

Report on Teaching Sabbatical 2015

University of California Department of Geography Los Angeles



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Foreword

First of all, I want to express my sincere gratitude to the Department of Geography at UCLA that received me and gave me an inspiring and valuable opportunity to learn about the educational system at UCLA. Particularly, I direct my gratitude to the staff at the department who helped me with preparations, problem solving during my visit, and professors that invited me to take part in their lectures and also shared pedagogical material with me. Not the least, I had a wonderful experience in the classroom sharing my course with very ambitious and enthusiastic students.

Back in Sweden, I am grateful to my colleagues and superiors at Jönköping University who introduced me to the Teaching Sabbatical Program, nominated, and believed in me as a good candidate to contribute to internationalization and pedagogical development. As I am writing this report, I am confident that my experiences will have a positive impact on personal and institutional, pedagogical, educational planning and research activities. I am eager to share my reflections on my experiences with my colleagues at Jönköping University and in this report.

I am most grateful to the STINT Teaching Sabbatical Program, and I highly recommend it as a fruitful opportunity to take distance from everyday work, to being challenged by different perspectives on teaching and course planning, and, of course, to get the opportunity to be actively engaged at such an internationally renowned university as UCLA.

Introduction

My current position at the School of Education and Communication at Jönköping University, and at the time I applied for the STINT Teaching Sabbatical, covers three integrated areas of work. As director of the Global studies programme, I manage the strategic development, external relations and the curricula of the Global Studies programme. As a senior lecturer, I teach human geography in the courses of the Global studies programme as well as in geography teacher education. I am also active in a research group that is directly linked to the Global studies programme. I have both an academic and a professional background in social and international development and gender issues. Most important, I have strong interest in, and truly enjoy teaching. Some of my research is in geography didactics.

This report is about my very personal experiences and reflections. It mostly follows the outline and content as requested by STINT. First, I give a description of preparations and planning previous to my visit. Second, I describe my position and work responsibilities at the Department of Geography at UCLA as a visiting professor. Third, I share a brief summary of other activities I participated in. Fourth, I discuss lessons learned from my visit, and also make some comparisons between these experiences and my home institution. At the end, I make some concluding remarks and reflections about actions I foresee for myself, and some recommendations regarding educational planning, teaching and research at Jönköping University, and in the Swedish educational and research system.

Preparation and Planning

Initial contacts and planning

In December 2014, I received the news that I had been selected to be a STINT-fellow at the Department of Geography at UCLA, Los Angeles. My family, including my husband and two children, at that time 13 and 11 years old, and I received the news with excitement. We did not need many days to decide to accept the fellowship.

In January 2015, I was informed by STINT that Professor Laurence C. Smith, who holds the department chair, would be my academic contact. Ms. Kasi Mc. Murray, who is the department manager, would be my administrative contact. I was eager to find out what I was expected to do during my visit and also wanted to plan in good time. Hence, I emailed both in the beginning of January to set the date for the planning trip and to start the discussion about my tasks to be. I received very welcoming words back from both.

With Professor Smith, several emails were exchanged concerning the objectives of the fellowship and my teaching assignment. I studied the homepage of the Department trying to get to know staff, research, programs and courses. I made suggestions to lectures that I could offer in several courses with respect to my main areas of expertise, and hoping I would be able to co-teach in several courses. Eventually, I was asked to select a few courses I could give from the list of courses offered on the web site, and to rank them according to my preferences. Shortly after, I was informed that I was to give the summer session course "Feminist Geography". I had no objections to that and accepted. Now I knew what I would be teaching, and I could start preparing. In February, I received notification from STINT that the plans for fellows at UCLA had been changed. Instead of giving one course or to co-teach in one course, we were expected to give two courses or to co-teach in two courses. This had to do with the fact that UCLA applies a system of four quarters rather than two semesters yearly. This information, of course, changed the picture, but was left unresolved before my planning trip.

With Ms. McMurray and Professor Smith it was agreed that I would visit in March. I asked Professor Smith to recommend professors I should contact and set up meetings with during my planning visit.

