julsrud and Gjerdaker, 2013; Lassen, 2006; Urry, 2007; Faulconbridge et al., 2009). Although it has been repeatedly asserted that new developments in

computer-mediated communication would come to replace corporeal travel (Cairncross, 2001), in reality substitution rates have been very modest at best (Choo and Mokhtarian, 2005; Denstadli et al., 2013; Haynes, 2010; Mokhtarian, 2003; Denstadli and Gripsrud, 2010). And although Boschma (2005) argues that there are different kinds of proximity necessary to ensure successful learning and innovation processes, the facilitating role of geographical proximity has not really been challenged as yet. Overall, then, face-to-face (F2F) proximity clearly remains a vital aspect of doing business (Urry, 2007), and given internationalisation tendencies this implies that travel seems to become more rather than less prevalent.

The academic sector is no exception to this trend (Brown and Duguid, 2000; Storper and Venables, 2004). Internationalising institutions of higher education and research (IHERs) formally encourage - and sometimes oblige – academics to be mobile (Ackers et al., 2008; Horta, 2012). For example, with reference to the academic context, King (2003; in Findlay et al., 2006: 298) observes that the 'rhetoric of mobility as a passport to personal development and career success [is] strongly present within wider discourses of European integration'. For instance, since the Bologna Declaration in 1999, several European documents and programmes have supported and stimulated the mobility of students and staff (Ackers et al., 2008; Cantwell, 2011). This is also reflected in many national and institutional policies, including immigration or funding frameworks (Kim, 2009). In Flanders, for instance, the main government-sponsored research funding institution (FWO) stated in its most recent policy plan (2012-2016, 39) that '(a) researcher can no longer afford to be immobile' (FWO, 2011). As a corollary, academics are increasingly expected to be mobile if they seek to advance their scientific career (Ackers, 2008; 2013). The scale and scope of transnational activities have expanded and intensified: increased emphasis is now put on collaboration in research projects, student and staff exchange programmes, and on competition for internationally sponsored research projects and grants or for highly skilled talent (Ackers, 2005; Altbach, 2004; Kim, 2009; Leung, 2012; Teichler, 2004).

To date, empirical research on academic mobility has predominantly focused on patterns and implications of longer-term research stays (Ackers et al., 2008; Jöns, 2011; Kyvik et al., 1999; Leemann, 2010; Leung, 2012; Leyman, 2009; Moguérou, 2004; Shauman and Xie, 1996; Welch, 1997;)[1]. However, recurrent moments of ephemeral and intense proximity also fulfil important roles in academia and research (Urry, 2007). Ackers (2008; 2010) argues that the regular short-term travel brought about by what Murphy and Doherty (2011) have called 'presenteism' can in many ways be even more effective and

important as a 'mobility strategy' than a single longer-term visit abroad, as it generates more opportunities to extend and cement one's network capital over time and space. Similarly, Decramer et al. (2013) suggest that lengthy assignments (of more than three weeks) are unfavourable for research productivity (measured in terms of international peer-review articles), while it is the number of visits that positively influences research output. In addition, in the face of an increased 'need' to be mobile, a strategy consisting of multiple short-term mobilities can also be adopted for social reasons, as it may be deemed a more 'family-friendly alternative' to moving abroad for a longer period.

In this article, we examine the uneven involvement of academics in short-term travel, with specific attention for gendered patterns. We do this through a quantitative analysis of a dataset provided by Ghent University (Flanders, Belgium), in which information on travel behaviour of academics is related with information on some of their personal characteristics[2]. More specifically, we link the relative capacity and/or willingness to travel with a combination of two work-related (career stage, scientific discipline) and three personal (age, gender and family obligations) characteristics. Our empirical focus is obviously idiosyncratic in that we focus on a specific sector (characterised by specific approaches towards mobility and career advancement), as well as a specific institution within that sector (mobility and internationalisation being a cornerstone of research policy in Flanders and at Ghent University). However, such a case-based approach has the distinct advantage that, unlike previous empirical studies on professional travel, we do not have to 'control' for sectoral, national or institutional variations, such as the size of an organisation, its location, or its internationalisation strategies. The workforce itself has got a lot in common too: employees reside to a large extent in the same region with its particular values and norms, are all highly educated, and (almost) all of them are encouraged, or even required, to be mobile.

As we will see, the capacity and willingness to be mobile among academics is indeed highly stratified: short-term mobility depends on unevenly distributed choices and constraints (Ackers, 2005; 2008). Two major sets of results emerge from our empirical analysis: (1) the capacity or willingness to be mobile is positively influenced by having a partner; and (2) the effect changes as caring duties come into play: female academics travel less when they have children, while male academics tend to travel more. This implies that especially female academics with family obligations appear to have difficulties to live up to what Ackers et al. (2008) call the 'mobility imperative' (see also Jöns, 2011; Leemann, 2010; Leyman, 2009; Moguérou, 2004). In addition to an

empirical understanding of the stratification of short-term travel effects on its own terms, such findings also bear on ongoing discussions on the gendered (1) prospects for career advancement and (2) work-life balance in academia. Indeed, given the tendency to add mobility expectations as a formal or informal prerequisite for career advancement in academia, mobility stratifications among the academic workforce are likely to (re)produce (gendered) career advancement stratifications (Ackers, 2005; Jöns, 2011). At the same time, and directly related to the (potential) burden imposed by regularly spending time away from home, the steady increase of short-term travel presents new challenges to work-life balance (see Sayah and Süβ, 2013), which again have a clear-cut gendered nature.

The remainder of this article is organised as follows. In the next section, we build upon insights from the business travel literature and the scarce literature on short-term academic travel to clarify the role of regular short-term travel in research and personal career development. We then elaborate on the travel data and the methods used in this study, after which we discuss our results and interpret these in light of the existing literature as well as previous empirical research on long-term academic mobility. We conclude with an overview of the main implications of our findings, and discuss some possible avenues for future research.

5.2 Travel, career success and work-life balance

5.2.1 A definition of travel

For the purpose of this article, and in line with definitions developed in the literature on business travel more generally (see Aguiléra, 2008; Davidson and Cope, 2003; Millar and Salt, 2008), we consider travel to be a mobility type with the following characteristics: (1) it concerns physical, corporeal or geographical mobility, as opposed to what has been called communicative, digital or virtual travel. The latter types of mobility refer to the use of computer-mediated communication for interaction (teleconferencing, web conferences, chat rooms, e-mail, etc.). (2) It is work-related, as the main and formal purpose of these trips for academics are lecturing, engaging in project work, collaborating, etc. (see Storme et al., 2013). These trips are not necessarily academically motivated in a strict sense, but may offer a combination of work and play (see Lassen, 2006; Wittel, 2001). (3) It often comprises shorter-term mobility, as these trips generally last a couple of days. It involves at least one overnight stay, making it distinct from day-to-day commuting to the workplace (see Gustafson, 2006; Jeong et al., 2013). (4)

Business travel often spans large distances, and often necessitates air travel (Lassen, 2006). And (5) a final important aspect of travel is that it is repetitive. It somehow implies an aspect of regularity, to meet and re-meet people and places over time (Urry, 2007).

5.2.2 Travel and career success

In this section of the article, we draw upon the business travel literature to link travel to individual career success. From a resource and competency based view of an organisation, individual career capital consists of three ways of knowing (DeFillipi and Arthur, 1994; Dickmann and Harris, 2005; Duberley and Cohen, 2010): (1) knowing why, referring to motivation, sense of purpose and identification. This type of capital is said to augment performance and learning (Dickmann and Harris, 2005); (2) knowing how, relating to skills and job-related knowledge; and (3) knowing whom, consisting of a range of social relations combined in a network. The latter refers to social capital, involving 'relationships of mutual recognition and acquaintance, resources based upon social connections and group or class membership' (Duberley and Cohen, 2010). According to the literature, the practice of travel enhances all three dimensions of career capital.

Knowing why: boosting motivation and identifying with the occupation

Work-related trips boost the motivation and inspiration of the traveller and therefore increase productivity (Gustafson, 2006). Journeys offer an escape from everyday routine tasks and situations, generating feelings of freedom and independence. The motivation or rush also comes from encountering novel, unknown, exciting and often intense experiences abroad, very much implying the use of all senses. Simultaneously, trips to unfamiliar destinations are also inseparable from feelings of danger, risk, adventure and uncertainty (Kesselring and Vogl, 2010), for example with respect to baggage loss, flight delays, and misunderstandings. The traveller has to cope with an unfamiliar context, possibly leading to misunderstandings. Managing these situations individually may therefore generate an adrenaline rush. And last, travel can be associated with feelings of importance, status and recognition, because the traveller has to represent the research team abroad (Gustafson, 2006). Others argue that people 'with similar practices and similar resources, develop similar identities' (Brown and Duguid, 2000, 140). Hence, travel is also about 'learning to be': over time and through the practice of regular travel, people acquire a similar and cosmopolitan academic identity (Lassen, 2006).

Knowing how: acquiring transnational skills and work-related knowledge

Through repeated travel, workers acquire skills and knowledge that are important for their personal and career development (Gustafson, 2006), for example the mastery of a (foreign) language, acquiring know how of particular objects and machines, or learning people skills. In addition, regular travel is related to entrepreneurship and the competencies associated with it, like self-reliance, confidence, adaptation, negotiation and coping with stress situations (Gustafson, 2006). These are closely linked to leadership skills and appear to be increasingly valued in today's global corporations and institutions (Oddou et al., 2000). Moreover, through regular travel one becomes interculturally competent by shifting from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism (Bennet, 2004). But travel is also related to knowledge exchange and learning. Academics are given the opportunity to reduce uncertainty and risk about knowledge claims, to secure credibility for those claims, or to recruit new and unexpected resources for research and teaching, etc. (Jöns, 2011). These collaboration opportunities are believed to increase research output (Edler et al., 2011; Verbree, 2011).

Knowing whom: networking and social capital

Most travel is undertaken for the purpose of networking (Lassen, 2009; Storme et al., 2013). This practice refers to actively constructing social bonds (Cheney et al., 2004; in Julsrud and Gjerdacker, 2013) and leads to social capital. Regularly engaging in F2F contact is vital here, because networking does not lead to relationship-building from the very start (Ackers, 2013; Welch et al., 2007; Storme et al., 2013). It implies showing commitment, understanding, mutual engagement and trust during regular moments of F2F proximity to establish relationships (Julsrud and Gjerdacker, 2013; Storper and Venables, 2004; Faulconbridge et al., 2009). Such proximity allows interpreting the meaning of a handshake, eye contact, body gestures, etc. It is clear that social life at-a-distance implies travelling, visiting and hosting (see Larsen et al., 2007) to reactivate such ties (Elliott and Urry, 2010; Urry, 2007). And the more links a person has, the greater becomes his or her compulsion to proximity, and therefore to travel.

In academia the creation and reproduction of transnational social ties through travel is necessary to ensure access to geographically dispersed opportunities. Larsen et al. (2007) refer to these opportunities as 'network capital', because once you are integrated in an influential network, the opportunities start accumulating. Academic events like conferences are places for informal recruitment (Seierstad and Healy, 2012): they offer faculty the

ability to scout for talent on the one hand, and give job seekers a chance to shop for a job on the other hand. As Ackers (2005, 109), puts it, '[b]oth career progression and migration are driven as much by networks and connections than quality per se'. The essential role of social capital for career success has been highlighted by many studies (Ackers et al., 2008; Arthur, 2003; Burt, 1998; Duberley and Cohen, 2010). Arthur (2003) argues that because contemporary workers no longer have traditional organisational career paths with job security and intra-organisational progression, the importance of interpersonal and communal relationships increasingly comes to the fore, as they often provide the only certainty when changing jobs. It is then no longer important to have mentors within the organisation supporting your career, but also relationships *outside* the work setting to support future career steps.

