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'The unbalanced hierarchy' addresses equal opportunities in academia. One of the key issues we face is that women are not being absorbed into the research community. Birgitta Odén, emeritus professor of history at the University of Lund, laid out the problems in her study 'Ju högre, desto färre' ['The higher you go, the fewer there are'] (Odén 1996). The phenomenon has also been described as 'a leaky pipe'.

It was against this background that the project 'Hit – och ännu längre!' ['Thus far – and further!'] was initiated in September 2006, funded by the EU European Social Fund. It has comprised twelve guest professors, all women and from several different countries, who 'supervised' postgraduate students and initiated workshops and seminars at the University of Lund. Their visits lasted between a week and a month, and were timed to avoid overlapping with one another. As a result the Department of Sociology (which included the departments of social anthropology, sociology of law, and media and communication studies) benefited from a series of visiting professors throughout the year that ended in September 2007; the guest professors became a significant new element in the postgraduate students' working environment. There were at that point some forty postgraduate students in the fields that participated in the project, of whom there were more women than men.

Naturally after only one year it is impossible to establish with any certainty whether the project will result in more women choosing to remain in academe in future. In the following discussion, I will instead discuss the possible impact on graduate studies based on the reports written by the guest professors. What problems did they see in graduate education as it stands? What contribution did they feel they made?

The guest professors, being outsiders, have a 'bird's eye view' of the institution they are visiting. The idea that a person who comes 'from outside' brings a special perspective originates in the work of the German sociologist

Georg Simmel. Simmel analyses how strangers relate to the group they join (1971), and his conclusions underpin the approach taken in this article. My interest is in the guest professors' observations in their capacity as 'outsiders', which, taken together, serve as a barometer of how well graduate courses function today. Similarly, it is revealing to read what, and where, the guest professors have felt they have been able to contribute.

Karakayali has developed Simmel's analysis of 'the stranger' (2006) by considering how the 'the stranger' is *used* in various organisational contexts, in the intriguingly entitled article 'The uses of the stranger: circulation, arbitration, secrecy, and dirt'. Karakayali's approach in this article inspired me to view the guest professors' role in this light. How is someone who comes from *outside* an organisation used by the organisation in question? In his analysis, Karakayali differentiates between different types of 'outsiders', all of whom assume very different functions. In the present context, it is the one who is 'highly skilled, and is accepted into the group in order to carry out tasks that the natives are *incapable* of performing' (Karakayali 2006:326), who springs to mind.

My discussion turns on the features of the academic working environment in Lund that the guest professors may have identified for the very reason that they were outsiders. The same is also true of how the guest professors' status as outsiders may have affected the postgraduates' attitudes, their willingness to be forthcoming, and the questions that were aired. Furthermore, a clear lesson can be drawn from the resonance with the students of the guest professors' presence, regardless of the informal nature of the activities they organised (or perhaps thanks to it), so 'different' from usual supervisions.

The disposition of this article is as follows:

- But I think I had a useful role as a kind of coach'

- A bird's-eye view' – and how postgraduates' work is seen in its social context

- On openness and the ability to air sensitive issues

- An outsider's perspective and comparisons

- Ideas are easily transportable

'But I think I had a useful role as a kind of coach'

Karakayali places particular emphasis on the dynamics of an encounter. Even autonomous organisations that are 'filled to capacity' can alter in unexpected ways when 'outsiders' are introduced into the organisation: '…even a self-sufficient socioeconomic system where 'all the positions are occupied' can have room for 'extraneous' elements and be transformed in unexpected ways as a result of this addition.' (Karakayali 2006:328)

Several of the guest professors felt they could make an immediate contribution by giving prominence to the potential in the postgraduate students' own material, essentially by bringing a greater coherence to what the students already knew. 'Similarly, strangers in the role of teachers and translators do not produce the information they circulate but they restructure and interpret that information in accordance with the needs of their 'customers'. (Karakayali 2006:327) It is striking that a number of professors comment on the fact that many of the postgraduate students were unaware that their skills were more than adequate for a research career. Several quotes from their reports lend weight to this idea:

> In this sense I think I was just an 'enabler', encouraging students to support each other whilst sharpening their perspectives. (Beverly Skeggs)

