

“Qualified mobility: going North but thinking about the South”

Dr. Leandro Rodriguez Medina

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Abstract:

The lack of opportunities in many developing country to develop a career in the I+D sector forces young graduates to face a frequent dilemma: either they stay in their country, trying to diversify their income sources and working under precarious conditions or they leave to the developed world in search of a postgraduate education that allows them to enter its more competitive I+D sector (or, eventually, allows them to return with a prestigious degree). The appealing of some regions, such as North America, has been studied and lies in their strong and leading I+D institutions and the possibilities to develop a career as researchers. However, the reasons to choose a particular country, city or institution have been less analyzed, since it is the outcome of psycho-socio processes that include family negotiations, enacted networks, social and academic capital, and, finally, a deep change in the ways of living (at least for some years). This paper analyzes, from a STS perspective, the facets of the process of leaving a peripheral country, such as Argentina, in order to keep on developing a career in I+D. It pays particular attention to the intellectual influence of North American ideas transmitted during their undergraduate studies as well as the strategic moves to arrive at North American higher education institutions. The main conclusion is that this process is less articulated and organized that it may seem for those who understand decisions as rational outcomes of individuals. Moreover, the decision to leave seems to be more influenced by local structural constraints and opportunities and by the recruitment strategies of institutions in the developed world than by individuals' goals or interests.