

# Doing an International Academic Career

Dr. Thomas Pederson

Prof. in Information Systems

Research area: Human-Computer Interaction

Dr. Mohit Gupta

Associate Prof. in Production Technology

Research area: Thermal Spray



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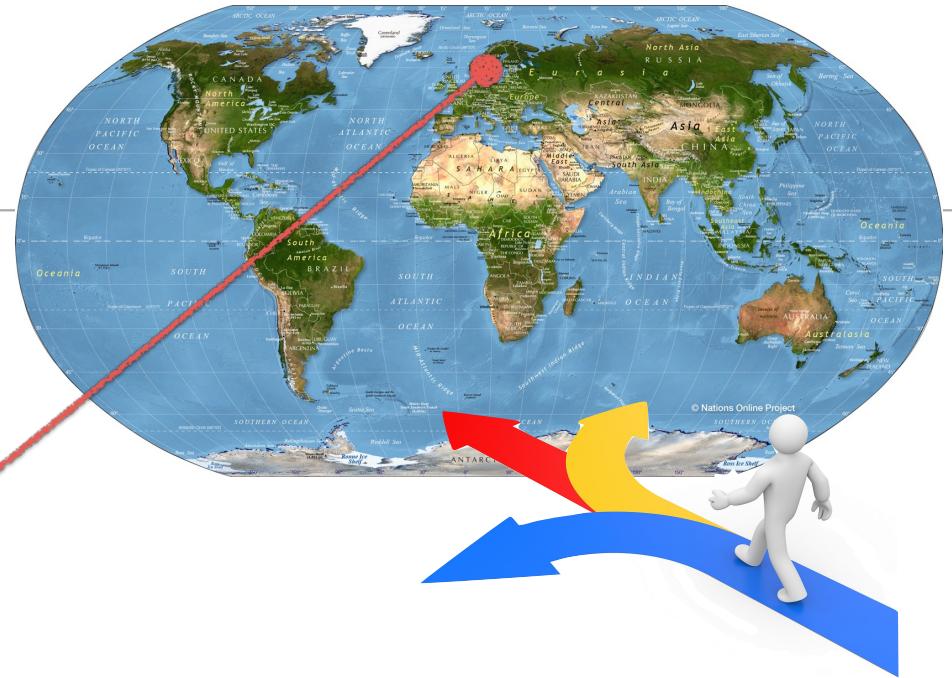
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Research area: Thermal Spray

University West, Sweden, Europe







# Doing an International Academic Career – talk outline

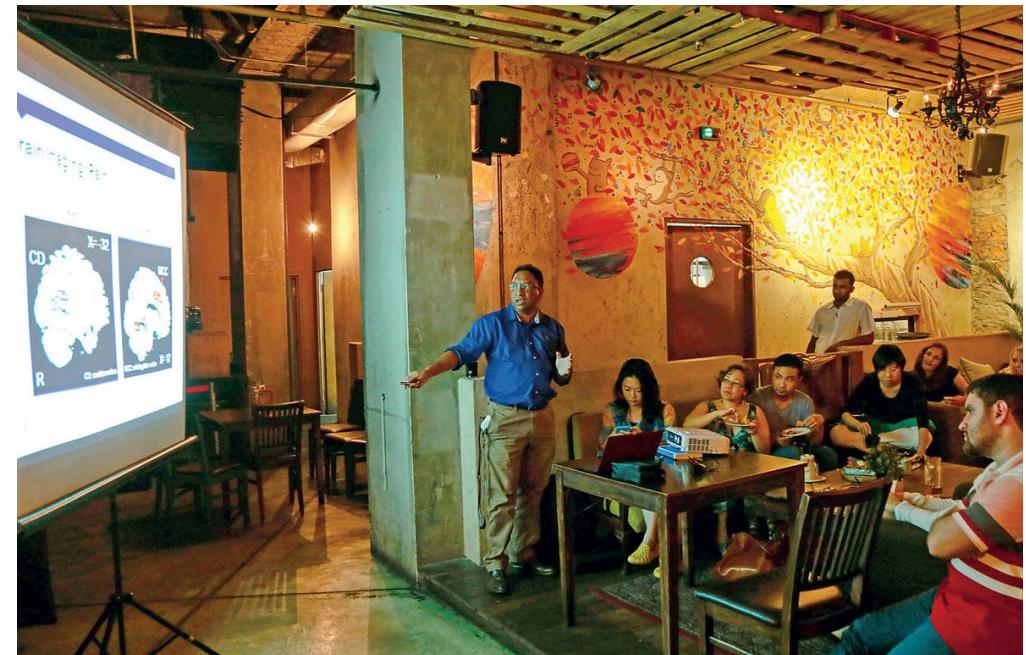
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- Why?
- Why not?
- A typical academic career
- How you advance – common assessment criteria
- How you do not advance – discrimination factors
- Career examples
  - *Mohit Gupta*
  - *Thomas Pederson*
- Lessons learned / recommendations