> But I think I had a useful role as a kind of coach. …But for some of them I think the thing I could contribute can make a difference, because they have faced setbacks and needed a push, or were uncertain what direction they should take. In a couple of instances the push was to tell them how good their work was, with exciting data, a good analytical disposition, and the like. Equally we could chat about what was missing, and agree that it actually was not that much. In the instances (and probably more often than not) where it was about taking action to solve problems, it was mostly about limiting the scope of the thesis, and choosing a relevant theory or method. (Annick Prieur)

The guest professors thus took on an encouraging role, drawing the students' attention to the potential in their work. Sometimes non-academic problems blocked the students' writing, however:

> One effect was that, in writing their thesis, they were skirting round the political or ethical issue that lay at its core: they were holding back from achieving the full potential of their research. (Susan Wright)

The guest professors attempted to get the postgraduate students to *understand* what they were capable of, and what they had already achieved. They saw the strengths in their work that the students had failed to perceive themselves. Several of the professors raise the issue that their encounters with the students often centred on shoring up uncertain ideas in the hope of stimulating and inspiring the students, and encouraging the students to identify what was significant and exciting in their thesis research.

'A bird's-eye view' – and how postgraduates' work is seen in its social context

According to Simmel's (1971:146) argument, a stranger adopts a position that gives a 'bird's-eye view' of social relationships within an organisation. It is taken for granted that, as a guest professor, you need to get a general view of the postgraduates' work as quickly and efficiently as possible, which virtually guarantees the use of such sweeping perspectives. It is natural enough to try to place the postgraduates' work in its context. How long before they submit their thesis? What kind of problems do they face – are they in the initial or final phase? Why is the student working on this particular issue? Yet the issue is whether such a general perspective is something only an outsider can provide. True, when you are in your own working environment, you tend not to view the social environment of the workplace in such a light. Several of the guest professors emphasise that they tried to contextualise the postgraduates students' work whenever they had the opportunity in individual discussions, with a view to bringing greater clarity to the structure of their research. What stage had they reached? Had they got funding? Could they work uninterrupted? Whenever the students reflected on their work in this way, it enabled them to see more clearly the questions propounded by their own research.

One of the professors writes that at first she felt it to be a disadvantage to have little prior knowledge of the various postgraduate students' work. However, she later appreciated that in the process of presenting their work, the students themselves provided the best basis for constructing a working relationship with her. In describing their research to an outsider, the postgraduate students were forced to communicate its essence. She could then ask, "Does that mean that you…?", and they answered: "No, or not exact-

ly…", and by these means it became increasingly clear to the students what they were really setting out to achieve.

One of the guest professors concentrated on giving the students an opportunity to reflect on how they had arrived in their particular formulation of a problem. She felt it important that they understand their own personal relationship with the course of their work.

> One of the tasks they really worked hard on and enjoyed was the 'intellectual biographies': to chart their journeys through different conceptual and theoretical apparatus. They seemed to find it useful as a way of understanding how and why they were working on the issues. It enabled them to clarify their positions on a range of issues. (Beverly Skeggs)

As one of the guest professors put it, 'We discover what we are trying to say by saying something.' It was this process the students underwent each time they described their research to someone who knew nothing of its, or their, background.

Time in context

The professors describe how they adopted a broad perspective on the postgraduates' work when it came to timing, in other words how to structure their time and resources so that they would be able to finish on time. One emphasises that she wanted to communicate an awareness of time in the practical logistics and structuring of the last phase of writing up.

> Since work is still structured to reward those who pursue their own projects, female scholars must learn to make conscious decisions about how they expend their time. They must learn to cultivate a detached attitude in which they can recognize both ongoing gender bias and structural impediments to female success and personal inhibitions arising from these structural factors. (Jane Flax)

> Generally, I tried to listen to what the students had to say, and I tried early on to contextualize their work. The meetings were thus influenced by at which stage they were in the 'doctoral career'. (Hanne Petersen)

> It was my impression that several of the students had spent surprisingly few thoughts on how to plan their final months and weeks and how to be able to reach an acceptable output with the money and time at hand. (Hanne Petersen)

> Many are engaged on *big* projects: the empirical material was occasionally overwhelming; there was a relentless drive to get 'enough data', so that they merrily carried on collecting data when they really should have finished and concentrated on writing with a view to the thesis disposition and analysis. It was as if many did not have time or space to develop and refine the object of their research. (Liv Finstad)

The special thing about being a postgraduate student, as Coser (1974) once wrote, is that it is an all-embracing and 'greedy' role, where it is not easy to establish the limits to your work. It is hard to view your own research with sufficient distance. Frequently it is also a solitary business: 'You have to create the rhythms of your work yourself'.