Subsequently, I managed to set up and plan a number of meetings before my departure. I also made previous appointments with Ms. McMurray and other administrative staff I had been referred to. Hence, I left for Los Angeles with an agenda ready and prepared.

Planning trip

The planning trip had both the objective of solving practical matters, establishing academic contacts and to define my tasks and responsibilities. It was invaluable in many ways. I travelled with my husband and while I had meetings at the department, he looked into practical matters, such as housing, schools, and activities for the children. We booked a hotel nearby UCLA campus so I could walk, and also rented a car to be able to drive around and explore to get an idea of distances and potential residential areas.

Meetings

During the visit at UCLA, I met with both professors and administrative staff. At this stage, I was not clear about what my second course engagement would be, and what form it would take. I was eager to get an opportunity to co-teach in order to have a possibility to interact with and learn from other professors. I was also keen on learning about interdisciplinary educational programs. Hence, during the visit I had the following meetings and explored such opportunities:

I was invited to a lunch meeting with professor Cindy Fan, vice-provost of International studies, and with her assistant and program manager Germán Esparza, who manage the STINT program at UCLA. I felt warmly welcome and very inspired. This was an important meeting to clarify what the new directives from STINT meant in practice regarding my teaching contributions, and was followed up with an email communication with Ms. Lelav Zandi at STINT.

Professor Eric Sheppard, who teaches courses in globalization, economic geography, development and urban change, shared valuable insights about good teaching approaches, his syllabus in the course “Globalization: Regional Development and the World Economy”, and the two interdisciplinary programs where the Department of Geography is engaged, the Global Studies Program and the International Development studies Program. It was a delight to meet with a professor whose book in development geography I make use of in my own teaching.

I also met with Professor Helga Leitner, who has research interests in international migration, politics of immigration and citizenship, urban development & sustainability, global urbanism, urban social movements, and socio-spatial theory. Professor Leitner gave me an insight into her research in Indonesia in urban development, and gave me valuable tips about teaching at UCLA. I also got the opportunity to sit in and listen to a lecture given by Professor Sheppard and a seminar by Professor Leitner. Unfortunately, I discovered that both Professor Sheppard and Professor Leitner would be on sabbatical during my visit to come.

A meeting with Professor Lieba Faier, who teaches classes on culture and place, gender and sexuality, global interconnection, human rights, and Japan, and who was in charge of the geography major, was of great importance for my forthcoming tasks. Professor Faier had previously designed and given the course in Feminist Geography, which I was to give. She shared her syllabus, course material and gave me valuable pedagogic advice.

With all professors I inquired about opportunities for co-teaching. It became clear that co-teaching was not an option at the Department of Geography. Two planned meetings with professors were cancelled for different reasons.

At the end of my visit, I met with Professor Laurence Smith (my assigned academic contact), who teaches courses in environmental science, satellite imaging, and physical geography. In our meeting, we discussed

my tasks, and agreed that I would give the course Feminist geography twice, first during the summer session, and second during the fall quarter. I was given the freedom to develop the course and a course syllabus with respect to my own areas of expertise in gender and development. We agreed that I would clear the syllabus with Professor Lieba Faier during spring.

I also met with the administrative staff. Ms. Kasi Mc. Murray, the department manager, made sure I was referred to different administrative staff. Ms. Rebecca Goodine, budget and personnel coordinator, gave invaluable support in preparing and following up on the extensive paperwork necessary to be accepted as a visiting scholar at UCLA. She also helped arrange a meeting with the center for UCLA Faculty Housing. Ms. Lisa Lee, student affairs officer, met with me and answered my many questions regarding the course set up, including expected numbers of students, dates for syllabus posting on the website, schedules, booking classrooms, how to communicate with the students, how to produce a reader, among many other practical things that setting up a course involves.

Planning and preparations post-planning trip - arrival at UCLA

The period after the planning trip, until I arrived at UCLA in mid July, involved solving many practical matters and extensive academic preparation. Many emails were exchanged with Ms. Lee regarding the course set up and with Ms Goodine regarding VISA and my letter of appointment. Below, I make some reference to the most important and time consuming practical matters previous to the visit. Hopefully, our experiences, travelling as a family, and dealing with such matters, may be helpful to other fellows and families going to UCLA and Los Angeles.