5.2.3 Travel and work-life balance

In a highly internationalised higher education sector, it would therefore seem that not having the capacity or willingness to be geographically mobile, may result in a glass ceiling for immobile academics. One particular constrain factor to (long-term) mobility appears to be the presence of family. Having a partner is particularly hampering when both partners aspire a career, because (temporarily) relocating negatively affects the career of a possible spouse (Leemann et al., 2010; Shauman and Xie, 1996). Both partners thus have to adjust their career plans, compromise the gains from each type of mobility and have more hurdles to overcome than single-career families, where one of the partners stays at home or works part-time. Having children and/or elderly parents to care for also proves to be hard to harmonise with long-term mobility (Ackers, 2008; Shauman and Xie, 1996). The current literature on academic mobility, however, suggests that short stays offer 'an important means of reconciling these various work-life pressures', as opposed to longer-term mobility (Ackers, 2007, 3). This is also put forward in the management literature. Several scholars suggest that a large part of companies use repeated business trips as alternatives to longer-term assignments abroad, when the employee refuses to expatriate (Millar and Salt, 2008; Welch et al., 2007).

Previous empirical research on short-term business travel across occupations in the US and in Sweden reveals that travel is a gendered practice (see Bergström, 2013; Espino et al., 2002; Gustafson, 2006; Jeong et al., 2013): business travellers are often male, well-educated, and found at the upper job echelons. By analysing work data from a decade ago, Gustafson (2006) empirically shows that caring duties, especially for young children reduced the likelihood of women to engage in overnight travel, while no such effects were

found among the male respondents. In a Swedish follow-up study, Bergström (2013) argued that the reduced share of work-related travel by women appeared attributable to other normative practices, namely their higher participation in the domestic sphere. Mobile women remain in charge of domestic responsibilities while travelling, while mobile men consider travel to be a reason for a reduced share of domestic work. Jeong et al. (2013) have reported similar observations by studying US travel data, as the responsibility for care of family members particularly suppressed travel frequency for women.

In light of these observations, it still remains unclear to what extent academics engage in short-term travel as an alternative to long-term travel. Unlike previous empirical research, we focus on academics within a single organisation, making the analysis independent from contextual characteristics (company size and composition, national/regional and organisational policies and labour characteristics, and the like). We can easily expect the mobility demands to be equally high for men and women in the same career stage and discipline. Female academics with family obligations might then be more inclined to travel on a shorter-term basis than their male counterparts, as a way of compensation. If this is not the case, short-term travel can also lead to less promotion opportunities for women and hence, reinforce existing gender inequalities in academia.

5.3 Data and methods

5.3.1 A dataset of travelling academics at Ghent University

The travel data used in this article originate from two centrally-managed databases at Ghent University (UGent), which has approximately 38.000 students, employs more than 5.000 academics and is one of the main public universities in Belgium. The first dataset consists of travel applications, registered from January 2009 until the end of 2012 and stored by the financial department to handle reimbursements of travel expenses. Registration of trips with at least one overnight stay is obligatory at UGent since 2009. More specifically, we have information on traveller ID, time period and country of destination of these travel applications. For the purpose of this article, we did not consider the travel applications without an overnight stay. The second dataset contains information on work-related and personal characteristics of the traveller, obtained from the department of Personnel and Organisation. These were linkable to the trip dataset through the traveller ID.

A first work-related variable distinguished the academics by 'rank' or position (predoctoral student [3], postdoctoral researcher [4] and lecturer/professor). The second work-related variable provided information about the disciplinary division of the traveller (UGent has eleven 'faculties'). Personal information of the traveller consists of family-related (partnering[5], parenting[6]) and background characteristics (gender and age). To limit interaction effects between the two variables characterizing the caring duties of the traveller, we have merged these variables into a single, ordinal variable with three levels: (1) academics without a partner and without children; (2) academics with a partner, but no children; and (3) academics with or without a partner, but with children[7]. These data were combined into a dataset of travellers, capturing 35.883 travel applications registered by 4.979 travellers.

The new dataset thus summarises travel data per person over a period of four years. However, many untenured academics are only employed for a fixed term, and it is therefore likelier that many more of them have begun or ended their contract during the period under study compared to tenured academics. A PhD research in Belgium is generally funded for four years, while the duration of a postdoctoral research position tends to vary between one and six years. As a consequence, we expect to have an overrepresentation of untenured academics in our travel dataset, compared to the 'average' subset of academics working at UGent at any given point in time. Table 1 compares the number of academics working at UGent in different academic positions at the beginning of February 2012 with the number of academics in our traveller dataset. More than 75% of all academics are employed through fixed-term contracts. The postdoctoral travellers in particular are indeed overrepresented in the traveller dataset (+24.4%), which is related to the short-term nature of their contracts. Predoctoral students are slightly underrepresented, which – in spite of also being employed on short-term contracts – is probably due to their lower propensity to travel (-2.5%). Lecturers and professors are underrepresented (-26.9%). This large underrepresentation can be traced back to the large number of 'guest professors': almost 40% (not in table) of lecturers and professors at UGent works in a part-time regime, which – on average - only takes up 21% of a full-time position. These part-timers most commonly have a primary affiliation with another university, research institution, government agency, or a company, whereby the bulk of the travelling is on behalf of their main employer. As this over- and underrepresentation of the different job categories is bound to influence the 'average' number of trips per academic position, the actual frequency of trips is not effectively represented. However, as we seek to assess the *differences* in

underlying characteristics (on which more below), this is not a problem in our analysis[8].

Table 5.1: Comparison of travel dataset with personnel data of Ghent University. Source: VLIR personnel statistics, 2012 and Authors.

	Academic Personnel February 2012		Travellers 2009-2012	Travellers 09-12 /Personnel 2012
	Count of heads	FTE*	Count of heads	%
All academics				
Predoctoral students	2865	2733.1	2793	-2.5
Postdoctoral researchers	1053	958.4	1310	+24.4
Lecturers and Professors	1199	812.3	876	-26.9
Total	5117	4503.7	4979	-2.7
Female academics				
Predoctoral students	1419	1348	1376	-3.0
Postdoctoral researchers	427	393.1	577	+35.1
Lecturers and Professors	250	158.5	185	-26
Total	2096	1899.6	2138	+2.0

*FTE = Full-time equivalent

5.3.2 A count regression analysis

In our analysis, UGent's traveller dataset is used to predict the number of trips a traveller makes based on work-related and personal characteristics. As our interest is above all in the effect of gender and family obligations, work-related characteristics are primarily added to the model to correct for gendered patterns in position and discipline. The dataset is subjected to several count regression analyses[9], where travellers' individual characteristics are used as independent variables and the number of trips they make as the dependent variable (Gardner et al., 1995). Our categorical variables (except age) are dummy-coded before the analysis. The regression analysis is 'zero-truncated', because our count data – i.e. the number of trips – has no zero

values, as we lack data on immobile academics. We evaluated the best fit by running several regression models and tested for interaction effects between the variables. The statistical analysis was programmed in SAS 9.3.

For each of the independent variables, the significance of the effect of a category is interpreted vis-a-vis a chosen reference group. Although this choice is arbitrary with respect to the model itself, it is common practice to choose categories with a high number of respondents, thus making the results robust, but also to select 'meaningful' categories in light of the research question. We chose as reference group male postdoctoral researchers, with children and an average age of 33, from the Faculty of Engineering and Architecture (the largest division at UGent). The coefficients of a count regression analysis can be interpreted in a similar fashion as one would interpret the coefficients of a 'standard' regression analysis, albeit that the expected number of trips changes by exp(coefficient) for each unit increase in the corresponding predictor. To give one example from our results: the value of the coefficient for 'lecturers and professors' (.783) suggests that the log count of trips decreases by .783 when the traveller is a postdoctoral researcher (our reference category). In other words: if all other variables are held constant, postdoctoral researchers - on average - travel exp(.783) = 2.19 times less than lecturers and professors during the period under study.

5.4 Results and discussion

5.4.1 An initial exploration of the travel data

Although the average number of trips made by academics between 2009 and 2012 is 7.2, more than half of all travellers (53%) engaged in less than five trips during the study period. Eleven percent (11%) travelled more than fifteen times. Figure 1 shows that the proportion of female travellers decreases when the number of trips increases. However, this figure needs to be interpreted with care, because this may be related with the fact that there are more male academics at upper job echelons or in travel-intensive disciplines; the count regression analysis 'corrects' for this. The regression coefficients can be found in Table 2. The asterisks in the second column indicate the statistical significance of the coefficients.
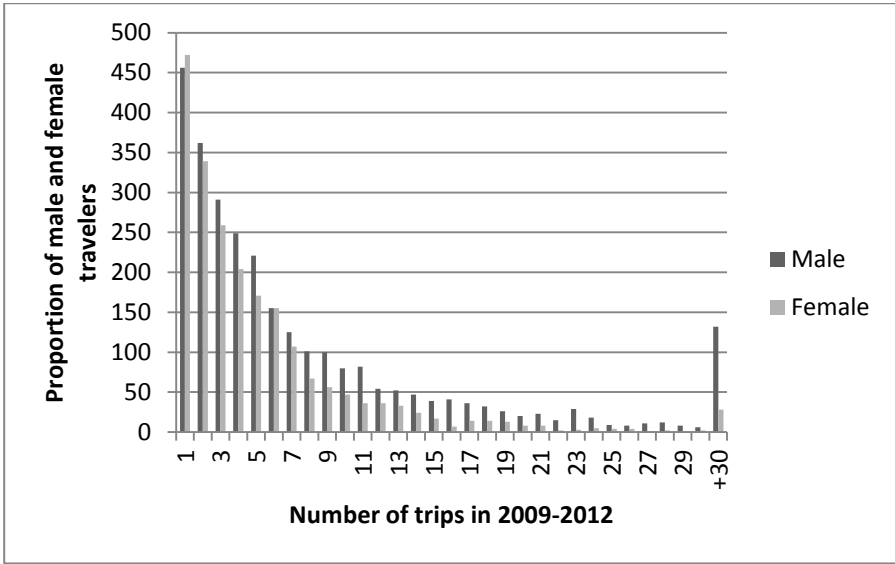
Figure 5.1: Number of academics per trip number for each sex. Source: Authors.

Table 5.2: Coefficient estimates of our regression model, with standard error and their significance. (ref.) = reference group; K = overdispersion parameter. Source: Authors.

