

Should I Stay or Should I Go

The Challenges and Opportunities of Moving Between University Systems

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1 Introduction

The scientific job market has evolved to a truly globalized market. This is epitomized not only by the English language as the de facto scientific language but also by the increasing share of originally native language journals that are offered in multiple languages or have been or will be fully converted to English (such as, for example, the BISE journal in 2015). Similarly, a plethora of exchange programs exists that allow students and academic staff to visit other institutions and exchange knowledge, ideas, and learning opportunities.

While student migration across scientific institutions is an established phenomenon (Gribble 2008) with ample structures, policies, and schemes such as ERASMUS¹ in place, academic staff migration between countries is still a challenge, even if exchange programs exist (Enders 1998). One reason may be that different career paths, varying teaching loads and different evaluation schemes for what constitutes scientific excellence are notable. This also influences the decision of where to start and continue an academic career. While the university systems themselves have been examined previously (Galliers and Whitley 2007; Lyytinen et al. 2007) and while there is some knowledge about career requirements in different university systems (Dennis et al. 2006; Dean et al. 2011; Loos et al. 2013; Recker 2013), we still do not know much about individual and contextual decisions of academics who either consider or execute a migration between university systems.

We have sought to stimulate a debate about how junior and senior academics reflect on the decision to migrate between university systems, with the aim to extract knowledge about success factors and recommendations to support such a life- and career-changing decision.

In this discussion, we convey experiences of BISE researchers who have been in a situation where a decision was required whether or not to migrate between countries with different university systems. The objective of the discussion is to provide insights about academic career decisions involving the choice of migrating to another country.

The discussion seeks to elucidate and compare the viewpoints of esteemed scholars who, at some stage of their career, decided about migrating either into or out of the Continental-European university system (CES) and who came to a conclusion about that decision.

We have been fortunate to recruit six esteemed BISE scholars to participate in our discussion. All these scholars at some stage of their career faced the decision to remain in their previous or to move to another university system. The following researchers have agreed to participate in this discussion (listed in alphabetical order with their current affiliation):

- Prof. Abraham Bernstein, PhD, University of Zurich, Switzerland
- Assoc. Prof. Dr. Judith Gebauer, University of North Carolina Wilmington, USA
- Prof. Oliver Günther, PhD, University of Potsdam, Germany
- Prof. Wolfgang Ketter, PhD, Erasmus University Rotterdam, The Netherlands
- Assoc. Prof. Dr. Michael zur Muehlen, Stevens Institute of Technology, USA
- Assoc. Prof. Dr. Kai Riemer, The University of Sydney, Australia

Each researcher provides his or her own reflection on the migration decision and its consequences, by considering the following guiding questions:

- What where the initial (non-personal) challenges that led to a migration decision between CES and ‘the other’ university system? Which were the factors that made this decision relevant and necessary? What where your impressions after the first year?

¹http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-programme/erasmus_en.htm.

- After having made the decision, what was important to build a career in the selected system? Did you spot differences that led to different actions than you would have conducted in the other (e.g., previous) system (e.g., different intensity of publishing, industry contacts, more or less involvement in university administration, more or less or different teaching)?
- What would I recommend to others who are confronted with a migration decision? What should they prepare for?

We are grateful that these six BISE scholars share their insights with us. Based on their statements it becomes apparent that we are not – as one might have expected – just looking at two homogeneous systems, “CES” and “the rest”. Instead, each university system has both comparable as well as unique features – some obvious and well-known, some subtle. Another common topic, as expected, is that any migration decision will include a variety of different career considerations but also personal aspects. And it is not necessarily the case that one aspect trumps the other; many of the scholars stress the relevance of individual life decisions that influenced their career moves.

It turns out, though, that there are some common themes that have played a role in most of the described decision processes at some stage. These include, amongst others, the configuration of the chair system (“Lehrstuhl”) that seems to be specific to CES countries and comes with different responsibilities and different degrees of personal freedom when compared to other systems. While chairs do exist in American, Australian and other university systems, they typically co-exist within departmental structures that can feature multiple group leaders and senior researchers. It would appear that such a co-existence structure for researchers is appealing to some scholars, while others look for, and embrace, the singular and hierarchical structure and responsibilities of a “Lehrstuhl”.

Industry affiliations and the appreciation of industry engagement also seem to be a distinguishing factor between different systems and institutions. CES is viewed as a leading university system in this regard. Noticeably, universities in Australia are moving into a similarly engaged, applied research direction, and also American universities increasingly

endorse industry connectivity, real-world impact, and sponsorship.

Third, how and what kind of PhD students are trained still differs substantially between systems and the universities within. This concerns the length and funding of PhD programs (through tuitions, scholarships, or indeed through research assistance jobs), but also the formal and operational structure of supervision and examination relationship. Again it would seem that the differences in this regard describe an opportunity for individual academics to find a system that suits the individual preferences and approaches best.

Finally, the question of tenure and how to obtain it was involved in most decisions. Despite the variety of regulations and processes around tenure, it is apparent that job security and decision independence remain key goals for scholars everywhere in the world. Still, in terms of tenure regulations and decisions, we see huge differences between Anglo-American systems and the CES.

In conclusion, it would appear that the academic market is indeed truly global and offers a variety of choice options for individual scholars seeking to find a place in the system. The statements of experienced and successful scholars clearly show that each system offers both advantages and disadvantages, and that clearly no system is truly ‘better’ than another. Instead, the experiences suggest that with sufficient agility and ability to compromise, scholars can find an enjoyable as well as productive environment in all university systems.

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2 From the United States to Switzerland

2.1 Introduction

My first big move was prompted by my desire to go to get a PhD with a specific advisor who happened to live in the US, after obtaining my Diploma in Computer Science at ETH Zurich. In hindsight, it was also based on a huge misunderstanding of how the US graduate school system

worked. I embarked from the assumption that as in Switzerland I had to ask an advisor and get his OK. The rest would be a purely administrative process. The US approach is one of a graduate school, where the institution vets the applicants and ensures their “basic” training. This difference led to a number of important distinctions.

First and foremost, I was not an apprentice – at least not initially – but found myself in a well-oiled machinery for training academics. Course-work, reading, assignments, and requirements led me to frequently burn the midnight oil on topics of general scientific focus. This is in contrast to my students here in Zurich who first delve into an initial research project and then learn academics on the way. The result is that US graduate students usually get a broader (and sometimes more systematic) knowledge in their initial phase; our CES system initially leads to depth on a specific topic. Also, the US system essentially expected you to become a professor as a norm – not as an option (and often exception) as in our system.