> We spent quite some time discussing how to establish frames for work, rhythms of work, and limits to work which might ease the 'career burden' and even 'career slavery' and protect today's young researchers from the 'unlimited' and often stressful nature of research work. The protective measures developed for industrial work are of course not necessarily very useful in relation to the conditions of research in an internet age. Thus there is a need to find and develop useful limitations and adequate conditions to secure creative research work, which does not lead to stress and burnout and is based on continuous overwork. (Hanne Petersen)

For the person who writes a wide-ranging monograph there is little validation to be had during your time as a postgraduate. Informal waymarkers are often rare. It can take a long time before you find the answer to 'what you stand for' in your research. Irresolution is evident in the guest professors' conversations with the postgraduates. When is enough enough? The question of when a thesis is finished, of what is required, is common. There is also uncertainty amongst the postgraduate students when it comes to practical issues, a fact noted by several of the guest professors.

> Two men and one woman wanted to talk about the logistics of completing their work and handling multiple demands simultaneously, rather than discussing their research, per se. About one-third of the students mentioned having difficulty with balancing their research and writing with competing demands. (Kathy Charmaz)

> Therefore, beginning in graduate school, it might be helpful if experienced academics discussed the practical process of making a career. Female graduate students could be encouraged to make a strategic plan for their career and to revise it periodically. (Jane Flax)

> Certainly, the graduate students have more time that they would in Denmark, and certainly nearly all the graduate students I met worked qualitatively. And yes, it is im-

portant that qualitative projects are not defined too closely at the outset, and are not thought through from a hypothetical-deductive model. Yet I was surprised at how apparently little weight was placed on setting limits, on giving focus to the definition of the problem, an anchoring in a theoretical perspective. In any case, I felt several had come a surprisingly short way with this, and in several cases a considerable empirical effort was already underway without it being clear to them what their thesis question actually was. I think this could make writing easier for many of them if a little earlier in the process they had help to focus. (Annick Prieur)

On openness and the ability to air sensitive issues

It should not be thought that the significance of the professors' visits was limited to the acuity of their observations as 'outsiders'; the roles they adopted while in Lund, the manner of their participation in the academic community they found here, are also revealing. Openness towards outsiders is well established. Hughes (1971) writes of the outsider being the recipient of 'guilty knowledge' for the simple reason that he or she cannot make use of such information. What is then the effect when the person being consulted is an 'outsider'? Under those circumstances, as Simmel once described them, you find yourself seeking advice from someone who 'comes today and is gone tomorrow' (Simmel 1971).

One of the guest professors observes that by virtue of being an outsider she has greater occasion to adopt a therapeutic role. The professors were not required to judge the students, nor were they involved in allocating jobs or project funding. Essentially all they had to do was read texts and offer a friendly ear to the students, fielding their insecurities and frustrations. According to Karakayali (and Simmel), it is unsurprising that the professors could discuss sensitive issues with the students. "Simmel's example that corresponds to this domain is the role of the stranger as a 'confidant' who 'receives the most surprising revelations and confidences, at times reminiscent of a confessional, about matters which are kept carefully hidden from everybody with whom one is close'." (Simmel 1971a:145) (Karakayali 2006:320)

Yet to accept this is not to underestimate the significance of a role that on the face of it could not be simpler; the fact that sensitive issues surfaced in this way was of the greatest importance. Insecurity hampers creativity.

As one of the professors remarks, insecurity is indeed very much part of academic life. Equally it can, if put into words, take on more reasonable proportions. A method that one of the guest professors used was to draw up an

intellectual biography. She described her own intellectual journey – complete with the different terms that had proved central, different theories she had read about, different projects she had been part of – to explain how she had arrived in her current position. The guest professors point out in their reports that the students were frequently open about their problems. 'Perhaps with luck they could feel themselves more free, precisely because they encountered people who were not, nor would become, a part of their daily working environment?' (Liv Finstad)

> But it is not done to speak openly about such academic unease, not in Lund either, and sometimes not even with your supervisor, I was told. In academe, it is often a matter of appearing 'competent'. (Liv Finstad)

The professors were themselves frank about the problems they had faced in their careers.