Variables and parameters	N	Coefficient estimate	Standard error	Odds Ratio
Intercept		1.74***	0.12	
K		1.01***	0.04	
Discipline				
Law	180	-0.108	0.09	0.90
Psychology and Educational Sciences	387	-0.107	0.068	0.90
Political and Social Sciences	168	-0.061	0.093	0.94
Arts and Philosophy	482	-0.134*	0.062	0.87
Economics and Business Administration	144	-0.143	0.099	0.87
Engineering and Architecture	986	(ref.)		1.00
Sciences	975	-0.232***	0.051	0.79
Bioscience Engineering	553	-0.235***	0.059	0.79
Medicine and Health Sciences	660	-0.336***	0.059	0.71
Pharmaceutical Sciences	151	-0.202*	0.099	0.82
Veterinary Medicine	293	-0.348***	0.076	0.71
Position				
Predoctoral candidates	2793	-0.529***	0.04	0.59
Postdoctoral researchers	1310	(ref.)		1.00
Lecturers and Professors	876	0.783***	0.057	2.19
Personal Characteristics				
Gender – Male	2841	(ref.)		1.00
Female	2138	-0.328***	0.06	0.72
Age		0.011***	0.003	1.01
Family obligations				
No family obligations	2683	0.176**	0.054	1.19
Partnering	740	0.124	0.071	1.13
Parenting	1556	(ref.)		1.00
Interaction between gender and family obligations				
Gender x No family obligations		0.265***	0.074	1.30
Gender x Partnering		0.245*	0.101	1.28

*p<0,05; **p<0,01; ***p<0,001

### 5.4.2 Interpreting the effect of work-related characteristics

The regression analysis reveals that the most important predictor of the number of trips academics make is their hierarchical position: the higher up the hierarchical ladder, the more academics travel (see Figure 2). We argued earlier that some of this might be explained by the overrepresentation of untenured academics, but there is some logic in here as several arguments can support this observation. First, younger and untenured academics might be less successful in the practice of networking, because they still lack the necessary skills and scientific recognition. Once membership in networks is ensured, this leads to a list of mobility obligations, to cement the network ties (see Urry, 2007). We think this is closely related to the positive and significant effect of age on travel frequency: in our model, the number of trips increases with age. Second, regular travel is still a relatively costly activity in terms of money, time and effort. Academics with enough resources and the authority to allocate these can be expected to travel more often. Younger academics often have to negotiate their trips with supervisors, and as a consequence, have fewer opportunities to make mobility decisions on their own (Storme et al., 2013). Third, previous research suggests that 'home-based' employment responsibilities such as teaching, administration, and department meetings hamper long-term mobility of tenured academics, (Ackers, 2008; Leemann, 2010). Frequent, but shorter-term mobility then serves as an effective coping strategy to still be able to internationalise (see Storme et al., 2013). And fourth, the job description of senior academics obviously differs from junior academics. Storme et al. (2013) argue that tenured academics can have travel-intensive roles, especially when they are in charge of an international research team at their home institution or have to manage a foreign research team.
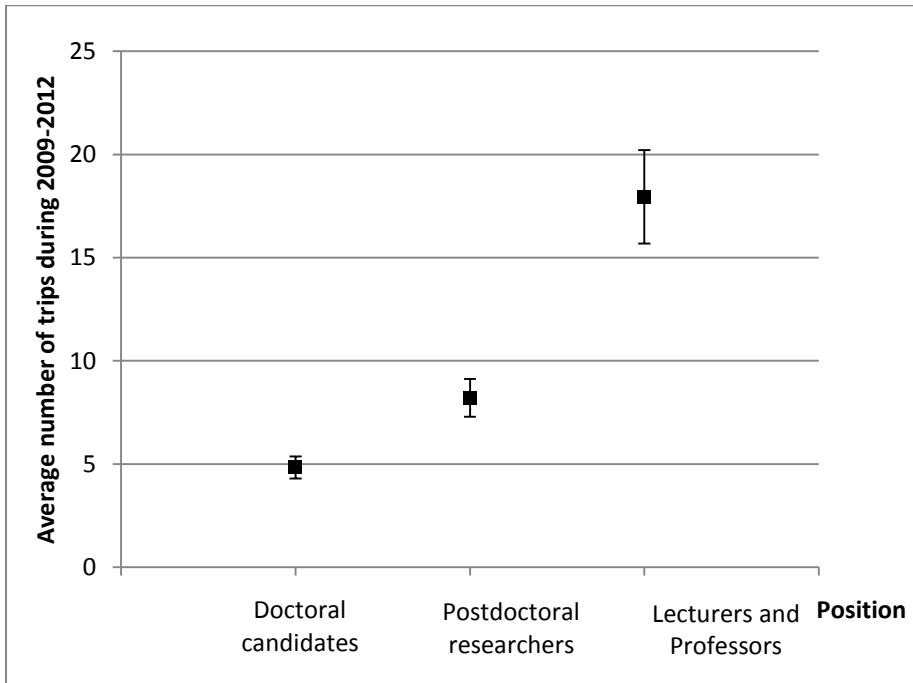
Figure 5.2: The effect of job hierarchy on the number of trips. Other variables in the model are held constant and correspond to the reference group. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals. Source: Authors.

The coefficients for all disciplines are negative, but not all of them are significant (see also Figure 3). In general, academics from Engineering and Architecture, together with the Humanities (first five disciplines) travel the most. The last five disciplines, which comprise of sciences, Bioscience Engineering and three Medical disciplines, travel less frequently.
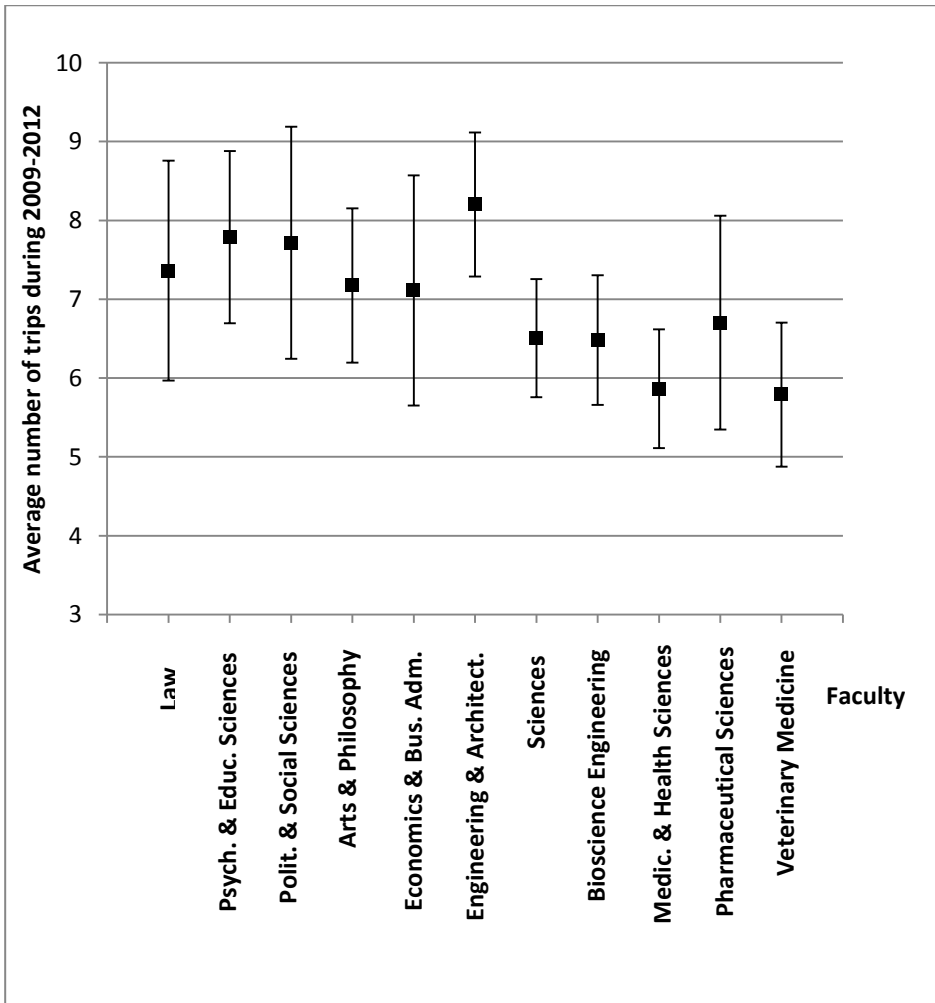
Figure 5.3: The effect of 'disciplines' on the number of trips. Other variables in the model are held constant and correspond to the reference group. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals. Source: Authors.

5.4.3 The effect of personal characteristics on travel

As such coefficients are often hard to interpret, particularly in the face of interaction effects, we included several figures to aid the interpretations, such as figure 4[10].

The most important finding of our analysis is that the interaction effect between gender and family obligations is (highly) significant. Our regression model shows first of all that partnering without parenting slightly stimulates engaging in academic travel for men as well as for women. This is insightful, because previous empirical studies suggested that having a partner reduces the likelihood of engaging in long-term mobility. Hence, we assume that as long as there are no children within the household, the career ambitions of a partner are not negatively affected by the (frequent) short-term travel behaviour of academics, on the contrary. The analysis even suggests that the career of a spouse fares well when a member of a household travels regularly on a short-term basis.
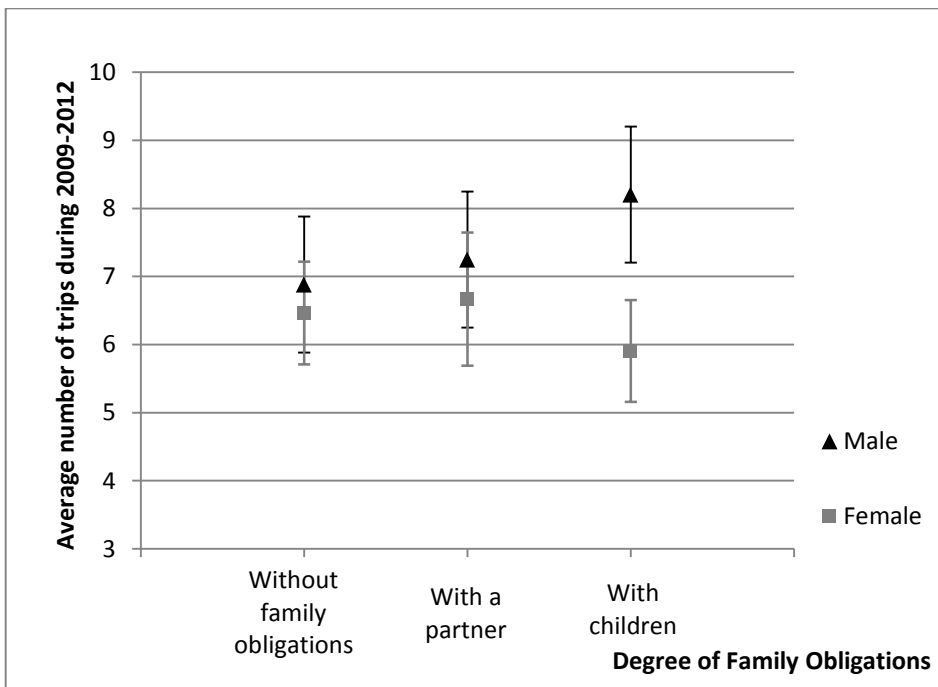
Figure 5.4: The effect of family obligations on the number of trips per sex. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals. Other variables in the model are held constant and correspond to the reference group. Source: Authors.

The effect of having children plays out significantly different per sex: when children come into play, academic fathers travel more often, while the number of trips academic mothers make, decreases. Academic mothers on average engage in less than six trips, while academic fathers from the same discipline,

age and rank travel more than eight times within the period under study. Giving birth to a child implies a period of absence – in Belgium mothers are allowed to take three months of parental leave, while men only have ten days - but the difference in number of trips cannot only be explained by this absence. The capacity or willingness to travel for shorter-terms is clearly affected negatively for a longer period of time.

As has been argued above, the fact that travel differs per sex when children come into play might be related to other gender-typed aspects of work and family life, for example when it comes to household tasks divisions (see Bergström, 2013). Although the data were not linked to mobility, a 2006 survey by Pyck (2008) among cohabiting academics at Ghent University showed for example that cohabiting female academics in general take up more than twice as much household tasks than their partners, while male academics in general perform significantly less tasks (see Table 3). This is especially so for male academics on top of the hierarchy. So despite societal changes in family forms and gender roles, men and women are somehow still expected to act both professionally and privately in partially specific ways.

Table 5.3: Gender differences in performing household tasks of cohabiting academics at Ghent University (adapted from Pyck, 2008).