Second, US graduate school is an excellent place to sample one’s interest in a huge variety of topics. Many of my colleagues arrived with an idea of what their research would be about and ended doing something completely different. In the CES the interests of the “chair” and funding source usually curb complete changes of topics. Indeed US students are sometimes (initially) only loosely attached to an advisor and funded through school grants. The first year or two then results in some kind of matchmaking – an approach the École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL) here in Europe, for example, has adopted with the doctoral school. As a side effect comes a curiosity of other faculty members as to your thoughts that goes way beyond I experience here. I vividly remember that the instructors of a course on political economy that I took wanted to convince me to work with them on a project – a topic far away of my research interests at the time.

Third, even in its bureaucratic demeanor the experience was extremely flexible. “Everything is negotiable,” was the advice I got from a number of former PhD students. It took me at least a year to understand the profoundness of this statement. In contrast to Switzerland, where I had gotten my first degree and where a program’s rules set the boundaries of the study plan, at MIT the rules of the program were more of a

Suchman-eske² resource to provide guidance for what the program could (not should) contain. It was all a matter of making a good case for what should be changed – only the general (or oral) exam halfway through and the thesis defense in front of a committee of at least three were absolutely set in stone.

It is important to note that as in Europe I also developed an apprenticeship-like relationship with my advisor, which intensified over the years. The result was an experience that formed me as an academic and how I see the world today more than I could have imagined. Would I have become similar if I had gotten my PhD in Europe? I don't know.

2.2 Decision Criteria

My second big move was a much more conscious decision. I was a tenure track assistant professor at NYU and saw positions that seemed to be a good match to my profile popping up in Switzerland. So I applied and received offers. The first question was, obviously, if I should actually move. Apart from personal considerations the decision was based on my experience of being a faculty member in the US and my understanding of a faculty member's job in CES as gathered from the student's perspective as well as conversations with mentors in the CES. The following were the factors that influenced the decision: the base funding, funding agencies' prosperity, access to students, opportunity for collaboration, and the chair system.

- The base funding in the US is practically zero. Yes, you get some slush funds for basic travel, but there is no base funding for students (controlled by faculty members themselves). In the Germanic system, in contrast, chairs usually get basic funding to hire a minimal number of PhD students guaranteed by the institution.
- Funding agencies in many countries are in financial trouble. In some countries, the national science foundation (or whatever the equivalent agency is) grants are extremely difficult to obtain and the acceptance rates are sometimes so low that it is highly improbable that you will succeed in receiving any. Other countries have very stable national funding agencies with high acceptance rates.

- Different schools have different students. Whilst this is not a feature of the US vs. CES system, European schools are more likely to have large undergraduate programs which provide a pool of students interested in working on projects. Some US schools, especially business schools, only have a graduate program, and MBAs are not always interested in working on research projects.
- US schools usually have many people working on the same cluster of topics. In CES institutions it is more common to hire one professor per topic. Personally, I prefer clusters of expertise to get varying opinions on my work to being the only one.
- Last, the (Germanic) chair system – partially the cause for some of the issues raised already – leads to a comfortable setup in terms of base funding and autonomy (compared to the US setting). It does, however, come with more institutional responsibility – an issue not to be underestimated, as I will elaborate below.

When making this decision I felt that the positive aspects of the Swiss offer dominated the possible disadvantages – after all, I could always cooperate with people remotely – and decided to move.

2.3 Living in Another World – Experiencing the New System

In the US I had been a professor in a department whose job mostly entailed research, teaching, and fund raising mixed in with some committee work. In Zurich, I was expected to take over a significant amount of institutional responsibility. I was suddenly a University Manager. Granted, there had been some committee work in the US, but neither the breadth nor depth was in any way comparable to Europe. The result was invariably to try and distribute the work over more shoulders. Whilst I had expected to run a small group – I had imagined 4 PhD students – the group quickly grew to 8–12 members. I realized that the base funding came at a very steep price – less time to do research oneself.

The funding agency in my new country was more than sufficient to support my needs. Paired with access to EU funding and straight corporate funding I could finance my projects well. In contrast to stories I heard from other people returning,

I never experienced any pressure from my institution to raise any kind of special funding. The University of Zurich (UZH) never expected me to raise a certain amount of corporate funding or set minimal limits. As a result, I completely focused on the research that I was personally interested in instead of worrying about how to please any one funding source. Note that this would have not 100 % been the case in the US, where NSF funding is very difficult to obtain and DARPA grants are extremely tightly managed (i.e., the project officer might manage the project quite closely).

The student body in the CES was vastly different to that back in the US. At NYU, I had been in a business school; at UZH, I was in the Faculty of Economics, Business Administration and Information Technologies but the Department of Informatics has a computer science program. The result is that it was quite easy to get access to people who can program well – assuming they are hired by a local company to do some on the side programming (a competition that exists both in New York and Zurich).

In terms of collaboration with colleagues working on the same topic, (as expected) UZH did not offer as many opportunities as NYU. If I wanted to find a colleague working in the same area I mostly had to collaborate with people elsewhere. The opportunity for inter-field collaborations, however, was greater and partially compensated for the disadvantages.

The largest influence on my career choices, however, was the freedom from any dogmatic opinions on what I was “supposed” to do. The discussion on what good IS research is, was ever-present in the US. Indeed, I was told that to get tenure I should at least publish a few papers in a set of named journals. UZH just said: publish well and become a leader in whatever (international) community you pick to be yours. I don't think, however, that this is a feature of CES vs. US; I have heard from some colleagues in CES that they were presented with “instructions” similar to the ones I got at NYU (as an example I just mention the VHB JOURQUAL list). As a result of this freedom I was able to ignore the “IS dogma wars” and focus on doing good research and establish myself within a research community who would be able to write

²In her seminal book “Plans and Situated Action” Lucy Suchman discusses the usage of plans. She highlights that humans typically use them as a resource to act and not as a set of instructions to follow blindly.

letters for me – an almost ideal setup for any scientist.

Keep in mind that in both worlds I was within research-focused institutions, so publications and scientific reputation gained within the relevant research community where the main evaluation criteria. Teaching and administration were things that I was expected to do well, but not a focus for promotion. I do not add fund raising here, that was/is not a primary evaluation goal but a secondary. Its role was to ensure sufficient resources to maintain research performance.