# Why? (an international academic research career)

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- Because most quality research is done through international collaboration
- and this is because
  - *at the cutting edge, knowledge development is organic and unstructured*
  - *many research problems are shared across the globe*
  - *creativity is fostered by alternating local focused work and global idea exchange*
  - *a shared de-facto language used for communication (English)*
  - *academic work environments and roles are pretty similar everywhere*



Credit: Science Cafe Kuala Lumpur, Daniel Chan.

# Why not? (an international academic research career)

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- Because you might want to do something else after your PhD degree, e.g.
  - *start or join startup companies building on your PhD work*
  - *join bigger industrial companies, participate and lead research intensive R&D projects*



[gred.se](http://gred.se)

# If you choose an academic career, this is what you will do

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- teaching
- research
- project management
- service to the institution (serving on academic and administrative committees)



Texas A&M – Commerce

## Typical academic career timeline (after MSc degree)

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- Year 0 (pre-PhD): Adjunct / junior lecturer
  - Year 1-5: PhD
  - Year 6-8: Fixed term appointment: post-doc, research assistant, other temporary project based employment
  - Year 9-14: Fixed term appointment: visiting/adjunct lecturer; assistant professor/tenure track
  - Year 14-19: Tenured appointment: associate professor, associate professor++ (docent)
  - Year 20+: Full professor
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- Note: starting a family and leave of absence for taking care of kids are typically always accounted for when assessing academic's productivity.

# How you advance – assessment criteria at all stages

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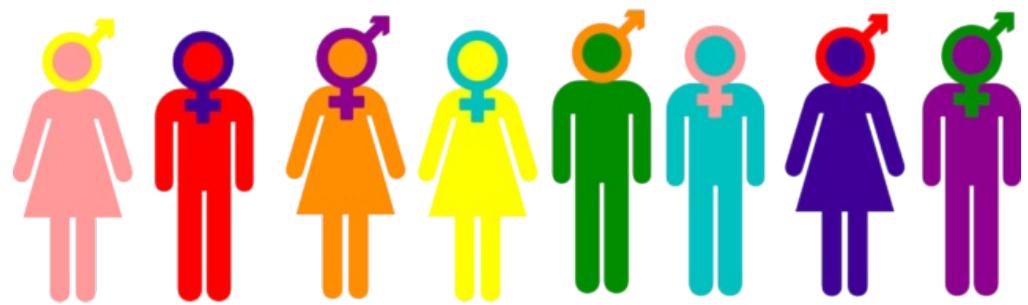
- Teaching
  - *experience in developing and giving BSc/MSc/PhD level courses*
  - *experiencing in developing and managing BSc/MSc/PhD level educational programs*
  - *pedagogical activities and achievements, formal and informal*
- Research
  - *publication record (number of publications in high ranked journals/conferences; number of citations)*
  - *ability to attract external funding for research projects*
  - *ability to start and lead research groups consisting of both junior and senior researchers*
  - *international network, contribution to the international research community*
- Project management
  - *ability to lead and manage both teaching and research activities*

## How you do not advance (discrimination)

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- Gender

- *In the academy in general, and in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) in particular, female academics are unfortunately systematically disadvantaged.*
- *Efforts to counteract this cultural problem are many and perhaps they slowly are having an effect (?)*



- Language

- *People from non-English speaking countries have a harder time doing an international career*

# Cultural differences in academic environments in different parts of the world (personal experience)

- general
  - how you address senior academics
  - how you set up meetings
  - how you get a tenured position in a place you like
- when visiting for short term (1-2 weeks)
  - sometimes local senior academics don't care about you, don't have time, don't have interest
  - sometimes local senior academics book you too much



# Career example Mohit Gupta

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- Bachelor studies in India, further studies at University West, Sweden (PhD in 2015)
- Internships abroad
  - May-July 2008: University West, Sweden
  - June-August 2013: Forschungszentrum Jülich, Germany
- Employment
  - Feb 2015 - Aug 2018: Senior Lecturer in Production Technology
  - Sept 2018 - present: Associate Professor in Production Technology
- Tasks
  - Apr 2016 – Jun 2018, Assistant Division Manager – Division of Subtractive and Additive Manufacturing
  - Jan 2022 – present: Core Area Leader – Production Processes in Research Environment Primus
  - Feb 2018 – Apr 2022, International Coordinator at Department of Engineering Science
  - May 2022 – present, Deputy Head of Department – Internationalisation