Housing

Housing in Los Angeles is extremely complicated and expensive. During the planning visit in March, my husband and I visited the University housing services, UCLA Faculty Housing, and placed us in a queue. Although, we were not promised an apartment, the impression we got was that it was very likely that one would be available at our arrival in July. Fortunately, we did not take it for granted. Instead, we put a lot of time into searching for apartments on different websites, and making many phone calls to various real estate services. We were close to getting contracts several times, but lost them due to formal matters, for instance, some required the tenant to have an American bank account at least 12 months previously to the application, a credit score, overseas financial information and references. We also had to pay an extra deposit covering two months rent. Since we were travelling with children, it was important to find a decent apartment and being able to settle in with steady everyday routines as soon as possible. Additionally, the time between our arrival and the beginning of my teaching was not very long, and I needed to focus on preparing my course. It was not until the very last few weeks before our departure, that we managed to get a contract. We signed up for a small two-bedroom apartment in Brentwood. Since it was unfurnished we had to rent furniture and complement with basic kitchen utilities from IKEA. If we had waited and searched for an apartment in situ upon arrival, we might have been able to get a better price. However, it was not a viable option to us. The location (Brentwood) was excellent in a very nice

neighborhood, close to some restaurants and within reasonable distance to UCLA. I took the bus, about 15 minutes, everyday back and forth to UCLA.

VISA

The VISA application requires substantial work in filling in information, making an appointment at the American Embassy for interviews in good time, and making sure to get the VISA in time. We had great help by Ms. Goodine at the department of geography, but even then, it was time consuming. At the time of the interview at the Embassy, we were informed that they had computer problems, and that our visas might not be ready in time for our planned departure. Fortunately, all worked out well and we could leave as planned.

Insurance

UCLA demands you and your family are insured. There is an established insurance policy offered by Garnet and Powers. However, you have the possibility of waiving their insurance if you provide proof of your own choice of insurance covering their very strict requirements. I am very grateful to Jönköping University who provided me with an insurance policy from Europeiska, including a letter establishing exactly what it covered with respect to UCLA demands. The rest of my family bought supplementary insurances to our regular home insurance, which also had to be approved by the International Center at UCLA.

Family issues

At the departure, our children were 12 and 14 years old. They were about to start sixth and eighth grades according to the Swedish school system. Our initial plan was that they would start elementary and high school respectively in Los Angeles public schools. The fact that it was very difficult to find an apartment complicated the search for schools. The children had the right to enter the American public school, but it was not optional to choose school. In fact, we could not make contact with any school until we knew where we would live. As time passed and we could not get an apartment, we opted for "Sofia Distans" which allowed them to follow the Swedish curricula and return to their respective classes in the Swedish school. It had both advantages and disadvantages. The biggest disadvantage was, of course, their lack of social interactions with classmates, and friends of their own ages. Consequently, activities outside the home became very important. Our son plays ice hockey and had a great time training and playing at the LA Kings club. Our daughter affiliated in gymnastics and cheer leading. Additionally, Los Angeles has so much to offer in terms of a wonderful climate, access to the beach, the mountains, among so many other things to explore. My husband was on leave and dedicated to supervising the home schooling and was very engaged in driving the children to different activities. In sum, we all had a wonderful time as a family, becoming very tight and sharing an everyday life with new routines and opportunities.

A final advice about practical matters is to be prepared to also deal with a great deal of them upon arrival. We arrived in mid July and got access to the apartment July 30, hence, we had a temporary living for one and a half week. My teaching started on August 3:rd, and even though I was well prepared, I needed some

days to get things in order and to settle in at the department. At this time, I was very fortunate to have my husband who took charge of many of the practical matters that did not require my direct involvement. As always, Ms. Goodine was extremely helpful in making sure all paperwork was up to date.

Position, tasks and responsibilities

My main responsibilities and tasks involved developing, and giving a course that was offered as an upper division course on the website of the Department of Geography. I was titled, visiting professor, fully in charge of the course and the sole instructor.