2.4 In Hindsight, What I Should Have Thought About?

Personally, I believe that the issues I thought about were pretty central to my decision. Some of them are actually not limited to US vs. CES decisions but also have some variance within those two worlds. Just as examples, the discussions around design science vs. behavioral approaches or “acceptable”/“desirable” publication outlets exist in both worlds. My target institution, however, was completely agnostic in these matters, the primary goal being “only” research output. What I had underestimated was the influence of the difference in institutional responsibilities. I had considered it but had not completely understood its ramifications.

Prof. Abraham Bernstein, PhD
University of Zurich

3 From Continental Europe to North Carolina

3.1 Introduction

Throughout my career as an academic scholar in the field of business information systems (IS), I made two decisions related to a move between the university systems in Continental Europe (CES) and the United States (US). Upon obtaining my PhD from the University of Freiburg (Germany) in 1996, I accepted a post-doctoral position at the University of California Berkeley and subsequently moved out of the CES. Twelve years later, I decided to forego a call to return to the CES, but instead accepted my current position at the University of North Carolina Wilmington, where I am now an Associate Professor with tenure. In the following, I summarize my experiences with

both academic systems and explain the reasoning behind my decisions, whereby the earlier decision was much easier to make than the later one.

3.2 PostDoc at the University of California Berkeley

My move out of the CES in 1996 had much to do with the excitement to venture abroad, but was also intended to help me choose a career path, as the post-doctoral position was “applied”, and therefore allowed insights into both academia and private industry. Most doctoral graduates in the CES do not continue their academic studies, but choose careers in private industry with the expectation that their doctor’s degree will accelerate promotion along the corporate ladder. Short-term post-doctoral opportunities are therefore comparatively rare. In the US, however, where PhD programs are more directly geared towards academic careers, visiting and post-doctoral positions are more widely available.

Whereas the CES tends to prepare its students for a professional life of independent thinking, work, and decision making be it in management, research, or both, the US system provides more structure and a systematic foundation with coursework on various statistical and research methods, and an emphasis on teaching proficiency. Indeed, some of the more difficult challenges that I experienced after my move were related to research methods, while others, more temporary, were related to spoken and written language (wording, sentence structures, and paper composition). The need to establish a new professional network also proved challenging, as I could not rely on the reputations of my alma mater and doctoral advisors to the extent that many of my peers could. Helpful were personal traits, such as diligence, organization skills, and the ability to work independently that are emphasized strongly in the CES. Early experiences with presenting to and interacting with international audiences at various conferences and workshops throughout my doctoral studies were also beneficial.

3.3 Assistant Professor at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Once I had decided on a career in academia and my time as a post-doctoral researcher came to an end, I accepted a position as an assistant professor at

the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. During the search that led to the new position, I learned that the endeavor would have been extremely difficult for a recent graduate of a CES-based program, even though the early 2000s provided many job openings in the field of IS. The US-system is not generally welcoming to candidates from the CES with its different approaches to research and teaching and few academic supervisors with international recognition. With at least one school, I ran into formal difficulties related to a transcript of my student grades that was required to make my application comparable. The offer that I accepted was based at least partly on professional relationships and a reputation that I had been able to establish while in the US.

As an assistant professor, I encountered two challenges in particular: (1) expectations of the tenure system at a tier-one research university to publish in the highest ranked journals and to build a national reputation in the chosen field of research among peer scholars; and (2) expectations of teaching effectiveness that far exceeded anything that I had ever experienced as a student in the CES.

As it turned out, the challenges related to teaching were mitigated by a limited teaching load of three to six hours per semester during the first years. In addition, a surprisingly effective support system was available that included seminars, peer-observations, and one-on-one support from professional staff with a pedagogical background. The support in teaching was extremely helpful and reassuring, yet further increased the pressure to focus on research and publishing.

Based on my experience, obtaining tenure at a US-based tier-one university requires outstanding research skills and help to navigate the publication process in a heavily crowded field. Besides the main dissertation advisor, other senior faculty members often act as mentors. Ideally, the mentors have experience with publishing in the highest ranked journals, or even hold editorial positions, and at minimum are well-known in the community, either personally or by way of their institution.

Another important factor is the common practice to base at least the first few attempts to publish in top-ranked journals on the dissertation thesis. Given the long lead times until publication, an early start is essential to manage the tenure process within the given time frame of

five to six years, which is de facto much shorter when considering the deadlines for submitting a tenure package. The requirement is more problematic for graduates from the CES that, at least until recently, often published their dissertations as non-peer-reviewed books in fulfillment of graduation requirements. A traditional CES-based dissertation therefore counts very little towards tenure in the US, while papers that are based on a published thesis may be difficult to place in top journals. In my case, the fact that the dissertation was completed five years prior to the start on the tenure-track did not help much either. An additional difference between the two systems is a comparatively limited emphasis on grant-funding and sponsored projects at business schools in the US. This practice can prove problematic for US-based scholars who consider moving (back) into the CES.

Sensing difficulties with my tenure situation, but also for other professional and personal reasons, I started to apply for open positions in the CES in 2004. Even though my efforts resulted in several campus visits, success was initially limited. In 2006, I responded to a call for an industry-sponsored professorship without immediate tenure that promised a particularly good fit with my expertise and interests. After an initial wait of eight (!) months, I received an invitation, followed by a campus visit in March of 2007. On location, I experienced a friendly atmosphere in modern and spacious facilities. The presentation and discussions with colleagues and students went well; the possibilities and available resources matched my expectations of research and teaching. It was easy to identify common interests with colleagues, and a stunning location manifested my desire to get started as soon as possible. As one major difference with my current situation, I welcomed the opportunity to develop an entire research and teaching program around a common theme, in a way that is not normally feasible for junior or even mid-level faculty members in the US.

Following the positive visit, several months passed without any word from the committee on the status of the hiring process or my application. Meanwhile, the Advisory Committee at my US-based department recommended not seeking tenure for risk of being denied. A first step would have been to

obtain letters from colleagues at peer-ranked US schools evaluating the quality of my publications and general reputation as a scholar in the field. The recommendation of the Advisory Committee was based heavily on my lack of publications in the highest ranked journals, which had been so hard to come by. The new development required me to find a new position within the next two years (= application cycles). For reasons of negotiation and peace of mind, I naturally preferred getting started sooner, rather than later.

