

Navigating the global space of tertiary education

- an exploration of the educational strategies of mobile students choosing to attend lesser known universities abroad

Over the past ten years the number of students who go abroad to pursue tertiary education has more than doubled, from 1, 9 million in 2000 to 4.1 million in 2010 (OECD 2012). This growing number of students studying abroad contributes to the overall flow of individuals and ideas across borders, and to the development of transnational elites. This is especially true for mobile students who attend “elite universities” in the USA, UK and France. As pointed out by sociologist Michael Börjesson (2005), an investment in an education at one of the American Ivy League universities or France’s *Grand Ecoles*, is not only an investment in a significant educational capital with global applicability, but also an investment in an institutionalized transnational social capital that stretches across most of the world.

It is less clear to what extent this also applies to students who go abroad to attend international programs at lesser known universities in smaller European countries such as Sweden, Norway, Denmark and the Netherlands where the national language is not one of the major world languages but where courses and educations are increasingly offered in English and where the educational structures are adapted to the Bologna model in order to ease mobility (at least within Europe). This paper which is based on some *very preliminary* findings from an ongoing research project exploring internationalization of university education in Denmark, discusses educational strategies of students attending internationalized English-medium educations at Denmark's second largest university.

The paper starts with a brief description of the research project¹ to which it refers. This is followed by some remarks concerning data and methods. Then I give a brief introduction to internationalization of university education in Denmark, which is our example of a small European country in the process of reforming higher education. This is followed by a discussion of 3 principles that seem to structure educational strategies when students navigate global space and end up in Denmark: nationality, practical sense (of possibilities), and economy.

I need to stress that this paper is a very rough draft, which is far from finished!

About the project

This paper relates to a research project that aims at contributing to our understanding of the way internationalization changes university educations in smaller European countries where the main language is not one of the major 'world' languages, but where a growing number of courses and educations are made available in English. The project focuses specifically on university education in Denmark and aims at contributing with knowledge about the Danish case. It does however also consider Denmark to be a specific example of a more general development in comparable countries.

The project also aims to contribute to the discussion of how the conceptual framework in general and the educational sociology in particular of the late Pierre Bourdieu may inspire studies of internationalization of university education. In his own work on the French educational field, Bourdieu

¹ The project is funded by the Danish research council FKK and undertaken by an interdisciplinary group of scholars from the Faculties of Arts and BSS at Aarhus University (2012-2015)

practically never considered internationalization. This is hardly surprising as he did most of his educational research during the 1960s and 1970s, when internationalization - at least in the form discussed today in terms of increasing student mobility, international ranking of universities and joint degree programs, for instance - was practically a non-issue. There are the occasional references in Bourdieu's work to the fact that French higher education was related to a broader international context. In *Homo Academicus*, for instance, he discusses the value in the French academic field of educational credentials acquired abroad (1984/88: 61-62), and he at least indicates the presence of foreign students at French universities (ibid: 237). Still, his main interest in the educational research was the reproduction of the "dominating classes" through the French education system and the homologies between the educational field and the field of power in the French society (1984, 1989).

During the 1990s Bourdieu's scholarship did however become more directly concerned with the effects of internationalization and globalization (e.g. Bourdieu 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999). In this work Bourdieu is on the one hand concerned with the challenges of internationalization in relation to "the internationalization of intellectual life" (199: 220). On the other he is concerned with the emergence of specific "world fields" or "international fields" into which national fields are being drawn "while retaining more or less autonomy" (Bourdieu 1995: ix). With reference to areas such as law, economics and literature Bourdieu argued that these new international fields are created through the increased competition between agents and institutions from different national systems creating new fields with their own symbolic power and their own hierarchies of symbolic capital. These new international fields interact and interfere with national fields as some agents are likely to operate in both (Bourdieu ibid, see also Madsen 2006).

This emerging interest in Bourdieu's later work for international fields created through increased international competition and cooperation has in recent years inspired scholars within different disciplines - law, literature and educational sociology for example - to develop Bourdieu-inspired approaches to internationalization (references).