The course had two entries for students: one in geography studies, and one in gender studies. On the website it was labeled M146. Feminist Geography or M146 Women's studies. As mentioned earlier, I gave the same course twice, once during the summer session and once during the fall quarter. The summer session and the fall quarter courses were very different in student compositions, and time frames, and allowed me to try out my pedagogical approach in different settings. Giving it twice, of course, also gave me the opportunity to refine and change some content and pedagogical material for the second session. Even though most of the material was ready for the second course, it did demand a redesign of its structure, and adaptation of examination assignments.

During the summer session the course involved four hours of weekly lectures during six weeks, including discussions, and during the fall quarter it involved three hours of weekly lectures, including discussions, during 10 weeks. The course was expected to cover "Critical engagement of gender as concept of geographic inquiry. Gender as spatial process, analysis of feminist geographic theory and methods, landscapes of gender, challenges of representing gender. Spaces of femininity, masculinity, and sexuality." Within this framework, I was given the freedom to develop a course syllabus, to choose course literature and to design the course and examinations according to my own areas of expertise and preferences. Professor Lieba Faier approved my proposed syllabus during spring previous to my arrival. Since, my background and expertise is in gender and development, the second half of the course had that focus. The first half was more focused on geographic and gender analytical approaches and concepts, providing a historical background to different theoretical approaches to integrate feminism, gender and space, as well as examples of empirical research.

In the summer session I had 16 students and in the fall quarter 67 students who graduated from the two courses. In both groups the composition of students was very varied. Some students had a background in geography and some had a background in gender studies, and no previous knowledge of the other. Some were doing their second year, and some were master students. In the summer course there was an even mix of women and men, while women dominated the fall quarter. There was a great mix of nationalities. Many were of Asian origin, some Latin, some European and most of them American.

Planning

The syllabus for the summer session had to be ready during spring, which consequently, demanded me to

design the course, choose course literature and develop preliminary lectures with clear objectives and a schedule previous to my arrival. I also developed a reader with selected articles and contacted the UCLA bookstore to make sure the course literature would be available at course start. Upon arrival, I had about one week of preparation to make all practical matters work such as: learning to communicate with students, sharing my power points, managing the classroom utilities, and of course doing the final polishing on my lectures. I was very fortunate to get my own office, and very helpful support from Brian Won, the Department Technical Advisor. During the fall course, I got a room mate, Professor Andrew Fricker, whose company I appreciated very much and who was very helpful in giving me advice on how to handle and solve issues that came up during the course of time.

Teaching

In teaching, I made an effort to provide different theories and perspectives on the matters in focus. In relation to lectures, I sought to engage students in critical discussions and exercises that required them to question, choose and motivate the best use of theoretical perspectives and concepts. To promote learning, I combined factual knowledge with empirical examples, films and exercises/discussions that required collection of data material and personal reflections. I also included collection of data to be processed, analysed, and presented both in writing and oral presentations. I was very happy to hear that some students had been inspired to make use of the data in other courses as well, for instance in cartography. The course design was my own but also with references to the valuable advice I had received during my planning trip from different professors. I was well prepared when I started my class in the summer session. Still, I must admit that the initial sensation of lecturing at UCLA was a mix of excitement and nervousness. Even if I knew my subject very well, I did not know what to expect from the students, and how they would experience my approach to teaching. In addition, I worried that my English would not be sufficient to express everything I had in my mind. As expected, I felt increasingly comfortable with the language and in my role as time went by.

Apart from lecturing, I had weekly office hours where students came and discussed what had been covered in lectures, and asked for guidance in examination assignments. Students were very ambitious, engaged in discussions in the classroom, well prepared for class and often willing to stay after class and continue discussions.