So, in September 2007, I assembled my application packet for the US-market and eventually sent out over fifty applications for positions that had been posted in various, mostly electronic, outlets. The large number of available openings is in stark contrast with the typical situation in the CES. However, it rarely includes full professorships at tier-one research schools, but mostly entry-level assistant professor positions that are comparable with habilitation positions in the CES, and positions at institutions that emphasize teaching and applied research and that are comparable with universities of applied sciences (Fachhochschulen) in the CES. Nevertheless, compensation in the US is comparable with the salaries offered at CES-based institutions, especially once costs of living, such as housing, are considered. Teaching loads vary between six and twelve hours per semester. Often, the rank is not preset, but determined in accordance with the experience and preferences of the candidate. Tenure is not normally granted immediately, but often after a shortened probationary period for experienced candidates.

While I was busy sending out applications in the fall of 2007, I was told by the CES-based university that I had visited a few months ago that I was ranked as number three on the list of candidates to be considered for the position, and that hiring negotiations would now commence with the number one candidate.

Meanwhile, my applications in the US resulted in nine preliminary interviews, conducted during the annual International Conference of Information Systems in December of 2007. Three campus visits were subsequently scheduled for early 2008. As is customary, the campus visits consisted of about two full days of presentations (research and teaching); interviews with colleagues, administrators, and students; social events; and tours of the campus and surrounding areas.

3.4 Associate Professor at the University of North Carolina Wilmington

In March of 2008, about six months after I had started my US-based job search, I had two attractive offers for associate professorships with a shortened path to tenure, one of which, namely my current position at the University of North Carolina Wilmington, I accepted. Considerable action followed to finalize the employment formalities and prepare for the move to North Carolina.

Then, almost two years after my initial application, I received a letter from Europe, and suddenly found myself in an unexpected predicament: I had to choose between (1) a standard associate professor position in a twelve member IS-department at a US-based public regional university business school with a teaching load of three courses per semester and reasonable research and service expectations, and (2) a full professorship at a respected CES-based university with the opportunity to lead my own department with research and administrative staff, independent budget, and considerable freedom in determining focus and direction. Tenure was not guaranteed in either case, but the possibilities were more promising, albeit ill-defined, in the latter case. As is customary in the CES, I began negotiations, hoping to get a clearer picture of crucial aspects, such as tenure evaluation criteria, as well as salary, retirement, and budget allocations. All of these items are clearly defined or can be determined quickly for a US-based position, but can be wide open and up to negotiation with university administration in the CES. Eventually, I terminated the negotiations as the process to finalize the most critical aspects just took too much time, while the US-based colleagues and administrators grew increasingly impatient.

The decision to withdraw from consideration for the CES-position effectively stalled my return to Europe for the foreseeable future, and was a very difficult one to make. The vast majority of first offers for a full professorship at a CES-based university are accepted by the candidates. In my specific case, it came down to the extensive length of the application process of several years, compared to months for the US-based process, and the considerable uncertainty that persists throughout the negotiation process about a large number of important aspects. I was also surprised by subtle, yet fundamental differences between the

two systems and the lack of mutual understanding on both sides. For example, the well-meant offer of the CES-based administration to let me teach for one semester in the US before transitioning to Europe was hardly acceptable for the US-based colleagues, given the administrative effort and costs associated with hiring a new faculty member. In contrast, there was little appreciation in the US for the offer that I was about to forego in order to honor my earlier commitment. I felt wedged between two worlds, and eventually started my new position on somewhat of a soured note.

Fast forward to 2014, I now enjoy tenure, and have begun to play a larger role in administrative service, as is expected of mid- and senior-level faculty. I am part of a well-functioning system of over seventy business school professors that I can actively help to shape. Expectations for research and teaching are manageable, whereby the levels of engagement and innovativeness are under my control and typically well rewarded. Yet, I also feel the pressures and challenges of a changing political landscape and a university system that honors the independence and self-reliance of the individual faculty member much less than what is typical in Europe. In conclusion, I believe that more understanding is required before meaningful migration will take place between the two systems. The current discussion promises to contribute positively to the goal of globalization in academia.

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4 From Germany to the United States and Back

4.1 My Situation

A few times in my life I was given the opportunity to choose between an academic position in Europe and an academic position in the U.S. I understand that personal reasons are considered out of scope for the survey at hand. Nevertheless, I would like to note that personal context played a major role in each one of my decisions. Notwithstanding the significant differences between the higher education systems in both countries, I find the working conditions for university professors overall comparable. As a

result, my personal and family-related perspectives were a crucial factor in each case.

When considering the actual academic position, the main variables I took into account were: (i) tenure vs. tenure-track vs. temporary, (ii) organizational independence vs. having a “boss”, (iii) teaching load, and (iv) salary.

I recall a difficult decision I had to make in the spring of 1988. I had just finished my studies with a Diplom-Wirtschaftsingenieur degree from the University of Karlsruhe (1984) and M.S. and PhD degrees in computer science from U.C. Berkeley (1985/1987). While doing a postdoc at the International Computer Science Institute (ICSI) in Berkeley, I sent out applications and conducted various job interviews. In the end, it came down to a choice between a tenure-track assistant professorship at UC Santa Barbara and a position as Oberassistent (senior teaching associate, a 6-year limited-term position) at ETH Zürich. Both computer science departments had, and still have, a good reputation but ETH has held a higher overall ranking throughout. Nevertheless, and despite a personal preference for Zürich as a highly cosmopolitan city, I chose Santa Barbara – not only because of the wonderful weather and natural beauty! The complete independence of the assistant professor position, combined with a perspective to stay in Santa Barbara in the long term (tenure-track!) seemed more attractive to me than the subordinate, limited-term position of Oberassistent – even though I was very optimistic regarding the working relationship with my prospective “boss” in Zürich. In retrospect I still believe it was the right decision.

One year later, in the summer of 1989, I changed my mind. I had just received an offer from a new research institute in southern Germany, FAW Ulm. The position involved heading a department of 10 researchers. Though not a professorship, it was well-paid (German payscale BAT I, comparable to associate professor) and it came with a permanent contract. The idea of heading a mid-size research group greatly appealed to me. And the long-term perspective of becoming a professor somewhere in German-speaking academia, heading a small research group with permanent funding (chair/Lehrstuhl), seemed highly attractive as well. In the U.S.

(and most other countries), the university provides funding only for the professor, whereas the Lehrstuhl system provides long-term funding for a research group and some administrative support.

Four years later I moved to Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin to take over their information systems chair. From 1993 until 2011, I served as director of Humboldt’s “Institut für Wirtschaftsinformatik”. My expectations came true. I enjoyed having permanent funding for a small group, not having to worry constantly about external funding. On the other hand, whenever a research program fit our agenda, we could quickly put together a team to assemble a grant proposal on short notice. This working style may not fit every researcher and every discipline. For work in information systems, I found it very productive.