One such approach follows Bourdieu's concern with reproduction through the educational system by looking at educational strategies of students going abroad in order to understand how they come to choose specific places and universities. In a Bourdieusian sense strategies may be seen as navigation in a 'space of possibilities'. The possibilities individuals perceive as available options for action depend on their habitus (internalized dispositions acquired through socialization) and their capitals (e.g. exams, network and money) with reference to their position in social space. Different individuals may thus see different possibilities in the same kind of situations depending on their habitus and capital. In his research on educational strategies in France, Bourdieu showed that individuals consciously and unconsciously strive to reproduce or enhance their capitals and positions which led to strategies of reproduction. With regards to internationally mobile students scholars have explored in what way going to university abroad fit into strategies of social reproduction. Some of this research (e.g. Munk et al 2012, Börjesson 2005) suggest that students who go abroad tend to choose universities that at the very least reproduce their current social position. Referring to Bourdieu's concept of practical sense (ref) this would suggest that students navigate with regards to a sense of space and place. This of course makes sense when we consider students who go to Harvard or Oxford or other universities which are already on the students' radar. It is less clear how students can act on a sense of place and space towards lesser known universities. Research has particularly looked at mobile students from smaller countries like Denmark (Munk) and Sweden (Börjesson) that go to universities abroad. Our project aims instead at understanding which educational strategies lead different students from various places in the world to

the same university in a small European country (rather than exploring how different students from the same country will be inclined to go to different universities).

Another Bourdieu-inspired approach to internationalization explores the evolving international field of higher education constructed through the actions of agents such as states, universities, international and private organizations like the EU and WTO or Times Higher Education Supplement, who are engaged in struggles to define a common ground for institutions of higher education and to position educational institutions in an order which makes it possible to distinguish the good from the better. In their discussion of university ranking for example Kauppi and Erkkilä (2011) have suggested that a structuring principle for the evolving international field of higher education which emerged during the 1990s were performance lists and comparisons of universities issued by various organizations and agencies. These international comparisons were not just descriptions of universities and their differences. They increasingly became measurable prescriptions (Kauppi & Erkkilä 2011, Bourdieu 2005 [Kings House]) and formalized as for instance "OECD-indicators", "PISA findings" and "Bologna criteria". Over the past decade these comparisons have been supplemented by a number of international ranking lists which appear to be measuring the quality of universities as if hierarchies already existed. Simon Marginson has argued that international ranking lists and especially dominating lists such as ARWU (also known as "the Shanghai-list"), THES (ranking by Times Higher Education Supplement) and QS (from 2004-2009 part of THES), appear to be imposing "a kind of field structure" onto "international space" (Marginson 2007: 3). Ranking lists function both as mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion - only a fraction of the world's more than 9000 universities are included on any of the dominating lists - and as networked hierarchies of select universities. The dominating ranking lists are sufficiently similar to be seen as competing claims to the same field and different enough to indicate an on-going struggle about the exact classification and belonging of specific universities.

While there are a number of competing claims to university ranking besides the ones that dominate at the moment, it appears to have become practically impossible to challenge the principle of ranking. Kauppi and Erkkilä (2011: 314-315) have suggested that this is because ranking lists tend to confirm a practical knowledge which is already present. Ranking lists do not simply impose a new order where none existed before. Rather they convert practical knowledge to actually existing hierarchies. The stakes involved in international ranking are many as a university's position on one of the dominating ranking lists is assumed to influence the university's ability to attract funding and mobile students. Although agents in the field generally take for granted that there is a correspondence between position on ranking lists and ability to attract funding or students, there is surprisingly little research into the actual existence of such a correspondence (see for instance Nokkola et al. 2012 regarding the correspondence - or not - between success in attracting international funding and position on ranking lists). In our project we among other things explore if and how students use ranking as a tool to navigate the international space of possibilities.

In our project we have taken inspiration from both of the above approaches to internationalization. We are supplementing them with an attempt to map the ways that students move in the emerging global field of tertiary education.