Average % of household tasks performed by		Me	Partner	Others
Doctoral candidates	Male	37	48	15
	Female	58	31	11
Postdoctoral researchers	Male	35	55	10
	Female	56	29	16
Lecturers and Professors	Male	26	63	12
	Female	46	24	30

Our results can also be interpreted in light of the findings of Leemann (2010), who defines (long-term) mobility constellations of academics with respect to the obstacles of having a family. Although they are all applicable for men and women, she argues that women are predominantly found in the constellations implying sacrifices: either adjusting or foregoing their mobility plans or postponing or foregoing family plans (Leemann, 2010). It is possible that female academics in our research are more often part of dual-career families

and hence, have more difficulties organising travel when caring duties arise than academics from single-career families. Unfortunately, we lack data on the career situation of the partner to test this. It is similarly possible that the relationship between work and family operates in both directions: mobility plans can also influence family choices. The survey by Pyck (2008) revealed that female academics at Ghent University tend to postpone having children significantly more so than male academics. One out of two female predoctoral students postpones having children, while this is merely one out of four male academics. This figures increases with another 6% for postdoctoral researchers and then drops again for lecturers and professors.

5.5 Conclusion

In this article, we presented an empirical analysis of the effects of academics' work-related and personal characteristics on the number of short-term trips they make. We have shown that – all other things being equal - women travel less than men, and that this difference further deepens when caring duties enter the fray: having children tends to decrease the number of trips for female academics, while parenthood increases the number of trips of their male counterparts.

Even within Ghent University, where individual workers have a relatively high degree of autonomy and self-determination (see Storme et al., 2013), women with children are disadvantaged in terms of the possibility to engage in short-term travel. Danell and Hjerm (2013, 1005) had 'reasons to assume that there may be factors within the university system that affects men's and women's career trajectories differently'. This article suggests that the 'suppressed' travel behaviour of early career women may be one of the university's internal mechanisms that can contribute to this. There may be direct adverse effects in that research CVs of women mention less 'international experience', but probably above all indirect, informal and sometimes intangible adverse effects in that female academics (especially with children) do not experience the supposed benefits generated by travelling. It is very likely that the male dominance at Ghent University's upper echelons (i.e. the leaky pipeline and glass ceiling effects shown in Table 1) has been, and continues to be, partly (re)produced by the increased expectation to mobility. Our analysis shows that, despite short-term mobility seemingly having the potential to be a more gender- or family-friendly alternative in the academic 'mobility portfolio', (see Millar and Salt, 2008), this is not the case in practice when the family involves the care for children. Furthermore, in light of the findings of Pyck (2008) regarding gender differences in performing household

tasks of cohabiting academics at Ghent University, compulsions to mobility are also putting further gendered strains on maintaining work-life balance.

Our analysis does not allow answering the question whether the constraining effect of family obligations for female academics is entirely different for regular short-term travel than it is for long-term travel. A more detailed comparison, including a focus on the interplay and trade-offs between both mobility types would thus be a welcome addition to the existing literature. It is clear that the findings reported here are idiosyncratic in that we draw upon data from a specific knowledge organisation, with its own travel incentives and budgets, employment structure and gender issues. It would therefore be interesting to compare our findings with travel data across institutions of higher education and research, and across a wider set of sectors more generally. Another blind spot is the potential (or the lack thereof) of virtual interaction via ICTs for replacing corporeal travel. Although the literature is invariably sceptical about overall replacement effects, it has not been explicitly spelled out of if there are gendered differences in uses of virtual mobility as alternative to corporeal mobility.

Despite these limitations, the results of this study emphasise the gendered nature of travel with respect to career advancement. Taken together, ongoing efforts to promote gender equality in academia should also pay attention to the sometimes 'invisible' obstacles to engaging in international travel and mobility in general, and consider the effects this may in turn have on professional development (Ackers, 2008; Danell and Hjerm, 2013; Jöns, 2011; Leemann, 2010, Leyman, 2009). Beeston et al. (2010) discuss institutional and departmental mechanisms supporting women faculty at all stages of their career, from the pre-tenure years through retirement. Recognising the importance of recurrent short-term travel, their policy recommendations include travel support and family leave policies (including elder care). Our analysis confirms the need for such policies.

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[1] Konopaske et al. (2009) observe that there seems to be a 'generic', relative shift in international employee mobility from long-term assignments to increasingly common travelling and short-term assignments. Following Sennet (1998) and Wittel (2001), this shift is explained by situating it in a wider transformation of the organisation of work in which 'short-term success', 'weak ties' and 'change' are increasingly valued.

[2] A specific feature of our data and method is that we do not simply assess who is, and who is not travelling, but rather examine the *number* of trips. This is relevant, because it is especially the *frequency* of academic travel that is being valued in academia.

[3] Predoctoral candidates comprise the PhD-students (95% of time devoted to research) and research assistants (50% of time devoted to research) working at Ghent University.

4 Postdoctoral researchers refer to researchers who have obtained a PhD and devote their time to research. It also comprises the group of postdoctoral research assistants, who generally have to devote 30% of their time to teaching.

5 We did not distinguish between cohabiting and married academics, nor did we differentiate between unmarried and divorced or widowed academics.

6 We did not dispose of the number of children, or the age of the children. We are aware of the fact that caring duties decrease when children grow older.

7 A limited number of academics in the dataset had children, but no partner. We did not put them into a fourth category because it is unclear whether this leads to increased or diminished caring duties over academics with both a partner and children.

8 We explored to what extent the flexible working arrangements differed by gender. Only for lecturers and professors, there is a slight difference: 44.4% of female academics have a flexible working arrangement, compared to 37.7% of male lecturers and professors.

9 We chose a negative binomial regression analysis over a simple Poisson model, because the former model adds an additional free parameter (K in our model) to correct for overdispersion in the dataset. Overdispersion occurs when the variance of the distribution is greater than the conditional mean, which was the case in our dataset of travellers.

10 We stress that it is no longer meaningful to interpret the coefficients of variables which are part of an interaction variable in isolation, when the interaction effect is significant.

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- 6 - GENERAL CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

6.1 Overview of this dissertation

This dissertation has analysed 'academic travel', which has been formally defined as short-term and work-related mobility practices in academia. The main aim of this study was to gain insights into the crux of academic travel for work and career development, its relationship with a healthy work-life balance, and its association with gender inequality. To this end, both quantitative and qualitative data were analysed in four consecutive chapters.

Chapter Two of the dissertation set the scene with a literature review, which revealed how the 'dominant' types of knowledge movements are linked with the meta-narratives that have sought to make sense of these movements. Based on this review, it was suggested that only recently there has been given attention to the practice of repeated short-term travel by highly skilled professionals and its relationship with knowledge transfer and generation. As a corollary, a micro-level perspective on the mobilities of academics – and especially in relation to their insertion in multiple, interpersonal networks – appears to be a promising direction for further research.

Chapter Three used a social perspective on the study of academic travel by exploring the role of 'meetingness' for academic work and careers. Various benefits and values – conceptualised as 'network capital' – were distinguished from being inserted in interpersonal and spatially stretched networks. In addition, this chapter made clear that insertion in those networks also comes with social obligations, and that these obligations may lead to conflicts over time. As a consequence, academics seem to negotiate their presence and absence both at work and at home.

Chapter Four explored different spatio-temporal strategies deployed by a sample of tenured academics in an effort to cope with the current internationalisation discourse in Flanders. The large majority of respondents agreed that a minimal volume of travel was 'necessary' nowadays - particularly for networking purposes - and consequently stimulated members of their research group to engage in the practice. A significant part of the respondents nonetheless mentioned travel constraints and difficulties and sought for alternative ways of coping, by rationalising both their travel and mobility behaviour.

The fifth Chapter looked into one of several potential inequalities brought about by academic travel, gender inequality in particular. The analysis

revealed that academic travel is a gendered activity, and that this gender inequality is 'doubled' when children come into play: the number of trips academic mothers undertake is significantly reduced, while academic fathers tend to travel more.

In what follows, we discuss the main findings and conclusions of this dissertation followed by a short discussion of possible avenues for further research.

6.2 Findings and conclusions

6.2.1 Global and academic trends fostering travel

Throughout this dissertation, we have distinguished between at least four interrelated trends that help explain the current upsurge of academic travel. It is not our intention to discuss these trends in full, but providing a brief overview of the main trends is important to sketch the *zeitgeist* under which academic travel is deemed not only possible, but increasingly obvious and normalised.

First, it is clear that technical developments in transportation and communication technologies have made travel faster, easier and more efficient. Together with the omnipresence of the Internet and mobile phones, these technologies have significantly compressed space, and impacted the dissemination and spread of (academic) knowledge. Today, one can be proximate in a virtual sense with almost anyone anywhere via quasi-instantaneous communication (Urry, 2007). In addition, information technologies make global information easily and widely accessible. The most obvious example in academia is the spread of online scientific output, not only under the form of formal scientific publications, but also of conference proceedings, working papers, project reports, and the like, to some extent generating 'information abundance' (see Brown and Duguid, 2000).

A second trend is the more prominent role assigned to universities in neo-liberal innovation agendas within a knowledge-based economy (Cantwell, 2011). In the process, universities, as primary producers and transferors of knowledge, are considered to be engines of regional growth and competitive advantage. This is most visible in their stronger ties with the private sector and their efforts to protect intellectual property, to create spin-offs and science parks (see Etzkowitz, 2001) or to open foreign branch campuses (see Salt & Wood, 2014). The overall performance of universities can nowadays also be read from their position in global rankings, such as the ranking issued by

Times Higher Education[1] or the Shanghai ranking[2]. In addition and perhaps as a consequence, universities seem to revise their policies towards more market-led and strategic behaviour (Enders and Musselin, 2008). With regards to personnel recruitment and management, they shift away from a 'shelter-like' approach towards 'meritocratic' assessments of individual performances in an effort to encourage the productivity of all their employees and to recruit the 'brightest and the best' beyond the regional or national level (Enders and Musselin, 2008). In a Flemish context, performance is partly measured by the production of publications in international journals, which thus explicitly promotes the practice (Debackere and Glänzel, 2004). A more market-led and entrepreneurial behaviour is also evident on the level of individual research teams or researchers. For example, research teams are increasingly hierarchically organised and managed, which often involves hiring a number of fixed-term workers on project-basis (Etzkowitz, 2001). In addition, individual researchers increasingly and strategically compete for (prestigious) funding and publication opportunities. As such, it seems fair to say that employment in the academic sector is increasingly insecure and competitive, resulting in intense pressures to perform (see, for example, Clarke et al., 2012).

A third trend is the changing world of 'work', as observed by Castells (1996), Baumann (2000) and Sennet (1998; 2007). These scholars argued that 'precarious' work arrangements are becoming more common, which refer to short-term, unpredictable and insecure jobs. As a consequence, institutional loyalty is reduced, and job mobility increases. This is interrelated with the concept of 'boundaryless careers' (DeFillipi and Arthur, 1996; Arthur, 2003), as increasingly more workers nowadays are deemed to be 'entrepreneurs' of their own career (see Dickman and Harris, 2005; Scullion et al., 2007). This entrepreneurship implies that academics have to look for the best options to keep themselves 'employable', rather than being able to count on lifelong employment within one institution. Academics have always had 'boundaryless' careers in the sense that relationships and recognition outside the own institution have always mattered, but the importance of these relationships seems to have increased. This trend is for example reflected in the rise of academics with multiple institutional affiliations (see Kim, 2009).

Fourth and finally, it is important to stress the current internationalisation discourse in academia, which in general terms refers to policy directions concentrating and prioritising on cross-border activities (Teichler, 2004). Such policies are more obvious for small higher education systems without strong publication networks in an own language, like the one in Flanders. Emphasis lies on transnational project work, collaboration and competition.