> As an illustration of the publishing process, I distributed one of my most recent papers including the referee reports to all the participants. Several of the participants had already given papers to conferences and seminars, but few had proceeded with the intention of publishing their contributions. A wide variety of questions was raised by the participants, indicating a need for more knowledge and a sharing of experiences on the processes of publication. (Annelise Ellingsæter)

> In other cases, I provided specific behavioural guidance to women students who had writing blocks. I also talked to them about my struggles with writing in my early career. (Catherine Kohler Riessman)

Certain types of problem the students felt they could not discuss with their supervisors, less concerning their research as such, but rather ethical and political problems in the field.

> A majority of students wished to talk about issues they did not know how to deal with. These were described as ethical, political or methodological, but regardless of label, concerned 'studying up'. Instead of the social sciences' usual studies of people weaker than themselves, these students were making ethnographic analyses of elites, powerful organisations or systems of government. This is at the cutting edge of the social sciences, so no wonder they felt they had problems in working out how much they should respond to informants' attempts to steer or control their studies, how to deal with gaps in information due to government officials' blocking access, or ethnographic material which showed disparities between what people said about themselves or their organisation, and how they actually acted. On all these issues, Sue Wright could give examples from her own or others' work to help the student think with, but it was

more important to ask questions and hear what the students themselves were trying to get at in their study, and how they felt they should deal with it. Many used phrases such as, "I know I should not say this, but I really think…" or "I can't do this, but what I really want to do is…." They knew how they wanted to develop their analysis but were limiting themselves because of what they felt were their discipline's conventions. Most important, many said that they had not had an opportunity to talk like this before. (Susan Wright)

Another professor points out that the postgraduate students are naturally enough no less sensitive today than they were in her own day; yet the critical examination of texts is a central element in every scholarly exchange. The manner of offering criticism to postgraduate students, who are at a stage marked by competition and insecurity, is as delicate an issue as it is crucial. A particularly sensitive situation arises when the critique is presented in front of others. The students are thought to experience insecurity, regardless of what the individual critical points might, or might not, signify.

The things that can be viewed as 'showing-off' tendencies in academia, which go beyond demonstrating good scholarly reasoning – to the point where it is instrumental (albeit unwittingly) in creating or confirming an internal specialised hierarchy – are an example of internal competition that can become destructive both for the individual and for the scholarly collective as a whole. (Liv Finstad)

It is even possible that critical opinions are taken less personally in cases where the critic is an 'outsider', and will not remain in the institution to act as a judge in future.

Am I good enough?

Perhaps the openness in the relationships between the guest professors and the postgraduate students made it possible for *one* particularly important (and sensitive) question to surface: Am I good enough?

Several of the women talked about having doubts about their work and feared what I might think of it. The possibility of embarrassment intimidated them. I tried to reassure them that they could bring work to me at any stage of development or just come and talk about what they were doing. (Kathy Charmaz)

What emerged in their conversations with the professors was a deep-seated insecurity as to the quality of their thesis material. Was the theoretical basis strong enough? Was the empirical data appropriate, and was it sufficient to

support the argument? Here the guest professors observe a difference between men and women when it comes to the insecurities voiced. One of the guest professors uses the word 'entitlement'. She identified a gender difference in the way the men felt themselves entitled to support and encouragement in their research to a far greater degree than the women did. She notes that such a positive sense of entitlement in an academic environment is probably self-fulfilling; with uncertainty comes the risk of unwarranted theoretical ambitions, and an inability to find your own authorial voice in your writing. Against this background, Finstad started a seminar under the title 'Am I theoretical enough?'

Other guest professors also felt that the women postgraduate students were more insecure than the men. Charmaz emphasises the importance of 'trust in emergence', of a sense of conviction in the task in hand (even if one did not feel particularly sure of oneself).