In this particular paper, however, which is *very, very preliminary* I engage in a preliminary discussion of the structuring principles of educational strategies of students who go to one of Denmark's larger universities with reference to an initial exploration of data collected so far.

Data and methods

The original plan with this paper was to explore in what way educational strategies of mobile students who pursue university education in Denmark correspond not only to the choice of university but also the choice of education. Following Bourdieu-inspired research that indicate that there seems to be a correlation between habitus and capitals on the one hand and choice of specific disciplines on the other the idea was to explore in what way such a correlation translates to an educational environment where students navigate the space of possibilities from many different directions and according to differently formed practical senses and which is increasingly interdisciplinary and therefore possibly appealing to very different students at the same time.

This exploration was to be based on the 5 different types of data that is used in the project: Statistical data from international organizations such as UNESCO and OECD in order to establish what kind of study destination Denmark is in terms of the numbers and nationalities of the international students going there.

Statistical data from the Danish Ministry for Research, Innovation and Further Education in order to see how international students are distributed in the Danish field of higher education. International organizations only calculate how many students pursue a tertiary education in which countries, however they don't differentiate between different tiers. Data from the Ministry may be used to get an idea of how many students attend different tiers of tertiary education and thus give us an indication of how many and what students attend universities.

As the interest for describing internationalization is fairly recent, the existing statistical resources lack precision. While statistics from the Ministry thus gives the numbers of students attending the different universities, the categories they operate with are large and fairly imprecise. There is for instance one category comprising students from "Asia and Oceania" and other comprising students from "Latin America and the Caribbean". Such categories are not very helpful when exploring where the students are and what they study. We therefore also include data from an email survey involving directors of studies, student councilors, international office and study secretaries that we performed at Aarhus University in the spring of 2012 about numbers and nationalities of the international students attending various international educations at the university². While this survey gave a better idea of where which international students are it also showed that there is a general lack of systematic knowledge about the incoming students at the university.

The fourth type of data come from a detailed questionnaire which have been filled out by students at so far 7 international programs selected based on the survey mentioned above and in a way so that the programs and the students reflect the different types of education involving international students at Aarhus University. The questionnaire, which is inspired by the questionnaires Bourdieu used in his studies of the French educational system - however revamped for the 21st century - is used to collect information about the students' family history, previous education, experiences with various forms of mobility and dreams for the future among other things. They were handed out, filled out and collected during classes which secured a very high response rate. The data collected via the questionnaire is being used to make a very dense mapping of the student body at different educations in order to get a context for the interpretation of the fifth type of data, which are in-depth qualitative interviews with a wide number of students.

² As I will get back to below, Aarhus University has been selected as the case for this particular study due to the very ambitious internationalization policy the university has pursued over the past 8 years.

The interviews were done in the period between October 2012 and January 2013 and involved 30 students from 4 educations at the Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Business and Social Science. The interviews followed a thematic interview guide focusing on family history, previous education, experiences with mobility, attitudes towards education in general and international education in particular and experiences at Aarhus University including involvement in various social and extracurricular activities. The interviews were very loosely structured and had forms of an exploratory conversation between the interviewer(s)³ and the interviewee.

Unfortunately and for very mundane reasons we are not even close to being finished with analyzing the data from the questionnaires, in order to use them as a framework for understanding the variety of educational strategies present. The following will therefore primarily refer to general statistical information and excerpts from interviews.

Internationalization of the Danish field of higher education, some initial remarks

Internationalization is obviously not a new thing in itself. Like other universities Danish universities have been part of various forms of international cooperation for a very long time. In the post-war era international cooperation was primarily with the Nordic countries, while Danish universities and other institutions within higher education also provided educational opportunities for students from various third world countries. Of course Denmark has also attracted students with interest in specific Danish topics, such as Søren Kierkegaard research, N.F.S Grundvig research and welfare research with reference to the specific Danish variation of the Nordic welfare model. In a similar vein Danish researchers within various fields have a long tradition for participating in various forms of research cooperation.