There is a clear incentive to allow such transnational activity to be open for all, rather than for a selective elite group. These policies result amongst others in funding mechanisms for early career researchers to engage in research visits or travels and are oriented towards 'international experience', with regards to publications, presentations and mobility. There is no sign that the institutionalised internationalisation fury – as we called the discourse in Chapter Four – will be weakened in Europe, nor in Flanders in the near future. By means of example, the Leuven-communiqué (European Ministers of Higher Education, April 2009, 4) considers mobility 'the hallmark of the European Higher Education Area', and aims at giving at least one out of five tertiary students graduating in 2020 a study or training period abroad. The Flemish government proves more ambitious, and approved a Mobility Plan of Action (September 2013), named 'Brains on the Move', which aims at giving one out of three tertiary students such an opportunity. A similar plan of action for staff mobility is in preparation, but it is clear that those two are interrelated. Moreover, former Flemish Minister of Education Pascal Smet expressed that due to information technologies and global rankings, professors might become 'travelling rock stars' in the university of the future (Belga, 28/10/2013). As such, the current internationalisation-discourse in Flanders clearly reinforces a 'mobility culture' amongst the academic workforce (see King and Ruiz-Gelices, 2003; Ackers, 2008).

6.2.2 Travel and social meetings

Within this academic climate, it should not come as a surprise that travel has become a significant, necessary and unquestionable practice in academic work and careers. However, and as has been argued by Urry (2009), the trends above offer a point of departure to analyse the significance of 'time-space distanciation' (Giddens, 1990, 18-19) or in the context of this dissertation, the complex, spatially stretched networks relatively self-directed academics get involved into in the course of their work.

Chapter Three explained that a considerable part of this travel is associated with 'doing work' at the destination and, as such, seems hard to overcome. For example, negotiating and signing an important funding agreement still has to be done face-to-face. Likewise, studying the preservation of Egyptian pyramids is complicated without – at least sporadic – in situ observations or measurements. Other more 'hard' obligations to travel are associated with studying particular objects, times and events. In addition, we distinguished 'role' obligations as well, or the compulsion academics feel to be somewhere based on the link between the meeting and the work-related roles or functions

they perform. By means of example, the president of a regional scientific network can easily feel a strong urge to attend the meetings of this network, to show his commitment and engagement with his position.

However, and in line with observations from Urry (2003, 2004a), academics face a number of 'softer' and more 'social' obligations to travel as well through their integration in spatially stretched *social* networks. Both the creation and maintenance of these relationships means meeting and re-meeting each other in person over time (Urry, 2007). As a consequence, a considerable amount of corporeal travel is simply produced by being inserted in multiple, social networks. These trips are of interest in this dissertation, because there is an – albeit small – possibility for substituting at least some of the successive trips by means of virtual travel (Urry, 2002). As such, it was a key aim of this dissertation to understand the vital, underlying mechanisms of such social meetings.

These social meetings are often undertaken in a pleasant and relaxed atmosphere outside a formal work context, regularly involving food, drinks, and play (see also Lassen, 2006). As a corollary, these meetings have been repeatedly coined one of the more enjoyable aspects of the profession. However, there is obviously more to it than the mere fun and leisure aspect. Participation in such social meetings are first of all important for increasing the 'know-why', or generating a sense of (dis-)belonging to the research community or network. Wenger (2000, 227) explains that meeting participation and the talking that occurs throughout the meeting shape 'our experience of who we are. We learn what we can do and how the world responds to our actions'. This is important for the formation of personal and professional identities in the workplace, and especially valued in an academic context with its high proportion of 'fragile selves', in that current high performative demands in academia make academics regularly question their worth and identity (see Knights and Clarke, 2014). In the case of 'belonging' to a community or network, travel can thus be of great motivational value. Academics therefore require first of all the opportunity to participate in these meetings, and second, a conscious *rhythm* of meetings (see Wenger, 2000).

Chapter three further distinguished between meetingness in sparse and in dense social networks, because the 'rich social goods' (Urry, 2004b, 117) that get exchanged in these meetings and the social practices associated with these meetings seem to differ per network structure, especially with respect to gaining know-whom and know-how. We recognise that making such an abstraction is problematic, because network structures are in reality far more complicated, often involving a juxtaposition of myriad diverse and overlapping

networks, for example at a large conference. Moreover, these networks evolve, which hampers a clear demarcation. However, we nonetheless believe that it is insightful to make this analytical distinction between network structures, because it allows developing an understanding of the various mechanisms behind, and the advantages derived from these social meetings.

The social practices in dense professional networks ultimately boil down to organising and hosting meetings on the one hand, and accepting such meeting invitations on the other hand. These meetings can occur in the context of more formal events, such as moderating or chairing a session at a conference or guest lecturing at a university. Although such meetings are often time-consuming and not always – or hardly ever for the busy academic – fit into plans, invitees somehow feel compelled to accept these invitations or at least have a hard time declining. Both sending such invitations and accepting them are somehow informal and covert ways of recognising and rewarding the work of others. Moreover, by sending such invitations, one tacitly commits himself 'to offering the return service and therefore enters into a circuit of continuous exchanges' (Bourdieu, 1988, 97). Social meetings in dense social networks are important to build trust, to generate understanding, to test new claims, and to secure informal recognition and support. As such, Sennet (2007, 80) explained that these 'strong networks constitute a safety net which diminishes the need for long-term strategic planning'. A member can fully be immersed in the present or 'on top of things' when access to such networks is secured. With respect to information and knowledge for example, this dissertation explained that these dense networks are a privileged, complementary and informal source of information and knowledge vis-à-vis slower and formal publication mechanisms retrieved via the World Wide Web.

This informal and face-to-face exchange of information and knowledge has become fundamental, partly because of the new challenges generated by ubiquitous information sources on the World Wide Web (Brown and Duguid, 2000). For one thing, the volume and scope of academic publications on the Internet is of such a magnitude that academics face difficulties retrieving the information, making sense of it, and keeping abreast. Asheim et al. (2007) emphasised that in the case of such an analytical and formal knowledge base, it becomes a matter of retrieving the information *first*, before everyone else can. As a consequence, this dissertation suggests – in line with Burt (2000) – that much of the sense-making and information sharing seems to occur at these social meetings, through informal communication mechanisms. These mechanisms include judgments, narratives, stories and news, and circulate firsthand within dense groups. Face-to-face interaction is vital, because it

allows for complex, and highly situated 'translation' mechanisms which cannot easily be copied through virtual travel or the use of ICTs.

Along these lines, there are arguments to believe that the importance of face-to-face meetings and more specifically, informal communication mechanisms will not wane in the near future. For example, in an era of increased 'open access' publications[3], *Nature* reported last year about 'the parallel world of pseudo-academia', whereby 'bogus journals' with names very much resembling their well-known and prestigious counterparts (or even committing to total identity theft), recruit scholars to make a contribution or to perform editorial duties, often via e-mail (Beall, 2012; Butler, 2013). If an unsuspecting academic accepts, he or she has to pay a significant fee to make a contribution. And as one would expect, the peer review process of articles of pseudo-journals is not always that significant or appears to be lacking. Similar practices come about for pseudo-conferences. These 'shady publishing practices' might especially be troublesome for independent or early career academics, as they are not familiar with the publishing landscape within their disciplines yet (Beall, 2012). Moreover, this creates new challenges for recruiters as well, as they have to flesh out whether contributions on curriculum vitae are actually in top or bogus journals. As a corollary, the importance of seeing the other face-to-face, building trust and informal communication practices is likely to be reinforced.

The social practices in sparse professional networks include attending large meetings, such as annual meetings or get-togethers of an entire discipline. This does not imply that these large meetings cannot be important meeting places for members of dense social networks, in fact they often are, but the number of attendants is often so large, that it is impossible for one attendant to know all the other meeting participants. As a corollary, the main rationale for attending these meetings is to be 'visible' to many potentially valuable others, instead of actively constructing social bonds. Although individuals attending these meetings share an interest in the meeting topic, these meetings are characterised by a high proportion of 'otherness'. This 'otherness' in the sense of relational distance can be productive for securing new opportunities and new insights (Ibert, 2010). Brown et al. (2001) spoke in a similar vein about the value of 'unlearning' and 'challenging tacit knowledge'. This primarily occurs via planned happenstance (Mitchell et al., 1999), through being there and engaging in both formal and informal practices. It involves serendipitous bumping into new people, new knowledge and new opportunities. As such, the network capital generated from being at such meetings includes new resources, a quick overview of a research field, and possible opportunities from

'gatekeepers' of funding, publication and talent. As a matter of fact, one respondent argued that this serendipitous bumping can even be 'organised' at such meetings.

As a corollary, large, temporary social events, like conferences, are social spaces where supply meets demand, where presenters meet an audience, where recruiters and scouts meet potential employees (see also Lampel and Meyer, 2008; Cantwell, 2011), and therefore become highly valuable for contemporary academic careers. Engaging in multiple and spatially differentiated social meetings matters to increase opportunities at various locations. One respondent made this point very clearly as follows: '*You have to plan to see different groups of people. You have to go to a lecture where the Asians are and one which the Americans will attend. So, you have to manage to have... sort of maximum coverage' (see Chapter Four).* The 'travel threshold' or the minimum amount of travel that academics felt necessary in academia mainly alluded to conference travel. Attending these discontinuous and temporary social practices is not seen as optional, but essential and normal.

Based on these insights, there is considerable evidence to suggest that temporary meetings increasingly structure academic work and careers outside the boundaries of a single university (see also Jones, 2009). Not engaging in travel is no longer deemed possible, especially not for ambitious, early career academics. Apparently, they should consider having additional access to diverse global 'pipelines' – as Bathelt et al. (2004) referred to them – outside their traditional organisational context, to secure future employment when their fixed-term projects end and gain access to publication and funding opportunities. Moreover, as early career academics need to change between projects and jobs quite often, the geographically extended social networks they take with them provide additional support and security.

Although corporeal meetings received the bulk of attention in this dissertation, it does not mean that virtual travel has no role to play, on the contrary. Chapter Three for example showed that in the context of dense professional networks, a better sequencing of corporeal and virtual meetings already transforms the way academics undertake their work. Our interviews suggest that corporeal travel is primarily undertaken for the social and informal aspects it allows, while in-between virtual meetings allow effectively getting work done (see also Weber and Chon, 2002; in: Urry, 2009). Such arrangements occur for example to smoothen the work practices between the geographically spread research groups associated with CERN. Moreover, in the fourth Chapter, we have argued that the combined use of virtual meetings and local contacts allowed academics to advance much quicker in transnational

projects or stressed how a physically travelling 'ambassador' arranged virtual meetings between people who have never met before, which could then generate additional (spatially stretched) corporeal travel in the future. One respondent similarly stressed that strictly collaborating via e-mail proved to be very effective for specific, clearly outlined purposes.

As explained by Kesselring (2006, 276), virtual meetings are 'an intelligent solution to the problem of unintended immobility'. Although virtual meetings often involve losing much social aspects of interaction, they are still a suitable and flexible alternative for not having a meeting at all (see also Haynes, 2010). In addition, a lot of academics reported using Skype once in a while, but generally not for work-related purposes: it allowed them to remain in touch with their family and friends while on the move.

Taken together, these insights show that the complex *interplay* between both travel practices is an important constituent of transnational working practices (see also Aguiléra et al., 2012). It allows an individual who is physically absent, to still be virtually 'reachable', be it in a familial or work context. Academics thus operate in multiple, spatially stretched work (and family) contexts at once and continuously negotiate their physical and virtual presence and absence. We stress that the reach of these social networks depends on the discipline/field of study of the academic, and on the extent to which the academic wants to engage in meetings of various scale levels. Preliminary exploration of destinations of our traveller data already suggested that academics from different faculties operate in different regions of the world and at different spatial scales (see also Ackers, 2010).

