

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

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This response serves two purposes: (i) to address the comments made by the second referee; and, (ii) to make some final remarks. I will not further elaborate on the points of clarifications, etc, that I presented in my previous response (25 February 2007).

I would like to begin by thanking also the second referee for her/his contributions. It is obvious that the second referee possesses a lot of expertise and passion for the subject under study in my paper and it has been very interesting to read what she/he has to say about it.

Although I agree, on a point by point basis, with most of what the second referee is saying, I find it hard to fully incorporate the critique since it would require a scale and

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scope of the paper that was never intended or possible. As a result of the referee comments, however, I have changed my argumentation in order to be more nuanced on the debating concepts. I have also provided more background to the Swedish case and streamlined some of the arguments concerning side-income.

What I have been trying to do here is to explore a unique dataset and to see to what extent we can use this kind of data to explore the questions at hand. It has never been my ambition to argue that privileged sites and mobile talent are polemic lines of thought; my ambition is merely to provoke further reflexion on the fact that these concepts actually represent two rather different notions about the role of space in innovation processes. The question of whether space is primarily a “gatherer” or an “enhancer” of talent is an important one, even if most academics of course have little trouble including both notions in their arguments. It is interesting to think about how we can approach this issue. The second referee calls for further exploration of regional theory and more detail on regional factors but I would like to argue that this question has to be dealt with in a more simplistic and straightforward fashion. The literature on regional institutions and innovation systems is rich and has provided much insight about fundamental economic geographical principles. However, it serves more as a background to the issues explored in my paper, than as a main tool of analysis. If my paper indicates anything it is that also very basic things matters: e.g. where people go to university and where they have their families. Knowledge workers are widely wandering minds but they are also home-based creatures. If we want to explain spatial patterns of innovation and knowledge production we probably need to explore both the virtual and social spaces that knowledge workers operate within (which the economic geographic innovation systems literature does very well) and the conditions of corporeality which governs the daily lives of knowledge workers (which can be explored with the kind a data that I use in my paper). In terms of focus, the latter mission obviously takes a toll on the former.