> My most significant recommendation concerns imparting a way of doing and thinking about research and writing. Concrete practices can help but undoing lifelong self-doubts is a daunting task. It would take numerous positive experiences for someone with profound self-doubts to learn to trust in herself. I recommend teaching these students to trust in the process of doing research, if not in themselves. (Kathy Charmaz)

> Issues that – somewhat to my surprise – came up several times in the discussions with one male and several female researchers – were the issue of 'belonging in academia'. The experience of being the first academic in the family and not having any experience with academic life to draw upon was mentioned by several researchers. This experience might influence the ability to deal with diffuse demands, to evaluate the quality of one's own work, and perhaps the ability to deal with the insecurity, which is part of academic life. It may also make it difficult to limit the mental energy invested in academic work. When is enough enough? (Hanne Petersen)

> Similarly, the theoretical ambitions were prodigious, but often awkward to draw out. I sensed that the idea that what you were doing, and whether it would be good enough – particularly theoretically – was mentioned by many. (Liv Finstad)

Have I handled the ethics of my research correctly? Am I familiar with the central terms and theories in my own field of research? It is misgivings on this scale with which the postgraduate students seem to wrestle. In their discussions with the guest professors, such thoughts certainly surfaced:

> I suspect that the Leaky Pipe project attempts to fix deep-seated problems of self-confidence and trust in one's abilities. To some extent, mastering new skills can help wom-

en build confidence. Reading across fields may help them hone their analytic and critical skills. From what students said, I concluded that they concentrated on the areas of immediate relevance for their research. (Kathy Charmaz)

An outsider's perspective and comparisons

It is an advantage to be an outsider because you see things that the 'natives' of the organisation take for granted. Certain things drew the particular attention of the guest professors: their initial impressions were often of a lack of outward-looking scholarly effort in the shape of articles and contacts across disciplinary boundaries; and they noticed the great weight the students accorded the writing of monographs when it came to their theses. The professors felt that the students interpreted this as meaning that monographs were preferable. Some of the professors consider this 'introspective', but that it could turned to a more 'outward-looking' approach if the students could be persuaded to write a series of articles collected in a consolidated thesis rather than a monograph.

> Lund University (still) has a dissertation tradition that includes the writing of monographs; all the students I met with individually are producing monographs. I sensed some ambivalence/frustration regarding this type of publication; some conveyed an impression that doctoral dissertations are not read by anyone else but the evaluators. (Anne-Lise Ellingsæter)

Several professors suggest a more 'outward-looking' approach to graduate studies. The directors of studies should encourage the students to take part in international conferences and seminars, and to present their work there. Participation in the national and international research community is ever more important, if only when it comes to job prospects and research funding. It has also become increasingly important for one's future career to publish scholarly articles – and the guest professors were well placed to spot the potential for this in the postgraduates' work.

Writing articles can be prompted – or hampered – by the working environment. The guest professors found a degree of uncertainty amongst the students as to the form an article should take, how to make an argument, how long it should be, and so on; concerns that were not dispelled by the different 'formats', usages, and the like used by learned journals. 'I held two workshops on writing and editing, focusing first on abstracts and then on

journal articles. In both sessions, groups of 3-4 students read each other's work and helped to edit it.' (Susan Wright) One guest professor stresses that the real motivation to write comes when students recognise themselves to be active participants in a scholarly community:

> As the doctoral period is quite long, I think it would be useful to develop a wider perspective on the academic activities in this period. Scholarly networks are established by individual contacts, and as a main strategy in network building I would suggest that the doctoral students early on are encouraged to participate in national and international conferences and seminars, presenting their work. Participation in the (inter)national research community is increasingly important, both with regard to future jobs and research funding. (Anne-Lise Ellingsæter)

Another guest professor is surprised by the narrowness of cross-disciplinary contacts, given the importance of an open outlook.

> It was in these projects that I felt a sense of disciplinary boundaries setting limits to the theoretical questions being asked. …Urban studies has long been a field that invites a cross-pollination of disciplinary approaches from planning to literature to psychology, and in my own experience it is exciting to bring doctoral students together when they share some common issues and questions. (Vron Ware)

In their comparisons with other working environments, the guest professors note a lack of strong networks at the departments in question, particularly amongst the women. Perhaps this deficiency springs from departmental misgivings? One of the guest professors recommends informal conversations, preferably in the shape of 'life stories', as a means of breaking down barriers. If nothing else, knowing that others have gone through similar problems might always make things easier.