6.2.3 Overlapping and conflicting obligations

Regularly engaging in multiple geographically stretched activities requires investments, and implies that at certain points in time, obligations to meet in person can conflict or overlap. However, the work of tenured academics is characterised by a relatively high degree of freedom and choice for coping and prioritising between work obligations (see Lassen, 2006). Chapter Four showed that individual academics seek a healthy balance between opportunities and obligations both near and far and develop diverse spatio-temporal travel strategies. Again, these travel strategies highly depend upon the field of study of the academic, and on work-related and personal characteristics. For example, a heavy teaching load somehow leads to spatial fixity during the academic semester, while everyday family obligations can constrain travel throughout the year and especially during holiday periods. As a consequence, Chapter Four showed that most travel of tenured academics

occurs during June and September and that not everybody travelled to the same extent.

In addition, several interview respondents reported having a 'balanced' travel activity, in the sense that they experienced little or no constraints to travel from time to time. Rather, they perceive their trips as a welcome break from the everyday routine and, when possible, they extend their trips with a holiday before or after the work trip. Such 'consumer' behaviour to travel is more common among doctoral candidates with no family obligations and limited work responsibilities (see also King and Ruiz-Gelices (2003) on student mobility). However, the main focus of this dissertation was on those academics who reported being 'off balance', that is, who experience difficulties coping with their personal set of obligations. They were of interest, because they might seek alternatives for corporeal travel.

The conflicts distinguished in Chapter Four were twofold: work-work conflicts, and work-life conflicts. Work-work conflicts are more likely for academics with a multitude of responsibilities in different work contexts, such as the management of a department or research team or the management of (foreign) project teams. Going on a trip generally does not allow the traveller to drop these ongoing responsibilities while away. Work-life conflicts refer to conflicts between work demands and strong obligations in other domains of life, such as networks within the household, family or circle of friends. 'Meetingness' is also believed to be important for spending quality time together with a significant other or to attend family events (birthdays, weddings, and the like) (Urry, 2003; 2004a). According to our respondents, especially everyday caring (for young children, elderly parents or pets) responsibilities can significantly constrain frequent travel.

Our interview data suggest that academics being 'off balance' deploy three coping strategies in particular: negotiating, outsourcing, and foregoing invitations and obligations. The former two become more obvious higher up the hierarchy. Negotiating can involve rescheduling or postponing meetings, combining purposes in a single trip, substituting the meeting by virtual communication as the 'second best' option or restricting travel to a minimum with respect to duration and frequency. Outsourcing refers to passing some of the invitations to - often younger - academics. Foregoing means conflicts are too large, and results in not engaging in travel or not returning an invitation, and hence, possibly losing out on the benefits the meetings might generate. If it concerns meetings of important networks, not going should clearly not be repeated too often. By means of example and according to many respondents,

skipping an annual meeting or a meeting invitation is believed to be fine once, but not twice.

6.2.4 Motility as a career asset

Our interviews suggested that a few decades ago travelling was a privilege of older and established academics, while early career researchers did not have the means to travel, nor were they supposed to. Nowadays, academics across all career stages are travelling and stimulated to do so, while not engaging in travel is perceived as problematic. In light of the insights summarised above, having the capacity to travel has clearly become a career asset in contemporary academia. Kaufmann et al. (2004) coined the concept of 'motility', as a form of capital bridging spatial and social mobility and referring in its most general form to 'mobility potential'. They explain that it is not only travel in and by itself which is important, but also having the capacity and willingness to travel at all times. According to Parker and Weik (2014, 168), this 'willingness to shrug off attachments and start packing' is frequently being evaluated in academia. Kaufmann et al. (2004) also emphasise that travel as a structural dimension of social life is caught within boundaries of opportunities and constraints, and structured by norms and values.

Based on our qualitative work, we expect the work and family obligations to be highest and most conflicting for early career and untenured postdoctoral fellows. They often do not enjoy the financial security associated with a tenured position, still need to be integrated in dense interpersonal networks, and the latter is believed to be the practice that requires most face-to-face meetings, and hence corporeal travel (Urry, 2007). Interviews with early career academics suggested that integration in social networks proves not to be an easy practice. It requires proactive behaviour and a sufficient amount of self-confidence. It is only after a while – and strengthened by formal types of recognition – that the ball starts rolling in the sense that other people are getting introduced to you, instead of you being required to introduce yourself.

Young and untenured academics can also be contemplating starting a family, which means the caring duties can potentially be quite demanding. In such cases, travellers can be 'caught in the middle' between work and family obligations (see Welch and Worm, 2006). Family responsibilities are said to not only impact the number of trips that are possible, they also reduce the flexibility, capacity or 'motility' to move at all times. In this context, and as argued by many respondents, the relevance of a strong, supportive, and local network of partner, grandparents, friends or paid help (e.g., nannies) can facilitate the juggling between responsibilities significantly.

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Hence, at certain points in a life or a career, travel is hampered more than at other points. As already suggested in the fifth Chapter, this works in the other direction as well: ambitious, early career academics tend to postpone or forego starting a family (see also Leemann, 2010). Moreover and in some cases, such work-related demands can put a strain on (marital) relationships or can lie at the basis of new, often temporary and negotiated household arrangements, like 'commuter partnerships'. In this non-standard household arrangement, one partner lives part of his time 'near his or her work and away from the communal family home' (see Van der Klis, 2009, 123).

6.2.5 Travel and inequality

Massey (1993, 62-63) has argued that '[t]he mobility and control of some groups can actively weaken other people – especially those who are already marginalized'. Chapter Five analysed whether there is a difference between male and female academics with respect to their travel frequency, which could be interpreted as a proxy for 'meetingness'. Such gender difference has been shown in earlier research with regards to long-term academic mobility (Ackers, 2004; Moguérou, 2004; Leemann, 2010; Jöns, 2011).

By analysing our quantitative dataset of travel applications, we revealed three important aspects of academic travel: first, male academics travel slightly more than women, regardless of personal and work-related characteristics. Second, the effect of a partner does not reduce the number of trips both men and women can make, on the contrary. This is different from studies on long-term travel, where having a partner hampered mobility (see, for example, Cox and Verbeek, 2008). And third, men travel significantly more when children come into play, while the travel activity of their female counterparts is reduced. As a consequence, academic travel – like travel in other business sectors (Gustafson, 2006; Bergström, 2013; Jeong et al., 2013) – proves to be a gendered and stratified practice as well. Given the increased value attributed to, and associated with, mobility and travel, this could at least partially help explaining the gender inequalities in academia.

While the prime focus of Chapter Five is on short-term travel in itself, the analysis does contribute to the longstanding debate about the persisting gender inequality in academia. Indeed, the 'leaky pipeline' has been described in many higher education systems, including the one in Flanders (Groenvynck et al., 2011). It refers to the fact that the share of men and women in academia is equal at the start of the career ladder, but women tend to drop out more easily when advancing up this ladder. A growing awareness of this problem has led to many policy incentives promoting gender equality in academia (Van

den Brink and Benschop, 2012). However, despite these incentives, female academics are still not catching up on their male counterparts in the sense that the relative share of women in senior positions in academia is hardly growing (European Commission, 2013; Danell and Hjerm, 2013). It seems that female academics somehow reach a 'glass ceiling', and the higher drop-out rate is especially found amongst postdoctoral fellows. The main argument of Chapter Five is that significant travel demands and expectations during the postdoctoral phases of an academic career, together with (traditional) gendered constraints on travel might partly explain this 'glass ceiling'.

Our data did however not allow distinguishing between different travel purposes. As a corollary, it is possible that the gender differences are not only attributable to a differential engagement in social meetings alone. However, and as argued above, social meetings – as the sole reason or as a by-product – make up an important part of the travel in academia. Moreover, our findings do not contradict other empirical research. For example, the case-study of Schroeder et al. (2013) showed that female academics have a greater tendency to turn down invitations to speak at prestigious conferences. Danell and Hjerm (2013, 1005) gave a viable interpretation of the gendered promotion chances in Swedish academia, namely that 'as long as competition over resources and positions is transparent, competitive women fare as well as men, but when men and women are allowed to compete over resources and networks in a more informal way, women are clearly worse off than men'. Our findings suggest that female academics – especially with children - miss out on the more 'invisible' network capital gained from travel and social meetingness and as such, differential engagement in travel can reinforce existing gender inequalities in academia.

The explanations for the reduced travel activity of female academics are nonetheless highly complicated and are clearly not only attributable to the presence of children alone (see Uteng and Cresswell (2008) on gendered mobilities). Female academics can for example find it harder to integrate in professional networks (Seierstad and Healey, 2012), and as such find it harder to identify with the world of work. Moreover, they may be disadvantaged by a paternalistic view of talent scouts who consider an academic job 'too much to expect of a woman' (Van den Brink and Benschop, 2012, 79).

However, when it comes to the differences between men and women when children are involved, Ackers (2004) and Leemann (2010) sought the explanation for gendered long-term travel on the level of the household, arguing that female academics are more often part of 'dual-career household constellations'. These constellations often involve foregoing or altering

mobility plans or avoiding and postponing family obligations (Leemann, 2010). By building on the findings of Pyck (2008) on academics at Ghent University, this seems a plausible explanation for the gender differences in short-term travel in our case-study as well. It seems that, even amongst a highly educated workforce in Flanders, women are still rather perceived and socialised to be 'care-takers', and men 'breadwinners' (see also Van der Klis, 47, in a Dutch context). From such a perspective, combining a life of work-related travel with a family – and even more so, a 'motile' life – mainly favours single career families, where one of the partners – at least temporarily - takes disproportionate care of the children. Getting more female academics in senior ranks might require husbands/fathers/partners who do not only share the parenting load equally, but also disproportionately. Although such household constellations seem to be on the rise, we would however argue on the basis of our qualitative work, that they are still to some extent deviant from the dominant ideologies of motherhood and proper child rearing, even in Flemish academia.

These findings suggest moreover that it is not only important to promote gender equality, but also to *undo* gender *inequality* (van den Brink and Benschop, 2012). As a consequence, it seems fair to say that academic recruiters and policy-makers should increasingly take into account the personal circumstances of the academics, by on the one hand explicitly recognising that personal reasons can temporarily slow down the careers of both men and women and on the other hand, by allowing more flexibility in a career at particular phases in life. This should make an academic career more balanceable with a family life - and other personal circumstances - in order to reduce the likelihood of having to forego a career or a family.

The effect of a partner proved to be no constraint for academic travel – rather the opposite is true - which means it is possible that short-term travel is *less* gendering than long-term research stays. Indeed, short-term travel does not involve (temporary) relocation and as such, does not require putting a possible career of a partner on hold (see, for example, Cox and Verbeek, 2008). In a recent commentary in *Nature*, Garwood (2014) suggested that the disruptive and unsettling job-related 'relocation' is outdated in academia because it reflects a time (1) when young researchers 'needed to move between labs and institutions to spread their knowledge and skills' (Ibid., 313); and (2) when single-career households were more evident, whereby a spouse was 'expected to follow the — generally male — breadwinner as he worked his way up' (Ibid., 313). Nowadays, he argues, a combination of budget airlines and a speedy Internet connection is a more than viable alternative. These

observations – perhaps unknowingly – echo the observations of David Lodge thirty years ago, where he explained: 'As long as you have access to a telephone, a Xerox machine and a conference grant fund, you're OK, you're plugged into the only university that really matters – the global campus' (Lodge, 1984, 269). However, Welch and Worm (2006) also reported that the flexibility, uncertainty and discontinuity associated with frequent short-term travel can put a higher strain on family life as opposed to the continuity of long-term travels. In the latter case, academics can even take their family with them when going on a long-term research visit. It may be clear from the findings of this dissertation that the shorter-term alternatives would indeed not come without new challenges.

6.2.6 Travel, power and privilege

> 'It is doubtless because of this that the logic of the accumulation of power takes the form of a viciously circular mechanism of obligations which breed obligations, of a progressive accumulation of powers which attract solicitations that generate more power' (Bourdieu, 1988, 97).