Examination and grading

In defining the number and types of requirements of the course, I used an earlier syllabus for the same course as a reference. The design of the different assignments, however, were my own, and modified from assignments I had applied before. Apart from active participation in the classroom, examinations involved a mid term exam, including a reading response, and a quiz with multiple choice, and short answer questions, and a final exam, including a regional gender analysis, and an essay. I read and graded all assignments in both courses myself. After a couple of weeks into the fall quarter course, I was informed that I would be allowed a reader, since the number of students, surpassed 40. I was not familiar with the role of a reader, and did not know of this possibility when I designed the assignments. A reader assists the

professor in grading examinations and is normally a student who has taken the course before and is familiar with the subject. I thoroughly considered the offer but came to the conclusion that the design of the assignments was not appropriate to allow somebody else do the grading without a very close supervision by myself. Had I known earlier, I might have designed the assignments differently and could have saved many hours of work. Fortunately, I found it enormously interesting to read the assignments and get to the opportunity to learn about how the students had interpreted and solved tasks.

UCLA applies a letter-grading system where each examination assignment constitutes a percentage share in the grading system. I did not have any experience of applying a letter-grading system. With the support of Professor Faier, I constructed a grading system with specific grading criteria for each examination assignment. This was presented to the students in the course introduction, and in the respective assignment directives.

Feedback

At the end of each course, the students filled in a standard course evaluation form. As I am writing this report I have not received the results of the course evaluation of the fall quarter. I received very positive response from the summer session in the course evaluation. In addition, I received many personal emails from students thanking me, and sharing their insights and experiences of both the summer session course and the fall quarter course. Due to the fact that I was the sole instructor, and very independently developed and gave the course, such feedback was important to confirm my own feelings of satisfaction, during class and in reading assignments.

Other activities

Naturally, the extent of work that I invested in designing, giving and following up on the two courses had implications on time available for other activities during the visit.

The second most important activity I performed was to sit in and listen to most lectures in two courses that I selected as most relevant to my own research, teaching interests and with reference to global studies: "Introduction to Area studies" given by Professor Adam Moore and "Introduction to cultural geography" given by Professor Lieba Faier. The objective was to gain input to my own teaching both in terms of pedagogy and content. Both professors very kindly shared all their course material, including powerpoint presentations, course literature and syllabuses. This provided me with insights into classroom practices and references to alternative theoretical approaches and research that may be interesting to use in courses at my home university. It was also interesting to discover that we shared many teaching approaches both pedagogically and in the use of concepts and theoretical references.

When possible, I participated in, social gatherings, seminars, dissertations and public lectures that were given at the department. The Tod Spieker Colloquium series included public lectures in both human and physical geography, with topics covering urban geography, tropical forests and landscape change. Unfortunately, my classes during the fall quarter and my office hours coincided with the department

higher seminars.

In order, to get more insights into the educational system, I constructed an interview guide and invited professors to a meeting to learn more about the following topics: their views on “good” education, the relationship between research and teaching at UCLA, career opportunities, the status of geography at different educational levels in the American schools, and views on how to teach about sustainability in geography.

Comparison between the foreign and the home institution, including important lessons

The Department of Geography, UCLA and Jönköping University, the School of Education and Communication are two very different Universities providing higher education. Below, I will briefly mention the main differences and lessons I have identified regarding alternative course planning, teaching, examination, and grading approaches. Some are applicable and others not in the Swedish educational system, due to the great differences in educational systems and organizations. Also, I have already referred to some aspects earlier in the text.

First of all, UCLA is a public research university established in 1919. The university offers 3800 courses yearly within 109 scientific departments, including 125 majors. The academic year is divided into four quarters, autumn, winter, spring and summer. The university accepts 42000 students every year and 14,4 % have international background. Jönköping University has around 10,000 students, of which 1,500 are international students. Jönköping University is a private, non-profit institution of higher education. At Jönköping University research and education are carried out at four schools: Jönköping International Business School, School of Education and Communication, School of Engineering and School of Health and Welfare.

The department of geography at UCLA ranks as among the top departments in the US. It is recognized internationally as a leader in research and education in both physical and human geography. The department offers two undergraduate degrees (B.A.) in in Geography and in Environmental studies and graduate degrees (M.A., Ph.D.) in Geography. At the school of Education and Communication at Jönköping University the education is organized in educational programs rather than disciplinary departments, offering four undergraduate degrees, of which I am the director of one, International work – majoring in Global studies. Geography is one of several disciplines within the Global studies program and linked to a research group in Global studies.

