

Interactive comment on “Mobile talent or privileged sites? Making sense of biotech knowledge worker mobility and performance in Sweden” by H. Mattsson

H. Mattsson

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Let me begin by thanking the referee for these excellent comments. They contribute to the paper in several ways: (i) by bringing my attention to an unfortunate obscurity in the paper; (ii) by suggesting interesting further study; and (iii) by pushing for a more direct approach.

Here, I would like to first briefly return to some of my intentions and claims. It seems to me that I have not been sufficiently clear on a couple of issues and that any further discussion would certainly benefit from a few points of clarification.

Clarifications: 1. In response to the first point of the referee comment let me say that the paper is strictly about elite biotech knowledge worker success and mobility. I do

not focus on firm competitiveness or on success of any other unit but the individual. I do however realize, after reading the comment and then re-reading my paper, that it is definitely possible to understand the paper to be interested in firms. This is an unfortunate obscurity and I am grateful to the referee for bringing it to my attention. .

2. When I am talking about ‘mobile talent’ and ‘privileged sites’ as contradictory concepts I am focusing on what these approaches has to offer for anyone who is trying to apply these theories in order to understand or influence concrete biotech landscapes. There is indeed a difference between, on the one hand, saying that the most important thing is to ‘attract and retain talent’, and, on the other, saying that ‘talent’ (or a proxy for talent at least) is somehow created and/or enhanced in certain environments. As I mention in my conclusion I do not believe that the approaches are incompatible, but there is a paradox here that I think is important to discuss. This shallow use of the concepts may be provoking, but to me it seems to be an interesting and rewarding exercise to oppose them in this simplistic way.

Secondly, points 4 and 5 are especially helpful in pointing out, on the one hand, issues that need further elaboration in the present paper, and, on the other, future studies that would build on the results in the paper. I fully agree with these recommendations.

Thirdly, I would have liked to discuss the issue of using wages as an indicator for success. It seems to me, however, that the comment mostly draws on me being unclear about what it is I am really studying. As pointed out above, the focus is solely on worker success and in this case I find the wage variable to be the best available measurement. Citation indexes and so on would in principle be a strong complement, but not even in Sweden is it possible to connect this kind of data to the database I am using - it would require identification at the individual level and this is not allowed.

I sincerely hope that referee 1 would like to continue the discussion in view of this response.

Henrik Mattsson

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