In this section, we (re-)address the role of power resulting from differential access to travel resources and opportunities in general, and diverse spatially stretched social networks in particular. We touch upon three such inequalities, but nonetheless stress that it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to engage in a full discussion of these topics.

First, the most recognised academics are often frequent travellers, regularly being invited to give keynote speeches and lectures, to perform the role of expert in proposal review panels, in charge of world reference laboratories or leading transnational projects. At several points throughout this dissertation, we referred to such powerful people as 'gatekeepers' or 'ambassadors'. Our dissertation reveals that these powerful academics have an important responsibility towards early career or non-travelling counterparts in two ways. First, they can pass on some of their meeting invitations to (early career) colleagues and second, they can – at least to some extent – increase the visibility of their non-travelling colleagues by acting as mediators or brokers with respect to knowledge-generation and networking. As such, there are informal, rather subjective rewarding mechanisms in place here. Simultaneously, being member of a research team involving one or several frequent-travelling ambassadors can lead to enhanced opportunities to travel on the one hand, and can at least temporarily bridge a period of non-travel and personal invisibility on the other hand. Both these situations create a (soft) power-dependency relationship, because the favour is not always easy to

return. Keeping in mind that careers in academia are still rather determined based on individual performance than on team performance, the network capital shared by travellers, more or less depends on the goodwill of the individual academic. For example, Welch et al. (2007) have reported 'knowledge-sharing hostility' among business travellers, whereby knowledge was kept as a power base, which could be traded later on. Without some sort of recognition for these sharing-practices, sharing knowledge and other gains might remain a matter of career concerns (see also Ibert, 2010).

Second, the power accumulated within a circle of top academics can also be problematic for a scientific field or academia as a whole. Lawrence (2003) for example, argued that it can threaten scientific objectivity, when there is a 'tacit understanding between some leading scientists: they invite each other onto committees, to conferences, nominate each other for prizes and awards, and support publication of each other's papers' (260). Favours are exchanged within the inner circle of friends and colleagues, while opportunities are shielded from those outside. In the case of gatekeepers (referring to headhunting firms) in 'elite labour markets', Faulconbridge et al. (2009) similarly warned for the arrival of an exclusive 'new boys network'. They reveal not only that accumulated power is important for these firms, but also that these search firms start to define who classifies as talent, and as such determine 'who is admitted to the networks that provide access to elite executive positions' (Ibid., 800). In this context, the question of 'who guards the guardians'[4] can be raised, which comes down to a question of trust. Without elaborating on this much further, this does not necessarily imply that the guardians need to be guarded (see the Nobel Prize lecture by Hurwicz, 2007).

Thirdly, by bringing back the concept of 'ecological privilege' (Nevins, 2014), we readdress the fact that the consequences of resource use by a privileged highly mobile minority are likely to affect other, less privileged ones first. Crude estimations based on our dataset of travel applications[5] in the context of Chapter Four revealed that lecturers and professors at Ghent University travelled on average over 20.000 km a year in 2009 and 2010. The average distance travelled by the hyper-travellers even exceeded 55.000 km annually. If we take into account that emissions at higher altitude are more damaging than emissions at ground level (Defra, 2010) and that distances are estimated 'as the crow flies', it may be clear that the carbon footprints originating from transnational academic travel are highly significant. In this dissertation, no chapter has been attributed to the apparent paradox in academia, namely the fact that highly-educated academics are somehow expected to be at the

forefront against human-induced global warming, but are significant consumers of distance themselves. From our interviews, it was clear that the majority of academics is aware of the high carbon footprint associated with (air) travel, although only a minority had an idea of the relative magnitude of carbon emissions from transnational travel, vis-à-vis the emission from commuting or energy use at Ghent University. Moreover, and on an individual level, ecological considerations are hardly ever taken into account when deciding to engage in travel (see also Lassen, 2010). Transnational travel seems to be so deeply structured in academic work and careers, that it is an 'unquestionable' practice (see also Nevins, 2014).

Much in line with Nevins (2014), this dissertation nonetheless argues that it is useful and necessary to think about (and act upon) ways of *undoing* this ecological privilege. This might imply re-evaluating the individual and collective professional habits of academics.

For example, in the short run, more sustainable travel solutions are likely to be found in a more efficient sequencing of corporeal and virtual travel practices over time. Chapter Four argued that such new ways of working are already sought after by workers who are (temporarily) 'off balance'. Sensitising and stimulating others to deploy their 'best practices' might allow academics to increase their level of internationalisation, while retaining sustainability. However, without an increased restriction on corporeal travel, by for example rising oil prices, putting a price on carbon emissions or providing less travel grants, a more efficient sequencing of practices opens up opportunities to increase the size and spatial extension of social networks of academics in the long run. As a corollary, it also makes sense to re-evaluate to what extent the current 'mobility culture' – and especially the prevalence of long-distance travel - is necessary and normal for each and every academic, in every discipline or in every career stage. To provide a clear example from our interviews: the added value for a Flemish doctoral candidate to go to Canada solely to present a poster at a PhD-meeting is questionable in light of its costs, especially when a similar meeting is organised in Austria or when it is possible to participate remotely. Hence, making the small world of academics a bit larger again when it comes to corporeal travel, entails sacrifices, but might equally lead to additional gains (see Nevins, 2014), such as smaller carbon footprints, but also and potentially, a more balanced work and family life for many individual academics and/or increased gender equality across career stages in academia.

6.3 Avenues for further research

This dissertation has led to new insights about the phenomenon of academic travel, but it has simultaneously opened up a variety of questions that could be addressed in future research. We briefly distinguish five possible research directions.

First, this dissertation did not focus on the 'corporate' level, or the strategies Ghent University deploys for staffing their recently opened branch campus (as has been done by Salt and Wood (2014) for UK universities). Although it is likely that the 'mobility portfolio' of Ghent University is not different from the ones of UK universities, that is, 'based simply on "marginal" ad hoc business travel, international staff recruitment, and electronic communications' (Salt and Wood, 2014, 95), it might be interesting to reveal the challenges Ghent University does or does not face to manage a relatively self-directed workforce in order to staff their overseas campus, and the extent to which a thoughtful combination of corporeal and virtual travel turns out to be a viable strategy.

Second, the small sample of respondents and the specific focus on one higher education institution and system clearly asks for comparative research on a larger scale. The findings reported here might be quite different for other higher education systems, especially in other regions of the world. To some extent, we compared the situation of academics in Flanders with findings from a relatively similar and small higher education system, namely the one in Denmark. However, more comparative research could look at how travel strategies and obligations differ between differing higher education systems.

Third, given the differences between academics within a university (Enders and Musselin, 2008), it would be interesting to explore how travel and knowledge practices are affected per discipline. For example, and as has been outlined by Asheim et al. (2007), the need for face-to-face proximity and local buzz differs per knowledge base. Buzz refers here to '*nondeliberate* knowledge-exchange and information-exchange propensities' (Asheim et al., 2007, 658). For example, we can easily assume that travel occurs under different conditions in 'entrepreneurial' disciplines (e.g., engineering, characterised by a 'synthetic knowledge base') vis-à-vis more 'intellectual' disciplines (e.g., social sciences, characterised by an 'analytical knowledge base') (see Asheim et al., 2007). Academics from the former disciplines produce more commercial and marketable knowledge in the form of patents and spin-offs (see Etzkowitz, 2001) and may for example be less – or more! – dependent on informal knowledge sharing mechanisms. As a corollary, for some disciplines, the 'global campus'-idea might be more feasible than for others.

Fourth, this dissertation has only begun to explore the diversity of social network types in academia, but much more in-depth analysis could help understand how and on what basis an individual academic chooses to invest in a particular network. This research direction is instigated from one of the interviews, where a respondent explained that he was not particularly overjoyed of having successfully mentored numerous doctoral candidates across plenty different countries. He indicated that he would rather invested in a limited number of strong and long-lasting connections, which could then develop into strong local centres.

Fifth, and related to the above, it would be interesting to explore the geographies of academic travel. Jöns' (2008) historical analysis of academic travel – academic travel defined in a broad sense – already revealed that distinct working practices have distinct and hierarchical global geographies. Preliminary analysis of our travel data reveals that the academic travel at Ghent University is primarily oriented towards the Anglo-American and neighbouring countries. However, our quantitative data did not allow differentiating between travel purposes.

Keeping current academic and societal debates about sustainability, flexible working lives and gender equality in mind, the practices surrounding academic travel prove to be a promising area for further study.

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[1] http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/world-university-rankings
[2] http://www.shanghairanking.com
[3] 'Open Access' publications refer to scholarly publications that are unrestricted by pay walls of publishers. Open Access publishers rely on authors (or their funders) to pay for peer-review, website maintenance and eventually publication.
[4] This quote is attributed to the Roman poet Juvenal (Hurwicz, 2007)

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Inleiding

De titel van dit doctoraatsonderzoek verwijst met een knipoog naar de bekende roman van David Lodge, genaamd 'Small World: An Academic Romance' en dertig jaar geleden neergepend. In deze roman worden verschillende academici gevolgd terwijl ze rond de wereld reizen in het zogeheten academisch 'conferentiecircuit'. Zij nemen deel aan bijeenkomsten verspreid over de wereld om 'elkaar te ontmoeten, lezingen te geven, in debat te gaan, te roddelen, te reflecteren en te filosoferen, maar ook om te feesten, mensen aan te werven of op zoek te gaan naar een job' (vrij vertaald uit Lodge, 1984, 546). Als ze elkaar ergens opnieuw terugzien, vervallen ze in de bekende uitroep: 'Het is een kleine wereld!'.

Deze studie focust op een vaak genegeerd, maar niettemin essentieel onderdeel van die 'kleine wereld' van academici, namelijk transnationale, werkgerelateerde reizen (*academic travel*). Dit type mobiliteit onderscheidt zich van andere types doordat het om korte termijn verplaatsingen gaat die meestal slechts enkele dagen duren en hooguit enkele weken. Verder behelst het fysieke verplaatsingen, vaak over langere afstanden, waarbij een persoon dus effectief in een auto, boot, trein of vliegtuig stapt. Het gaat om meer dan alleen verplaatsingen in het kader van conferenties, maar ook reizen om gastlezingen te geven, veldwerk te verrichten, bibliotheken te bezoeken, of aan projectvergaderingen deel te nemen, passen binnen deze bredere definitie. Fysieke mobiliteit is niettemin erg afhankelijk van 'virtuele' verplaatsingen, of het gebruik van communicatietechnologieën om op een afstand in contact te blijven met anderen (Faulconbridge et al., 2009).

In zekere zin zijn academici in het verleden altijd al mobiel geweest. Een aantal mondiale trends hebben er echter voor gezorgd dat veelvuldig reizen een wezenlijk onderdeel is gaan uitmaken van het beroepsleven van vele academici. Het is bijvoorbeeld een rechtstreeks gevolg van steeds snellere en efficiëntere transport- en communicatietechnologieën, maar ook van het heersende internationaliseringsdiscours in de academische sector. Overheden, universiteiten en instituties dragen vandaag internationale samenwerking, competitie en visibiliteit hoog in het vaandel en creëren op die manier een klimaat waarin mobiliteit - en dus ook regelmatig reizen - een verwachting wordt (Ackers, 2008).