Research universities in the US, as opposed to teaching universities, have graduate programs and their focus is very much on doing research. This means professors teach less and have more time available for research. Whereas UCLA is a research university, I would characterize the School of Education and Communication at Jönköping University more in terms of a teaching university where research is gaining more and more ground. These differences in size, resources and organization, obviously allows for different approaches to teaching, and research.

At the department of geography at UCLA all courses are designed and given by individual professors and course content is closely related to their research. Professors are free to develop their own syllabus with respect to their research and pedagogical expertise. One professor may give a course with a particular design during one quarter. The next quarter a different professor may give it with a somewhat different focus. Students do not get any opportunity to redo exams if they fail. Instead, they have to retake the course, and consequently it may be different. Professors are not guided by or obligated to follow objectives defined at national level for educational programs and courses as in the Swedish system. This has both pros and cons. My impression is that it allows for more creativity and relevance with respect to professors' competences and updated research. It may also bring their passion and inspiration about their fields into the classroom. On the other hand, labor market relevance and practice may get less attention. From the students' perspective, the total time it takes to finish an education may also be prolonged.

Designing and giving a whole course by myself was different from how I am used to work in course teams, co-teaching, and co-designing courses at Jönköping University. My personal experiences and lessons are both positive and negative. On the positive side, I was very much in control of giving the course a structure with a logical sequence of lectures based on readings and assignments. I designed the course making use of a pedagogical frame of reference, based on my own research in geography didactics, where subsequently I included the theoretical and empirical references of my choice. It was very rewarding to see that students were following the pedagogical structure and expressed very positive learning experiences. On the negative side, I lacked peers to discuss course content and course design which I find very fruitful and rewarding at my home institution.

I was positively informed that, at least at the department of geography, teaching is a valued merit for career advancement together with research merits, and that course evaluations very much play a role in the regular assessments of staff achievements.

The system of Teaching Assistants, Teaching associates, Teaching Fellows and Readers was new to me. According to the TA Handbook of the department of geography the objective is to give qualified graduate students training for academic and academic-related careers in teaching and research, as well as an opportunity for an income during their studies through the TA-positions. The TAs' roles involve supervising assignments, discussions, and labs in undergraduate courses in close co-operation with the professor. As mentioned earlier, it did not work out for me to include a Reader. There are several advantages for the graduate students as mentioned above in gaining both training and resources in teaching. For professors it frees time to focus on lecturing and research. On the other hand, I presume that it is not easy to transfer all types of assignments to be graded by someone different than the professor, unless the TA works very closely with the professor. I wish I had had more opportunities to learn about this system.

The application of a mid-term exam and a final exam allowed students to get an idea early about their preliminary grading levels. Hence, many would visit me during office hours to discuss how they could improve their final grades. Students appreciated this.

In general the students in my two courses were very ambitious. They were well prepared for individual classes, very active in discussions, and in general, demonstrated very high levels both in academic writing and oral presentations. They were very respectful and polite. Some of them referred to my first name, Åsa, but most of them called me Professor Westermarck. Participation in lectures was part of the requirements, and would affect grades. Hence, most students participated in all my classes, and if they did not they were very careful to submit a note verifying relevant causes of absence. Students were very focused on getting good grades. Many students were aiming for an A, and anything below B was not acceptable in their eyes. In conversations with other professors, grade inflation was mentioned as a result of the very competitive environment at UCLA, students' generally high level of ambition and pressure from their families to perform well etc. I also learned that students sometimes drop a course if they get the indication that they will "only" get a C grade. Even if the grading system required time and effort to develop, I found it very useful in communicating requirements and criteria to students in a transparent way.

Another difference I noticed was that most courses use research articles as reading material rather than textbooks. This was an important lesson, which I bring with me home. In conversations with professors, I learned that in upper division courses, research articles are preferred to textbooks with the objective to provide students with deeper knowledge about subjects, and also to provide training in academic analysis, and writing.

