Exploring career (im)mobilities of Kenya hoteliers in the UK

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This paper serves as a useful conduit in 'voicing' migrants' lived experiences in a foreign country and in particular, considers shedding some light on the impact of migration on migrants' hotel careers. With reference to Kenyan hotel migrant workers in this study, their career development (or lack of) in the UK is examined. The traditional theory of career mobility whereby education and professional training have a strong positive impact on careers is challenged in this study. Instead we found that despite their world class industry-specific training, Kenyan hoteliers faced multiple (im)mobilities in their workplace. Using the mobilities theory and its dimensions of 'power' and 'emotions' we explore the lived and career experiences of these migrant workers. We examine how their skills are under-deployed and the emotional disruptions that follow. We draw attention to the changes in the politics of power of movement in foreign land. This knowledge is generated by the use of modified life history interviews with thirty-two Kenyan migrants including ten face to face and six Skype interviews conducted with participants that were still living and working in the UK. The remaining sixteen face-to-face interviews were conducted with participants who had returned to Kenya. The life history technique gives the overall picture of an individual, however, this research, focused only on the career stage of the participants and as such, parameters were drawn which started with their post secondary education through to their working lives as at the time of the interviews.

Keywords: Hotelier training; Kenya; UK hotel industry