> When I talked with a small group of women about the possibilities of working together in study and dissertation writing groups (both are common practices in the US), the idea appeared to be quite alien to these women. (Kathy Charmaz)

> The environment in Lund seems to be fairly fragmented. Many university environments are, which means the majority work more on their own than they would wish. Viewed objectively, you are in competition with your colleagues (as a postgraduate), and it goes without saying that this is not the best basis for camaraderie. But without being able to point to a supporting study, I think that where they have succeeded in creating a good social milieu, the problem of retaining postgraduate students is reduced. (Annick Prieur)

> The students said that they found it fruitful to hear that they were struggling with similar issues and that they could benefit from each other's solutions. They also said that such occasions were otherwise rare. Myself, I found the atmosphere quite good – people were open about themselves and to others. I also learnt a lot from what they had to say. (Karin Widerberg)

> My knowledge of the graduate student culture in the four departments is limited and impressionistic. In addition, my observations and suggestions come from an American experience. Thus, I simply offer ideas to consider and perhaps to spark discussion. I wondered how women graduate students' lifelong participation in the Swedish educational system had affected their definitions of graduate school and conceptions of themselves as graduate students and professionals. Solitary work and separate paths characterized the image of graduate school that most women portrayed. (Kathy Charmaz)

In these comparisons, postgraduate students in Lund were felt to be working much more on their own than their peers elsewhere. As one professor suggests, 'This may be due to obligations to teach and to assist on projects with external financing, as well as the strong focus on work with the dissertations.' (Hanne Petersen)

> I also discussed with staff the idea of organising a weekly or fortnightly PhD student workshop, along the lines I have experienced in UK universities, where the staff member is just the facilitator. The aim would be for students to get to know each other's work, and to organise their own programme of activities, focusing on whatever issues face them at the time. (Susan Wright)

The professors sense a need for a research environment where students work with one another's texts, and they draw comparisons with their home institutions.

> In the UK, such workshops have built very strong student communities that benefit from learning about each other's very different research topics, and encourage each other in a shared commitment to make advances in their discipline. (Vron Ware)

Ideas are easily transportable

'The congruence between teaching (and, more generally, 'intellectual activity') and strangeness, of course, is not so surprising. As Simmel (1990) shows in *The Philosophy of Money*, in many ways, 'ideas' and 'knowledge' are

like money: they 'belong' to no one, and can belong to anyone; they are easily transportable.' (Karakayali 2006:318) The transmission of ideas and contacts was one of the guest professors' key undertakings. 'Above all I could introduce ideas that were a bit different by virtue of coming from a completely different milieu and another tradition', writes one. Several note that it would be possible for the postgraduate students to establish relationships with their peers in the USA and the UK who are working in similar fields.

> In several situations, I could connect students with scholars in the US and Britain I know with similar interests. (Catherine Kohler Riessman)

The part of the project that dealt with the issue of establishing new contacts and circulating fresh ideas, and which again hinges on the professors' role as outsiders, may well prove decisive in future. 'The first general domain of activity in which strangers participate is circulation' (Karakayali 2006:315). In this case it is a matter of circulation of information. The professors felt that they could contribute with new references and new angles on the students' research.

> I found that my background in urban studies was perhaps the most useful resource since a number of the projects entail the study of different aspects of the city – whether Kampala, Shanghai or Malmö. Although these projects were all quite different in scope and approach I felt they all lacked guidance in material on the postcolonial city and it was exciting to think this through in relation to particular questions, whether local, transnational and global. (Vron Ware)

> I introduced several students to photovoice methods – where cameras are given to participants to photograph aspects of their worlds, and they talk about the images afterwards with the researcher. The approach has been used productively in the U.S. with immigrant populations. We also explored the complexities of transcription practice and ethnographic forms of data gathering. (Catherine Kohler Riessman)

> Every student left a consultation session with a list of several readings I selected that were relevant to their projects (substantively or methodologically). Because I have a bibliographic file online, I was able to provide detailed citations and in some cases PDF copies of relevant articles. (Catherine Kohler Riessman)

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Some final thoughts

Of course, it is nigh on impossible to know how what effect the project 'Thus far – and further!' will have on equality of opportunity in the long run. I, for my part, have concentrated here on what the guest professors have *'seen and given'*, using the professors' own descriptions, analysed in the light of the particular perspective an outsider can bring to an organisation.