I gained various insights from these personal experiences:

- (i) German-speaking academia is an attractive place for researchers. Working conditions are comparable and the social reputation of a university professor arguably is still higher than in many other countries.
- (ii) On the minus side for Germany, I see the higher teaching load and the often lower salary, which is only partially mitigated by other financial circumstances (such as no tuition fees for the children’s education).
- (iii) I have become a strong supporter of the tenure-track Juniorprofessur (junior professorship) in Germany. It is the closest the German system can get to the attractive assistant professor status typical for the U.S. or Canada. Even though the salary is quite modest, Juniorprofessuren are a highly attractive means to attract excellent young scholars to German-speaking academia from all over the world. For this reason I have just started a tenure-track program at the University of Potsdam, where I currently serve as president. By offering young promising researchers an independent Juniorprofessur including tenure-track, we expect to attract top talent to Potsdam.
- (iv) In many disciplines the Lehrstuhl system is an important competitive advantage compared to associate and full professor positions in

most other higher education systems. This may be of less importance in areas like the humanities where scholars tend to work on their own (*Einsamkeit und Freiheit*, loneliness and freedom, as referred to by Wilhelm von Humboldt and later by Helmut Schelsky). One of my former economics colleagues recently decided to move to the U.S., partly because the *Lehrstuhl* system did not really suit his working style – he prefers to work with senior colleagues rather than with doctoral students. If you work empirically, however, particularly in the natural sciences and engineering, the *Lehrstuhl* system has a clear advantage when it comes to attract experienced scholars.

4.2 What Does This Mean for Junior Scholars?

For a young PhD or postdoc who wants to stay in academia, a tenure-track assistant professorship or a Juniorprofessur at a prestigious university seems the most attractive option by far. The limited-term, subordinate positions we still offer to postdocs at many German institutions cannot match the intellectual and financial independence of the former. Anybody who has a junior tenure-track faculty position in the U.S. or Canada should stay there, rather than returning to Germany as a “*wissenschaftlicher Mitarbeiter*” or “*Hochschulassistent*” (i.e., a research associate).

4.3 What Does This Mean for Senior Scholars?

Upon attaining tenure, the circumstances change significantly. A German, Austrian, or Swiss *Lehrstuhl* can compete with associate and full professorships at most other universities worldwide – provided the position comes with a reasonable number of PhD student positions (at least 2) and adequate administrative support. This may well make up for the heavier teaching load and the sometimes lower salaries.

Ultimately, both professional and personal aspects need to be considered when one has the opportunity to choose between positions in different countries or even continents. Great working conditions and a high salary will be of limited help if your partner or your children are suffering from the move.

4.4 What Does This Mean for Higher Education Policy Makers?

German-speaking academia should definitely keep the *Lehrstuhl* system facilitating permanent funding for a few doctoral student positions, possibly a postdoc, and administrative support. It is an important competitive advantage in many disciplines. Moreover, presidents and deans should be able to lower the teaching requirements for faculty with a strong research record to maybe four hours a week (*Semesterwochenstunden*) – the standard load in Germany is more than twice as much. German universities should also be able to pay higher salaries for professors with a truly international reputation. And they should create more tenure-track Juniorprofessuren wherever possible.

Prof. Oliver Günther, PhD
University of Potsdam

5 From Germany via the United States to the Netherlands

5.1 My Initial Challenges and Decision Factors

I earned my B.Sc./M.Sc. in Electrical Engineering from the Applied University of Trier, Germany, and spent all in all 9 years in industry as well. Then I decided to go to the U.S., because I wanted to study and work in an international environment and experience living in a foreign country for an extended period of time. Consequently, I received a M.Sc. in Software Engineering from the University of St. Thomas, Minnesota, USA, in 2000, and spent another 2 years in industry. Initially, I was supposed to return to Germany and start a PhD, but I felt that the academic environment and training, as well as personal contacts at the University of Minnesota were excellent, and I decided to join their PhD program.

After finishing my PhD (departments: computer science and information systems) in January 2007, I decided to join the Rotterdam School of Management (RSM, department: information and decision sciences), Netherlands (NL). I had several offers from around the globe, but decided to accept RSM’s because of several factors. First, the tenure track system in the NL is very similar to the US system, which I was familiar with. Second, RSM offered me a high flexibility in setting

up my own research stream and group, which is not as easy in the US, especially with high risk/high reward research that is off the beaten path. In my case it was the combination of Artificial Intelligence, Economics, Information Systems, Machine Learning and Software Engineering. Third, in relation to the second point, RSM has a great support structure in terms of financing research visits (inward/outward), workshops, experiments, staff, etc. Fourth, the language of choice is English. The school is international and many of my colleagues come from different parts of the world. This made the initial transition much easier. Fifth, RSM is among the top 3 research ranked business schools in Europe and very well connected world-wide (especially to the US). Sixth, the location of RSM in Rotterdam is at the heart of Europe and its harbor the biggest of whole Europe and one of the biggest world-wide. This has given me access to many businesses located around the harbor and beyond.

5.2 What Was Important to Build a Career

One of the big differences after switching back to Europe is the amount of industry collaboration. Being at RSM, I have many more possibilities to collaborate with businesses than previously in the US. For instance, we have innovative large-scale projects of great importance with CISCO, the Dutch Flower Auctions, and the Port of Rotterdam. We also do policy guiding for the Dutch and German governments and on the European Union level. Being a European citizen makes it much easier to gain influence on EU policy than as a foreigner in the USA system. Further, the institutional financial support given by RSM has allowed me to hire PhD students earlier in my career. This is in contrast with the initial challenges on the tenure track. Since I was one of the first assistant professors on the tenure track, mentoring and evaluation was not well developed yet, and I had to rely on my contacts in the US to advise me during this process.

At RSM, as an assistant professor I had much less involvement in governance than I would have at an equivalent US institution. For instance, only full professors are allowed to have sole supervision of PhD students, all others can be at most co-advisors. Further, many departmental decisions only involve senior faculty members, such as the compilation of

the ERIM journal list, which is used to evaluate faculty on yearly basis.

As an associate professor, RSM offered me an Academic Leadership program that prepares potential senior faculty for higher-level responsibilities and leadership. This program introduced me to a number of colleagues from across the University who have become important links in my professional network. I am not aware of an equivalent program in the US.

