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Transnational Mobility of Scholars as an Opportunity for Learning Cosmopolitanism

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This paper explores transnational academic mobility and opportunities it presents for learning cosmopolitanism. Recently, Australia has signalled its unwavering commitment to promoting academic mobility by launching a new mobility program entitled the New Colombo Plan. This Plan provides mobility grants to Australian students to study in the Indo Pacific region and it serves to further deepening and expanding transnational academic encounters. These encounters have a potential transformative power on the careers, intercultural outlooks and life courses of the participants. Such transformations may include opportunities for learning cosmopolitan values, dispositions and competencies.

Previous research found that intercultural academic encounters can generate misunderstandings, refusing the other and deepening nationalism, but they also have enormous potential for expanding horizons, cultural enrichment and acquiring cosmopolitan worldviews. Cosmopolitanism has been acknowledged as a transformative vision contemplating of an alternative society. Mobile scholars and their mobility experiences are therefore a very promising research target group because they are uniquely placed at the forefront of potential cultural and social transformations.

This paper is based on empirical fieldwork conducted among mobile scholars affiliated with the European University Institute in Florence in 2015. In twenty-five face-to-face interviews, research questions examined individual pathways for intercultural transformations and opportunities for learning cosmopolitan values, beliefs and attitudes, as well as acquiring intercultural competencies, attributes and dispositions.