It was obvious that professors at UCLA work a lot. Many professors were absent, on sabbatical, worked at home, or only came into the department to teach, for office hours or seminars. Partially, this was due to the traffic in LA, and the time commuting between their home and UCLA. It was not easy to make appointments. Opportunities and spaces for interaction during coffee breaks were scarce. Particularly, during the summer session the department was pretty empty. I spent every workday day at the department from the start of the summer course until the end of the fall quarter. In average, I worked around eight hours/day.

Action Plan

Designing and giving a course alone versus co-teaching and co-design

In terms of my personal experiences and lessons from my visit I appreciated the high degree of freedom and responsibility given to me as a professor to develop my syllabus with respect to my own research expertise, and to be able to design a course with a clear structure based on a logical framework running through the whole course. Being the sole instructor gave me the opportunity to be more in control of the sequential order of content and to give a deeper perspective on the subject. On the other hand, I lacked the opportunity to discuss and to be challenged in my own perspective. In my role as director of the global

studies program at home, and as responsible of individual courses, I will encourage a combination. I will promote co-teaching and co-design, but in smaller teams.

Flexibility in course development versus strict goal orientation in syllabus

The Swedish educational system is based on strict regulations with national educational goals, which are transmitted down to individual course syllabuses with the aim of ensuring educational quality. In contrast, my impression was that almost no such regulations were applied to ensure educational quality at UCLA. Rather professors' competences, a close integration of research in courses, a well-defined tenure track, and career assessment system seemed to play an important part in ensuring quality. Considering the substantial differences in the Swedish and the American educational systems, it is difficult to suggest concrete actions. However, I do find it wise to strive for, flexibility in syllabuses, and parameters to ensure that updated research and personal research performed by teaching professors is included in course content.

Promotion of research competences in education

UCLA and the department of Geography are renowned for excellence in both research and in pedagogical work. AT UCLA professors are expected to teach 3-4 courses annually, and are expected to keep high standards in both teaching and research. They have the rest of the time available for research. Hence, time for research may be planned according to how many courses they choose to do during one or two quarters. Planned sabbaticals for research, is something I believe Swedish research and educational institutions should look into in order guarantee professors fair opportunities to engage in research during extended periods without teaching obligations, and with sufficient resources.

Pedagogical resources and classroom activities

Both professors in the two courses I followed, made use of pictures, films and film clips in order to exemplify theoretical and conceptual statements. This was very appreciated by the students. Discussions were integrated in the lectures. This is something I already do, but an insight, I want to share with other professors and course planners.

Promotion of academic writing

I was impressed by the academic writing skills in several reading responses submitted by the students. As mentioned above, one concrete action to promote such skills at my home institution is to use more research articles as reading material in combination with textbooks. I will also promote many opportunities for students to train and apply academic writing as integrated requirements in course examinations and assignments.

Other actions

I will explore the possibility to give my course in feminist geography at Jönköping university to both Swedish and international students. The fact that it is in English, and based on many of the above positive experiences, would contribute to internationalization at Jönköping University. It would be interesting to

evaluate students' views on a course given by a single professor in contrast to most courses that they are used to taking with several professors involved. It would also be interesting to compare how Swedish (and international) students would solve the assignments in comparison with students at UCLA.

I am also considering the possibility of writing an article about the pedagogical framework I applied in the course design and in teaching to discuss its effectiveness in teaching feminist geography. The reading responses submitted by the students constitute a very rich data material exemplifying their learning process, and how they interpreted concepts and applied them to their everyday lives and identities. I assure, it was very satisfactory and exciting to read about the multitude of identities reflected by the mixture of participants and their varying backgrounds.

In sum, I had an intense period with great learning experiences that left me with a feeling of wanting more. There was so much left to explore. It was an extremely rewarding experience both personally and professionally, and I truly made an effort to make the best use of the time. Still, I remain with a feeling of wanting more time and opportunities to network and interact with other professors. Therefore, my final recommendation for the future is to limit teaching alone to one course, and to open up time and spaces for co-teaching and other interactive activities.

Last but not least, I would very much like to have peer STINT fellows at Jönköping University to share and to work with in processes of change. I encourage all my colleagues to apply for this very rewarding scholarship.

January 2015