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What can bibliometrics tell us about knowledge flows among scholars?

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Scholars are carriers of different types of knowledge, which they wittingly or unwittingly exchange whenever they collaborate. Some scholars embrace international mobility and travel across borders to work with experts in their field and to gain new knowledge. These internationally mobile scholars can act as knowledge brokers by acquiring relevant knowledge during their research work abroad and transferring it to their home country. However, we know little about how and what knowledge is transferred, as there is a lack of data and methods to prove this. This shortcoming is addressed in this presentation by demonstrating the potential of bibliometric data to identify the participants in knowledge flow processes, the channels through which knowledge flows and the content of the knowledge that flows. I will present bibliometric methods that I developed specifically to capture knowledge flows, using co-authorship networks, citation networks and text mining techniques. The results of the bibliometric analyses to trace knowledge flows were validated by asking internationally mobile scholars to report what they had learnt during their research stay abroad. The validation suggests that bibliometric methods can identify knowledge brokers on the one hand and reveal specific knowledge content on the other.

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