It wasn't however until the late 1980s early 1990s with the establishment of EU's Erasmus program that concern with the ability to cater for larger numbers of foreign students spurred considerations - politically as well as educationally. Up through the 1990s a growing number of courses and increasingly also whole educations were taught in English - at least when foreign students were present. Since the beginning of this century Danish universities have seen a more systematic approach to internationalization. More English language programs have been launched; there have been ongoing discussions of language policies, questions of examination languages and how to formalize the admission processes for international students. There have also been discussions of how internationalization can benefit national students. Inspired by the 'internationalization-at-home' philosophy (Nilsson 2003) the idea is that all students participating in international education will be able to acquire linguistic skills, experience with international cooperation and intercultural skills. This has led to attempts to create innovative international programs that are often interdisciplinary and aiming at international careers. There is however also courses that are just taught in English if needed. This in itself suggest a tension in the internationalization of Danish universities, between international programs that attempts to incorporate an international dimension and English-medium programs that are taught in English because there are foreign students present - or because they are taught by foreign staff.

³ The interviews were performed either by me alone or together with either PhD-student Tanja Tanne Wadsholt or research assistant Mette Ginnerskov Hansen

Since the beginning of this century Danish universities have undertaken a number of mergers and university expansions to create bigger and stronger universities - allegedly to do better in the international competition to attract "the best and the brightest" among scholars and students. Different Danish universities have engaged in research and educational cooperation with universities abroad. Joint degree programs between Danish and foreign universities have been introduced and parallel education has been established at different national universities. While this helps establish Danish universities in the emerging international space of further education, research in internationalization of higher education has also suggested that internationalization is not necessarily only a strategy for universities to position themselves in an international field of tertiary education. It may also be a strategy to retain or better position within the national field (Börjesson). Attracting external funding through cooperation with prestigious universities abroad is one way of doing that. Attracting international students is another. Danish universities receive part of their funding from students passing exams. Internationalization is also a way of enlarging the pool of available students in order to become bigger and to get more funds.

University education in Denmark has traditionally been free of charge, and Danish students are furthermore entitled to a state stipend to help cover living expenses (approximately \$1000 per month, for the duration of an education (5-6 year)). Education is also free for students from EU/EEA/Switzerland; however these students are not entitled to receive state stipends. Since 2006 students from outside EU/EEA/Switzerland have had to pay tuition fee in order to attend university education in Denmark unless they receive a scholarship either from the university or from a national or international organization. There has been a fall in overseas students coming to Denmark since tuition fee was introduced. And even if the number has begun to rise again, it is still fairly few students who are actually fee-paying (in 2011 there were 74 fee-paying students at Copenhagen university and 148 at Aarhus University). The majority of students in Denmark still don't pay tuition fees. However, as I will get back to our data suggests that internationalization has led to a growing economic inequality and a growing tension among students who attend university in Denmark.

In our project we have started the research with Denmark's second largest university, Aarhus University. Aarhus University is interesting because it is the Danish university that has pursued the most ambitious internationalization strategy. Since 2005, where the university board hired a new Rector with experience from educational programs from the World Bank and an ambition to make Aarhus the most internationally recognized Danish university, there has been a substantial investment in internationalization. Aarhus University was the first Danish university to get EU's ECTS-label and at present the Danish university with the highest number of international students attending full education, which is typically a 2 year master program. The number of incoming "free-movers" to Aarhus almost doubled in just three years: from 1254 in 2007 to 2274 in 2010. (This puts Aarhus slightly ahead of Copenhagen University which has gone from 1720 to 2193 in the same period). Together with the approximately 1000 international exchange students who come to Aarhus each year this means that international students make up approximately 10 % of the students at the university.

The university has undertaken a huge investment in making education available in English. Out of the 117 master programs offered at the university, 62 are offered in English and a total of 1019 courses are available in English if it is needed.