5.3 What I Recommend to Others

You should prepare for an adaptation and learning period, especially culturally, with regard to both work and private life. For instance, the official language of RSM is English, but there is very little diversity in the senior faculty (there is a lot in the junior and mid-career faculty), and so if you do not speak Dutch, you are not necessarily included in the collegial community. In addition, if you wish to have fruitful relationships with businesses you will need to master Dutch quite well. For instance, we are working very closely together with FloraHolland, the largest Flower Auction world-wide, and all business and research discussions are in Dutch. I could understand Dutch from the beginning, but it was only after I learned to master Dutch (after about a year), that I was able to obtain deeper insights from the conversations with the auctioneers that improved the quality of the research dramatically, since I was able to understand the whole picture better.

Obtaining grants and funding is another big difference I found after moving back from the USA to Europe. In US business schools you are not expected to apply constantly for grants, but this is the case in the European system. Further, in Europe there are large-scale grants opportunities within the European Union research framework, such a FP-7 or the upcoming Horizon 2020 program. These grants bring interesting dynamics into the projects, since projects are usually run collectively by research teams from different countries with different rules and regulations. Another distinguishing factor is that there is hardly any military funding in the EU, which is in stark contrast with the USA.

Further, in my opinion Europe has a much better social contract between its citizens and their various governments. Social benefits and services, such as long maternity leave, vacations, affordable day

care, and good health benefits are common among and also demanded by Europeans, whereas this is absolutely not the case in the USA. In the USA taking a longer vacation is something that is not done. I believe that taking a vacation will recharge one's batteries and will improve productivity and well-being in the long run.

Finally, I really enjoyed my professional and private time in the USA, but I equally enjoy being back in Europe with its great social systems and returning to my roots.

Prof. Wolfgang Ketter, PhD
Erasmus University Rotterdam

6 Go West, Young Man. Lessons Learned and Earned after a Decade in the US Academic System

6.1 Introduction

On August 15, 2002, I began my US career as tenure-track Assistant Professor of Information Systems at Stevens Institute of Technology in Hoboken, NJ. Geographically speaking, Hoboken is part of the metropolitan New York area and located within 20 minutes of midtown Manhattan. I arrived with 2 pallets of books and personal effects and a freshly minted Dr. rer. pol. from the Information Systems department of the WWU Muenster. I had spent 10 years in Muenster – from 1992 to 1997 for my Graduate Diploma in Information Systems, then another 5 years to complete the PhD I wanted to continue my career in academia. And I wanted to migrate to the US.

Why the move abroad? In 2002, the German system was in the middle of a transition to supplement the existing system of habilitations with newly established Junior-professorships. Those who had gone through the “old” system were looking for permanent positions, while those who had just completed their PhD were deciding whether it made sense to tack on another five years for a habilitation, or whether to take a chance and apply for one of the new Junior chairs. Staying for the habilitation would have added 5 years to my time in Muenster. Switching elsewhere for the habilitation was a rare occurrence at the time, and often indicated some form of disagreement with your PhD advisor. While I got along very well with my advisor, I felt that ten years

in Muenster was enough. Had I grown up in the US system I probably would have gotten my PhD at a different university from where I got my Bachelors and Masters degrees, but in Germany changes between universities were not that common. Five years earlier I had migrated from the MS (Diploma) into the PhD trajectory seamlessly. In this transition a little more was involved.

6.2 The First Year

I had some fundamental understanding of the US academic system (and an IEEE book called “Tomorrow’s Professor” that proved invaluable during preparation). I had applied to three schools and was invited to interviews at two. One (an Ivy League school) turned out to be unattainable unless you came out of a top US PhD program – you were expected to hit the ground running with a stable research agenda, publication track record and grant-writing experience. The other (Stevens Institute of Technology) was an excellent match – a small (6,000 students) technology-oriented private university, where I had collaborated with one key faculty member before. The industry exposure I had collected in Germany proved a valuable asset (whereas the other school was not interested in this at all), and I was hired on a three-year tenure-track assignment, which was renewable for another three years (after that I had to either be granted tenure or leave).

When I arrived I was assigned two courses to teach (Systems Analysis & Design as well as Database Management) and began to establish a research agenda. I had some excellent mentoring by senior colleagues with regards to research, teaching, and the administrative structure of the US University.

6.3 Teaching

I picked up two courses I had taught in Germany and Estonia before, so I had material to work from. They were graduate-level courses in the US, taught in a part-time Master’s program. The students were working during the day and took classes at night. The majority of the students were IT professionals, and theory was not much appreciated. The students demanded practical examples, discussion, case studies, and interaction. Luckily, students tend to learn from each other as much as from the instructor, so

where I was lacking practical experience, some of the more seasoned participants provided insight from their own organizations (remember to take notes...). While a 90-minute lecture in Germany was often conducted with 45 slides in full frontal “sage on the stage” mode, I often used less than 20 slides in our 2 1/2 h lectures. I had to learn how to make classes interactive, integrate exercises into the regular flow, moderate discussions, and manage expectations.

Becoming an effective teacher is a continual effort, takes a long time to master, and involves lots of (sometimes painful) feedback. For every course we conduct a mid-semester survey with four questions: (1) What do you like about the course? (2) What don't you like? (3) What should we be doing more? (4) What should we be doing less? These surveys are invaluable in deciding on mid-course corrections before it is too late. At the end of the semester students fill out a more extensive survey, and two key items are “The quality of the course was excellent” and “The instructor was an effective teacher” (with a Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree). The Dean reviews the result of these questions with the Associate Dean, the feedback becomes part of your performance review and later becomes part of the tenure package. The best feedback I received was the recommendation to audit a course taught by my colleague Kevin, who is the most accomplished (and beloved) teacher in our faculty.

6.4 Research

I arrived in the US with a research agenda that was relatively broad and opportunistic. I spent much of the first year pursuing different topics I was interested in and submitted several grant proposals. This was different from a typical US academic, i.e. someone coming out of a US-based PhD program. Most of these candidates will spend the first 1–2 years of their tenure-track career publishing results of their dissertation in (hopefully) prestigious journals. I had been told the significance of journal publications, but did not possess a trove of content from my PhD that had not already been published, so I had to pursue something new. I applied for an NSF CAREER grant, a very prestigious award that is given to young investigators that are in the first 5 years of their academic career. The reviews were devastating. While I believed

in the topic, I had no experience in writing grant proposals and lots of catching up to do. Outside of NSF I applied for corporate funding and was successful (luck, opportunity, you name it). In retrospect, this was both positive and negative. Positive in that it gave a boost to my research (and looked good on my tenure package). Negative because I was not fully prepared to run a major project as a Principal Investigator (PI) without any Co-PIs to guide me. While the project was ultimately successful, it hit a few rough patches because of my inexperience in grant administration.