Even in the guest professors' own reflections on the project, they attach importance to the fact that they did not belong to the institution. Broadly speaking, the argument is that as outsiders they are better equipped to meet the needs of the postgraduate students at a particular stage of their research careers; it is easier to spot the strengths and weaknesses in a working environment that can hinder or encourage scholarly enterprise. I have touched on the importance of mutual openness in academic relationships, and practical ways in which the visiting professors encouraged a more out-ward-looking ethos. I have also considered how the 'outsiders' viewed the significance of scholarly exchange – indeed the significance of conversation generally – and encouraged the students' appreciation of the virtue of such symposia in the making.

In an environment where all too often we rely on swift appraisals of col-leagues' work, achievements, and competence, it is easy to get into the habit of thinking in stereotypes. The lack of a shared and complete background, which might otherwise have determined the relationships between the post-graduate students and the guest professors to whom they presented their work, is here seen to be a positive boon. One of the guest professors herself commented on the advantages of having no local history to speak of:

> One of the most enjoyable things I experienced in the 'Leaky pipe project' was the op-portunity to be the specialist in an environment where I did not have a strong local history. It is also a matter of being detached from 'what's in the walls', both in scholarly traditions, but also when it comes to predetermined and mutual expectations between colleagues. (Liv Finstad)

The function of 'outsiders' in a university department has been a running theme in the discussion of what the guest professors have 'seen and given' in Lund. As researchers, the postgraduate students will necessarily move in an international scholarly community. The project has pointed out at least one way to facilitate the transition from a local to an international milieu, a step

that we can see from the statistics has been particularly difficult for women postgraduate students to take.

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Appendix
Application to ESF, European Social Fund, 2006, Visiting research mentors as a strategy to deal with the "leaky pipe" problem

Of the 6.000 employees here at Lund University 54% are and 46% women. Examining the figures more closely, however, we find a very unequal gender distribution: only 14% of the professors are women; among the lecturers and assistant professors 30% are women, where women comprise 40% of instructors without a PhD degree. The low representation of women at higher ranks contrast with the high number of women pursuing doctoral studies: among the doctoral students 52% are women. It seems that once they complete their dissertations the women disappear out of the academic system.

The exit of female academics from the universities has been described as the "leaky pipe" syndrome. It is attributed to what are presumed to be negative aspects of academic life which push promising female doctoral candidates and PhDs to decide to leave academia altogether. The purpose of this project is to combat this negative tendency. It attempts to provide doctoral candidates and new PhDs with the skills, competencies and inspiration with which they can remain within the academic world and pursue a successful career.

The target group of the project

The group in focus for the project are the PhD students and recent PhDs (both male and female) who are at the beginning of their academic careers. The aim of the project is to enable the female PhD-students to view the academy as a more comfortable place of work and consider the universities and the research sector as desirable career opportunities.

Project strategies

The goal of this project is to help make these unequal structures of the academia more visible to the PhD students, both male and female. (We should also note that there continues to be a great lack of women authors in

the course literature at all levels of university teaching.) The concrete activity of the project is to invite a number of eminent female guest professors to function as advisors in sociology, social anthropology, media- and communication research, and sociology of law.

These guest professors will have several roles. First, they will function as role models for the female research students and new PhDs. Secondly, the guest researchers will work with individual PhD students to show them what kind of contacts could be important for pursuing work in their particular field. Several studies of women in the academia have pointed out, that women are often "frozen out" or marginalized within the academia. Thirdly, the female guest professors will help the young scholars realize the potentialities of their dissertation, assess future research ideas of individual PhD students, and assist them in deciding what part of their work could be published in prominent international fora. The doctoral students and the new PhDs working together with the visiting advisor, will be able to better decide what ideas from their dissertations could be developed into high quality scientific publications as a step toward a productive academic career.

The projects will be evaluated for its impact and effectiveness. As part of the evaluation process, each guest professor will contribute an essay for an anthology about their experiences in Lund. The impact of the project will also be assessed using interviews and questionnaires given to the participating doctoral students from the four departments of the project.

As a long-term goal we hope that the presence of several well-known foreign scholars working closely with our doctoral students will give new inspiration to female researchers to remain within the academia and pursue careers at university and research institutions.

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