# Career example Mohit Gupta

## – personal experiences from internationalisation

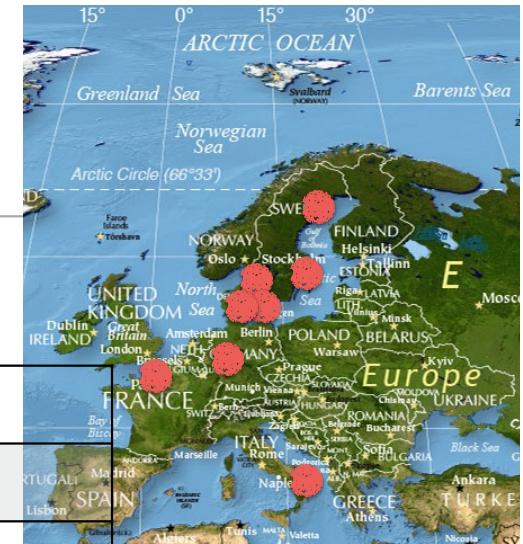
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- Summer internship at UW during 2008
  - *Great experience in a very different environment, education and work system*
  - *Opened lot of opportunities – has been vital in shaping my career*
- Experiences during work
  - *International collaboration necessary for successful career in research (publications, projects, etc.)*
  - *Learning from how things are done in other working environments*
  - *Opened up for new leadership positions*



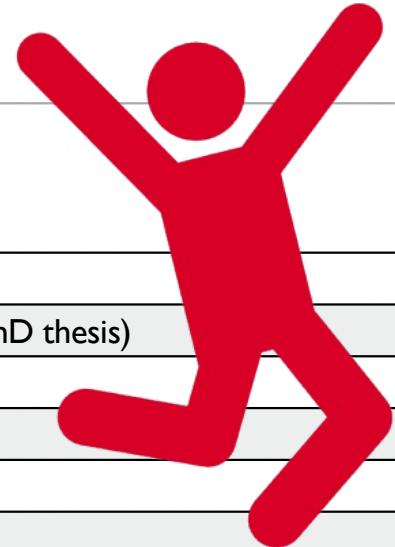
Anonymous person “skiing” in Norway, 2010

# Career example Thomas Pederson



1991-1997	MSc studies	Umeå University, Sweden
1997	MSc thesis	Ericsson Media Lab, Sweden
1997	Visiting research assistant	GMD/Fraunhofer Research Institute, Germany
1998-2003	PhD studies	Umeå University, Sweden
2004-2008	Teacher and researcher on temporary contracts	Umeå University, Sweden
2006-2007	Post-doc	Bari University, Italy
2009-2016	Senior Lecturer / Associate Professor	IT University of Copenhagen, Denmark
2016-2021	Senior Lecturer -> Full Professor	Malmö University, Sweden
-2021-	Full Professor	University West, Sweden

# Career example Thomas Pederson



- Key events that shaped Thomas' career

2003	PhD degree
2004	First invitation to co-arrange a workshop (at Ubicomp 2005 conference w. people I referred to in my PhD thesis)
	First external research grant (small, \$50.000)
2005	<b>First PhD student supervision appointment (assistant supervisor)</b>
2006	Got a post-doc position (Bari University, Italy)
	First invitation to review papers for conferences (by my post-doc supervisor)
2009	<b>First tenured appointment (Senior Lecturer / Associate Prof. At IT University of Copenhagen)</b>
2010	First invitation to co-edit a special issue of a journal (IEEE Pervasive Computing Magazine ("Labeling the World"))
	First invitation to be technical co-program chair for an international conference (Tangible & Embedded Interaction, at MIT Media Lab)
	First Invitation to be general co-chair of an international conference (ACM NordiCHI 2012)
	First Invitation to review research applications for funding agency (Icelandic Research Fund)
2011	<b>First Invitation to be member of PhD examination committee</b>
2012	<b>Second PhD student supervision appointment (main supervisor)</b>
2017	Promoted to Full Professor
2018	Started my first research lab

## Lessons learned / recommendations

- **Network actively.** (Unless you are an outstanding researcher in which people cling on to you anyway)
- **Collaborate with (external, internal) people you get along with well.** You will help and push each other.
- **Say yes if someone invites you to do something new,** even if you don't know how to do it.
- **Always do what you promised, in time.** Show that peers can depend on you.
- **Set up project deadlines, plan where to publish early.**
- **Give praise when colleagues do something good.** Contribute to a positive environment. Everyone gains.
- **Try to be proactive with teaching duties.** In this way you get to teach the stuff you want.



Mostphotos/Jovica Varga



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**Easy peasy ;-) Questions, comments, reflections?**