Deze dissertatie kadert binnen het '*mobilities paradigm*' dat zich situeert op het raakvlak tussen twee, vaak apart beschouwde onderzoekstradities: transportgeografie en sociale geografie (Sheller & Urry, 2006; Urry, 2007). Op die manier wordt gepoogd vanuit een 'sociale' invalshoek naar mobiliteit en reizen te kijken. Meer specifiek: het onderzoek vertrekt vanuit het idee dat fysieke verplaatsingen een quasi-onoverkoombaar onderdeel vormen van sociale relaties (Urry, 2003; 2004). Die verplaatsingen stellen mensen in staat om elkaar op specifieke tijdstippen in persoon – en dus *face-to-face* – te ontmoeten. Het belang van dit soort interacties mag niet onderschat worden omdat de ermee geassocieerde, 'rijke' communicatiekarakteristieken (oogcontact, lichaamstaal, directe feedback, etc.) mensen in staat stellen om een vertrouwensrelatie op te bouwen, om toewijding en engagement te tonen, om machtsrelaties te bestendigen, etc. (zie Beaverstock et al., 2009).

Meer nog, in bepaalde gevallen kunnen bijeenkomsten veeleer beschouwd worden als een noodzaak of een verplichting. Om een eenvoudig voorbeeld te geven: als een familielid huwt of begraven wordt of een zoon of dochter is jarig, dan wordt "er zijn" een verwachting (Urry, 2003; 2004). Boden & Molotch (1994) verwezen in dat verband naar een 'dwang' om dichtbij te zijn. Ook op professioneel vlak spelen dergelijke sociale processen mee, zeker in de academische sector, waar sociale interacties een erg belangrijk onderdeel zijn van de job. Niet enkel de formele bijeenkomsten, maar ook de informele, ongebonden conversaties die aan bijeenkomsten gelinkt zijn, verdienen aandacht (Urry, 2009). Urry (2003) benadrukt dat het van belang is om het ritme, de significantie en de kwaliteit van dergelijke bijeenkomsten te gaan onderzoeken, eerder dan te focussen op het aantal relaties dat een bepaalde persoon heeft.

Bovendien, doordat sociale netwerken zich onder invloed van mondialiseringsprocessen steeds verder over de wereld gaan uitstrekken, treedt het belang van deze bijeenkomsten expliciter naar de voorgrond (Urry, 2009). Het onderzoek bestudeert dus niet enkel geografische nabijheid, maar veeleer '*time-distanciated proximity*', waarbij (langere) periodes van afwezigheid afgewisseld worden met kortere (en intense) periodes van geografische nabijheid (Urry, 2007). Het onderzoek gebeurt op basis van een *mixed methods approach* of het combineren van zowel kwantitatieve als kwalitatieve datasets. Het is bovendien gecontextualiseerd op de Vlaamse academische sector en het empirisch gedeelte richt zich op de Universiteit Gent, die internationalisering hoog op de agenda heeft staan.

Overzicht van de dissertatie en voornaamste bevindingen

De dissertatie bestaat uit zes hoofdstukken. Het eerste, inleidende hoofdstuk legt de basis van dit werk door in te gaan op het theoretisch kader, de onderzoekscontext en de gebruikte data en methoden. Het hoofdstuk eindigt door vier onderzoeksvragen te formuleren, die worden beantwoord in de daaropvolgende hoofdstukken. Het doel van deze studie is om meer inzicht te verkrijgen in het nut en de meerwaarde van academisch reizen, de relatie tussen (veeleisende) reisverwachtingen en een gezonde balans tussen werk en privé te bestuderen, en bij te dragen aan het debat over mobiliteit en ongelijkheid.

Gezien het gebrek aan onderzoek naar het reizen van academici (Ackers, 2010; 2013), bestaat het tweede hoofdstuk uit een brede literatuurstudie over de mobiliteit van hooggeschoolde professionelen tijdens de laatste decennia. Specifieke aandacht gaat uit naar de relatie tussen personenmobiliteit en kennisoverdracht, wat als één van de kerntaken van academici gezien wordt. Meer specifiek, het overzicht toont hoe de 'dominante' types (geografische) mobiliteit gelinkt zijn aan de metaverhalen die zin geven aan die mobiliteit. Pas in de laatste jaren wordt specifiek aandacht gegeven aan frequente, korte termijn verplaatsingen, maar veelal vanuit een bedrijfsbenadering. Weinig onderzoek vertrekt vanuit het microperspectief en bestudeert hoe mobiele professionelen omgaan met het feit dat ze geïntegreerd zijn in sociale netwerken in verschillende contexten waar mobiliteit geen 'extra' is, maar steeds meer normaal en nodig is.

Het derde hoofdstuk opent de 'black box' van academisch reizen, door de onderliggende mechanismen te bestuderen die aan de praktijk verbonden zijn. Het kwalitatief onderzoek onderscheidt eerst en vooral 'harde' en 'zachte' verplichtingen om ergens fysiek aanwezig te zijn, en gaat vervolgens dieper in op die laatste. De 'zachte', socialere verplichtingen verwijzen naar de noodzaak om mensen op gezette tijdstippen te ontmoeten. Het hoofdstuk maakt verder een (abstract) onderscheid tussen kleinschaligere meetings, met personen die elkaar goed kennen en grote bijeenkomsten, waarbij het onmogelijk is om iedereen te kennen en veeleer het belang van 'gezien worden' speelt. Beide types bijeenkomsten genereren voordelen die voor een academicus erg nuttig zijn op werk- en carrièregebied.

Het eerste type is geassocieerd met uitwisselingsprocessen tussen academici, waarbij personen worden uitgenodigd om deel te nemen aan bijeenkomsten, *keynotes* te geven, een sessie op een conferentie voor te zitten, etc. De informele communicatieprocessen die plaatsvinden tussen personen die elkaar

goed kennen zijn in een tijd van informatieovervloed op het internet, erg belangrijk om op de hoogte te blijven van de wetenschappelijke literatuur in het vakgebied, van recente ontwikkelingen en van de nieuwste opportuniteiten. Bovendien blijkt integratie in dichte netwerken buiten de eigen universiteit belangrijk als extra ondersteuning en zekerheid, bijvoorbeeld bij het testen van nieuwe claims en indienen van projecten. Voorts blijkt het ook belangrijk om 'visibel' te zijn tijdens grote bijeenkomsten, zodat mensen – en vooral uitgevers, job scouts, en andere mogelijke partners - een beeld krijgen van de onderzoeker en zijn onderzoek, zodat in de toekomst samenwerkingen kunnen ontstaan. Het hoofdstuk beargumenteert bovendien dat in vele opzichten en door een efficiënte combinatie van virtueel en fysiek reizen, het werk en het reizen van academici verandert. Zo wordt fysieke aan- en afwezigheid bijvoorbeeld steeds meer onderhandeld en wordt er vooral in persoon gereisd voor de informele, sociale aspecten die *face-to-face* meetings mogelijk maakt, terwijl virtuele meetings ingeschakeld worden om 'effectief werk te verrichten'.

Het vierde hoofdstuk staat stil bij het feit dat reizen 'vervloekt' zijn met significante kosten en dat het een periode van afwezigheid genereert (Beaverstock et al., 2009). Op basis van een clusteranalyse toegepast op een dataset van reisaanvragen toont het dat niet alle academici dezelfde strategieën hanteren om met de mobiliteitsverwachtingen en –beperkingen om te gaan. Dit hoofdstuk focust op lectoren en professoren, die over een hoge graad van vrijheid beschikken om hun werk in te plannen en taken voorop te stellen (Lassen, 2006). Bijna één op de drie academici reist bijvoorbeeld erg lokaal, terwijl één op de zes meer dan tien keer per jaar reist. Uit kwalitatief onderzoek blijkt dat de mobiliteitsverwachtingen en beperkingen disciplineafhankelijk zijn, functieafhankelijk zijn en vaak beïnvloed worden door de persoonlijke situatie en attitude van de academicus zelf. Twee functieprofielen in het bijzonder leiden tot frequent reizen: de manager van een internationaal georiënteerde onderzoeksgroep en de (transnationaal) projectmanager. Hoewel een deel van de respondenten best tevreden is over hun reispatroon, in de zin dat reizen niet zo moeilijk te organiseren valt en een welkome afwisseling biedt van de alledaagse routine, zijn er ook academici die 'uit balans' zijn. Twee categorieën worden onderscheiden: academici die niet voldoende kunnen reizen (vaak door werk-privé conflicten) of die teveel moeten reizen (hoofdzakelijk door werk-werk conflicten). Zij schuiven een aantal alternatieven naar voor, die betrekking hebben op het rationaliseren van hun reisactiviteiten, maar ook hun mobiliteitsactiviteiten in de tijd om zo de nodige aanwezigheid in verschillende (werk- en privé-) omgevingen nog steeds te kunnen garanderen.

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Hoofdstuk vijf vertrekt vanuit het gegeven dat het niet alleen belangrijk is om effectief te reizen, maar ook belangrijk is om op gezette tijden het potentieel en de capaciteit te hebben om te reizen, hetgeen Kaufmann et al. (2004) 'motiliteit' noemen. Dit geldt zeker voor academici in het begin van hun carrière, om kennis op te doen, maar ook om geïntegreerd te raken in internationale netwerken en zich te identificeren met de manieren van werken. Dit hoofdstuk onderzoekt de verschillen tussen mobiele mannen en vrouwen op vlak van *reisfrequentie*, en dat meer specifiek, gekoppeld aan het al dan niet hebben van een partner en kinderen. Dit hoofdstuk focust met andere woorden op de link tussen reizen en ongelijkheid. De regressieanalyse toont aan dat er genderverschillen zijn, en dat het verschil 'verdubbelt' als de academicus in kwestie kinderen heeft: academische vaders blijken meer te gaan reizen, terwijl academische moeders minder gaan reizen. Het effect van een partner werkt niet beperkend, integendeel: academici met partners, maar geen kinderen blijken meer te gaan reizen. Aangezien reizen steeds belangrijker is geworden voor een academische carrière, kan dit verschil in reizen op zijn minst voor een stuk de genderongelijkheid in de academische sector verklaren (zie Europese Commissie, 2013). Het hoofdstuk duidt het genderverschil verder op basis van inzichten uit de literatuur en secundaire data. Een mogelijke verklaring kan zich afspelen op het niveau van huishoudens: academische vrouwen maken wellicht vaker deel uit van *'dual-career'* huishoudens, waarbij zowel de man als de vrouw een carrière nastreven. Dit huishoudtype vereist vaker toegevingen op privé- (uitstellen of afstellen van het hebben van kinderen) of op werkgebied (uitstellen of afstellen van mobiliteit en carrière) (Leeman, 2010).

Het afsluitende hoofdstuk zet de belangrijkste resultaten uit de dissertatie nog eens op een rij en gaat vervolgens dieper in op de (informele) machtspositie of status die frequent reizende academici kunnen accumuleren en de verantwoordelijkheid die zij daarbij hebben ten opzichte van anderen. Zij kunnen in zekere zin (informele) uitnodigingen doorgeven aan anderen en ook een periode van niet-reizen van collega's overbruggen. Echter, omdat academische carrières nog steeds hoofdzakelijk gebaseerd zijn op individuele prestaties en niet op teamprestaties, hangt dit voornamelijk af van de *goodwill* van de reiziger. Verder staat het hoofdstuk ook stil bij het feit dat reizen een privilege is. Het hoofdstuk stelt daarbij de heersende reis- en mobiliteitscultuur in de academische sector in vraag, iets wat haast nooit door de respondenten werd gedaan. Deze dissertatie argumenteert – in dezelfde lijn als Nevins (2014) – dat er ook nagedacht moet worden over manieren om dit privilege ongedaan te maken. Een meer efficiënte samenhang tussen virtueel

en fysiek reizen in de toekomst, waarbij fysiek reizen ook gereduceerd wordt, betekent misschien in sommige opzichten een verlies, maar maakt de mobiliteit een stuk duurzamer. Bovendien, het komt mogelijks de *work/life* balans van academici ten goede en kan daarbij een positieve impact op de gendergelijkheid in de academische sector teweegbrengen. Het hoofdstuk rondt af met een vijftal aanbevelingen voor verder onderzoek.

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