6.5 Administration

US universities have a dual structure – the business side is run by the president (chancellor in some university systems) and his/her vice-presidents (comparable to the C-level executives in a company). The academic side is run by the provost and the deans of the individual schools (in our case Engineering, Arts & Science, Business and Systems Engineering). Large schools have departments (e.g., Mechanical Engineering, Physics etc.), but in our case the Business school does not, which means that there is no management layer between the Dean and the faculty. The Dean is your boss and can have a significant impact on the quality of (academic) life. Among the faculty, there is little difference between Assistant, Associate and Full Professors. The major differences stem from whether you are on the tenure-track or are hired as clinical (i.e., pure teaching or research) faculty, and – on the tenure-track – whether you have tenure or not (yet). These differences manifest themselves in form of various committees that are open only to tenure-stream (or even tenured) faculty. Coming into this system from Germany, the subtle political nuances are easy to miss. Non-tenure-stream faculty very often have little representation on key academic committees, and significant decision-making bodies are often reserved for tenured faculty. Your job as Assistant Professor is to publish high quality papers, teach well, and be a good citizen. This third aspect is significant, because it means that you should make many friends and few enemies along the way. You will need them when your tenure case is discussed in the Promotions & Tenure committee. Luckily I was given two “easy” committee assignments,

which did not require a lot of work during my first few years, but provided some exposure and “face recognition” among my fellow colleagues.

6.6 Tenure

After six years at Stevens Institute of Technology I submitted my tenure package in the fall of 2008. This consisted of a long-form curriculum vitae, a research statement, teaching statement, some key publications, and a list of references. The Promotions & Tenure committee requests reference letters from external references. Some are taken from the list of candidate-suggested references, while others are selected by the committee without involvement of the candidate. This makes picking your references a somewhat tricky process. You want to pick well-established academics (e.g., chairs, department heads) that will vouch for you, but you want to give the committee the opportunity to “discover” an obvious choice as well, otherwise they may be forced to ask someone that does not know you well. You also must avoid conflicts of interest, i.e. you cannot name people you have published with in the last 3–5 years.

Generally speaking, every junior academic in the US is looking for the magic formula to make it through the tenure process. And every school has different rules, none of which are published. In the end, putting a tenure application together is very much like preparing for the closing argument in a court case (a US court, that is). You put together your best argument why your particular circumstances demonstrate that you have well cleared the intellectual and productive bar related to granting tenure at your institution. Which argument you choose depends on the individual case, but of the three pillars (research, teaching, service), only the research pillar makes or breaks your case. The other two are necessary, but not sufficient conditions. Your research argument can be based on the quality of publications (e.g., papers in journals that are in the Financial Times 45 list), success in the acquisition of research funding (e.g., NSF grants) or intellectual contributions in form of patents or corporate spin-offs. I chose to focus my argument on impact, illustrated by citations, standards, and mentions by industry luminaries.

I was granted tenure and promoted to Associate Professor effective fall 2009. On the one hand, this was a significant step to reduce the anxiety about job security and career prospects. On the other hand, it was somewhat anti-climactic, since most tenure decisions are rather rational and the candidate can see the writing on the wall when the case is submitted. The other aspect that has overtaken tenure as the holy grail of US academic careers (at least in Information Systems) is the fluid relationship between academic and industry careers. I know many colleagues who spent a number of years in industry and joined academia in their 40s and 50s. Similarly, one of my recent colleagues gave up his tenure-track position to join an industry research lab. Others (like Daniel Huttenlocher from Cornell) gave up tenure for a stint in industry, and were hired back (with tenure) at a later point in their careers. The fact that I have been working at the same university for 10+ years is seen as an oddity by most of my friends in industry.

6.7 Today

At a certain point in the US academic career the question of “what’s next?” arises. There are two possible trajectories – become a full professor and focus on research, teaching, and the commensurate service, or try your hand at managing an academic enterprise.

After 11 years I have taken on the role of Associate Dean of Graduate Studies in our business school. This is an administrative assignment that involves the supervision of seven graduate programs (one MBA and six Masters), including their marketing, student recruitment, academic quality, faculty development, and industry relations. It is a managerial role that turned out much more enjoyable than I could have imagined. It is a time-limited assignment after which I can either return to my regular faculty role, or pursue academic administration in a more permanent fashion (e.g., by applying for the position of Dean at a different school).

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Michael zur Muehlen
Stevens Institute of Technology

7 Moving Down Under

7.1 Introduction

In late 2008 I made the decision to apply for a senior lectureship position in Business Information Systems at the University of Sydney. The selection process was swift and efficient and I was informed of the positive outcome the day after my interview, only three weeks after I submitted my application online. It was agreed that I start my position in August 2009, relocating with my family to Australia on a permanent visa sponsored by the University. At the time I was still in the final stages of my Post-Doctorate (Habilitation) at the University of Muenster. I wanted to finish this project partly because I had invested considerable time, but also as an option to leave open the possibility of coming back to the German University system in the future.

Any decision that has such life-changing implications as emigrating to a far-away country is always a holistic decision that has many contributing factors. The main question for me at the time was: does it feel right? I see this as an important identity-related question: Can I see myself as an academic in this system? Can I see myself live in Australia, become Australian potentially? And then of course any such decision is never an individual decision. It will always include or at least affect a wider group of people, in particular the immediate family. And while much is gained in such a move, something gets left behind. We made this decision as a family, and my wife and I were equally excited about the opportunity.

We were able to make this decision, as we had previously lived in Australia. In 2003, while in the final stages of my Doctorate, I spent one year as a visiting lecturer at the Department of Information Systems at the University of Melbourne. This was enough time to experience what it is like to work at an Australian University and what it is like to live in this society. As a result, I knew the differences between the two systems before making my decision in 2008.

7.2 Differences Between the Two University Systems

The Australian academic system³ resembles that of the UK, which is very differ-

ent to the one in many central European countries. Australian Universities are organized around departments that represent disciplinary areas and act as the basic organizational unit within faculties or schools. In the German system the basic unit is the chair. As a consequence, the Australian system has less full professors, and professors generally do not enjoy the same freedom and influence in making individual decisions. At the same time, Australian departments have more full-time professional academics at different levels, whereas this middle layer (Mittelbau) is generally quite thin in German Universities. The Australian system is thus quite different; a number of levels exist for individual promotion and career progression, which means that the full professoriate is generally awarded later in life on the basis of merit and demonstrated international leadership in a discipline or field. At the same time, the everyday nature of the system is less hierarchical; the department head is a role that often rotates among senior colleagues and a large number of general staff take care of administration of teaching and research at the faculty level, performing work that in Germany would often be carried out at the chair level individually.

The different make-up in the organizational structure goes hand in hand with differences in the status and role of PhD candidates: In Australia they are students, while Germany operates an apprenticeship model where PhD candidates are the de-facto backbone of the system, taking on a variety of teaching, service, research and consulting roles besides working on their theses. Finally, in Australia research is carried out much less in direct interaction with industry partners and industry-funded research in business faculties is the exception, whereas for many chairs in the German-speaking system it is the main form of research engagement. On the other hand I have experienced research in Australia to be more philosophically grounded and mature method-wise.

7.3 What Contributed to my Decision

Against the backdrop of these differences, academically, my decision to move out of the Continental European System (CES) was based on a strong preference for working within a departmental University structure. In essence, I did not want

³To keep things simple I will speak of “the Australian system” even though most aspects I outline apply equally to Universities in New Zealand. Similarly, I will speak of “the German system” while many aspects apply to Universities in other German-speaking and neighboring countries also.

to move into what I perceived as a research management role, having to build my own chair at the likely expense of the intellectual and research part of my academic role. Marrying the demands of building a chair with sustaining and in effect still building a high quality research program did not seem appealing to me. My worry was that in my mid-thirties I would be chairing my own group effectively being the senior person whose role is to build, look after, manage and mentor a group of PhD candidates and PostDocs. Instead, I wanted to work in an environment where I could work with and learn from more senior colleagues on a daily basis, while still being recognized as an experienced and independent academic.

Another strong factor in my decision was the particular make-up or “flavor” of the Information Systems community in Australia, which I see as leaning towards qualitative, interpretivist research with foundations in the social sciences, much in line with IS communities in England, Ireland, or Scandinavia. This orientation, which stands in contrast to both the more engineering-oriented community in Germany and the more cognitivist-behaviorist tradition in the US system, provided a good fit with my own research approach.

7.4 Experiences After the First Year

My experience after having worked in the new environment for the first year was very positive. I enjoyed the freedom to work as an academic balancing research, teaching and some administrative tasks and I found myself be able to achieve a much better work-life balance than during the later stages of my Postdoctoral tenure. At the same time it became clear to me that my old and my new academic system were quite different at a deeper level.

In the education space I experienced the professionalism of my new school as a gain: the way courses are developed and delivered, the support available to individual lecturers and the wide range of personal development opportunities. Moreover, Australia is a multi-cultural society and the same is true for the University student cohort, which makes teaching both challenging and stimulating. However, at the same time this professional approach to higher education comes with less individual freedom to influence the curriculum. Gone are the days were I could offer an elective seminar on a

topic that I thought might be of immediate relevance to my students. Accreditation requirements, governmental quality assurance and professional approval processes mean that any change to the make-up of a degree needs to be planned, outlined and approved up to a year before its first delivery.

Research-wise it was notable that it was much less common to carry out research in direct partnership with industry. Third-party funded projects were rather uncommon except for some dedicated applied research institutes that would engage in contract research. However, it became clear that these differences are both systemic and path-dependent. The reason for the apparent lack of collaboration is not a lack of willingness on the part of the individual researchers or respective industry contacts. Rather, since there is no strong tradition of industry-funded collaboration there are also no practices, established funding models and importantly no budgets readily available within corporations to fund collaborative research. But the key to understanding the differences is the fundamental difference in the role of the PhD in the two systems. In the German-speaking system the vast majority of PhD candidates move into industry after finishing their theses. Because precisely these PhD candidates also do the majority of work in the industry-funded projects during their candidature, as a result they are familiar with the model and will seek out universities for similar projects later in their industry careers. This creates a self-reinforcing cycle of engagement. In the Australian model the PhD is largely seen as a qualification for pursuing an academic career, often undertaken by candidates who are deliberately moving out of industry to pursue a career in education. PhD candidates are often full-time students who are neither available to carry out such projects, nor does the model yield the same basis and understanding within corporations for the merits and anatomy of industry-funded research.

7.5 What It Is Like Working in the System

The University of Sydney is one of the eight founding universities in Australia and known as a research-intensive university. While the individual research track record is paramount for progress and promotions, the focus is not narrowly on just counting publications. I

have enjoyed the freedom to carry out non-mainstream research and been able to further build my own academic foundation by engaging deeply with works in the philosophy of science and technology. At the same time, teaching is very important since students are a major income source in the fee-based Australian system. Universities are in competition for attracting students nationally and internationally. Since teaching is highly professionalized and rigorously evaluated, strong incentives exist to invest time and effort into improving student learning experience and outcomes.

Finally, as there is less direct research with industry, for the reasons outlined above, there is also less pressure to sustain the future of the enterprise with third-party funded research, whereas in Germany professors often spend considerable time and effort recruiting new projects to fund their PhD candidates. At the same time, this reality also presents a tremendous opportunity to establish models of industry-partnered research similar to the ones that have proven effective in Germany. This is much valued by the university and a rewarding part of my role as a researcher, even though this is likely to always remain on a much smaller scale and requires much ground work in establishing models that are common place and readily understood by German corporations.

7.6 My Recommendations for Colleagues Considering the Move

For those colleagues contemplating a move into the Australian system it is useful to understand the various employment levels and how they would translate into the German system. This is important to ensure one's chances of success in the application process. The entry level into the academic system after finishing a PhD is the position of lecturer (level B). Colleagues who are finishing their Postdoctorate (Habilitation or Junior Professorship) will typically apply at senior lecturer level (level C), which many local academics would reach three to five years after finishing their PhD. Colleagues with more experience will apply for Associate Professor (Level D) or Professor (Level E) positions, depending on their track record and international standing. Finally, it is also worthwhile to be informed about and to negotiate with the university to sponsor a permanent

resident visa, in particular since temporary visa holders might not be entitled to subsidized public health care and free schooling for their children. Professional migration agents can help understanding the available options.

In summary the decision to emigrate turned out to be the right one – for myself academically and for our family personally. Working in a world-class university is inspiring and humbling and provides its own interesting outlook on the world. While I am not ready to rule out moving back to the CES at some point, there are enough challenges and opportunities here to keep me academically entertained in the foreseeable future. Finally, there is no denying the fact that living in a truly spectacular city, a multicultural and open society, as well as in an agreeable climate and with ready access

to world-class beaches act as strong opportunity cost to any potential decision to leave.

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to: Section 1

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