In the following section I will take a first look at educational strategies of international students coming to Aarhus. I will frame this discussion according to three structuring principles. First I will look at who the international students are, who come to Denmark in terms of numbers and nationalities. I will briefly relate the official statistical categorization with categories we have found in our sample so far.

Secondly I will look at ranking. I will discuss how Danish universities are ranked on different international ranking lists and relate it to the way that different groups of students seem to incorporate ranking in their educational strategies. Thirdly I will look at economy, both as an argument to choose Denmark as a study destination and as a factor that creates increasing diversity. As I have already mentioned, for practical reasons I have not been able to link these various strategies that are produced in relation to these structuring principles to specific groups of students which actually makes it very difficult to decide what they mean. However they give an idea of some tendencies that will be analyzed further in the months to come.

Numbers and nationalities

In relation to a discussing of the educational strategies of international students coming to Denmark it makes sense to get an idea of who these students are in terms of numbers and nationalities. In the following I take a look at some of the numbers provided by UNESCO, OECD and the Danish Ministry for Research, Innovation and Further Education regarding incoming students and relate it to some of our own data.

In the broader context of student mobility, Denmark is a fairly small destination, at least in terms of numbers. Although there has been an impressive growth in incoming students over the past 10 years, from around 4000 in 2002 to around 10000 in 2012 (Ministry/OECD), and although the number of incoming students far exceeds the number of outgoing students on a full education (10000/3400), only 0.4 % of the total number of mobile students end up studying in Denmark according to UNESCO's assessment of student mobility in 2012. In terms of numbers this puts Denmark on par with European countries such as Finland, Ireland, Norway, Hungary, Rumania, Poland and Portugal, all attracting between 0.3 and 0.5 percent of the global population of mobile students, a little below the Netherlands (0.8) and Sweden (0.9) and way below 'big players' such as Germany 5.6 %, France 7.3 %, UK: 10.9 %, and United States 19.2 % (source: UNESCO).

In terms of nationality the majority of the international students coming to Denmark to study come from the neighboring countries of Norway, Sweden, Germany and Iceland, followed by students from new EU member states such as Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Poland, Hungary and Rumania. Denmark also receives students from the rest of the EU, from Asia, Oceania, the Americas, and Africa, however only in very small numbers. In 2010 the Ministry of Education only registered 250 African students and 253 American (north and south) students at Danish universities. In contrast almost 3000 students from the Nordic countries and 2500 students from the rest of Europe were registered at Danish universities.

If we look at how often students from various countries choose to go to Denmark, Denmark is only among the top-three study-abroad destinations for students from Iceland (no. 1), Norway (no 2) and Sweden (no 3). Denmark is furthermore among the top10 study-abroad-destinations for students from the following countries Lithuania (no 5), Latvia (no 5), Estonia (no 6), Poland (no 7), Hungary (no 8) and Rumania (no 10).

Finally if we look at what international students in Denmark primarily study, a vast majority of the international students study at the faculties of Social Science, and - to a somewhat lesser extent - Arts, and Engineering, with fewer students pursuing an education at the faculties of Health and Science. This information is important when attempting to position Denmark in an evolving international field of higher education and it is equally important in relation to assessing international students'

educational strategies. The presence of high numbers of Nordic students reflects the long tradition of free mobility between the Nordic countries and the fact that the Nordic languages are to a large extent mutually intelligible. Nordic students do in fact often attend Danish-medium education and in a broader context of internationalization they do not necessarily understand themselves as international students. As one informant from a Nordic country studying at an English-medium program for instance explained:

[P]er definition I am a Danish student, which is very nice, because it opens up a lot of things. (...), it's extremely simple to go between the countries, (...) I got my "nemid" [easy access to banks, tax information etc.] and everything just set up, [they] even sent the information back to the [Nordic country] government, so I don't have to anything there either.

The informant also stressed the ease in moving between the Nordic countries, and the fact that Denmark is 'less foreign':

" (...) there is a lot of people doing exchange programs, doing Erasmus, (...), and again, instead of going to Australia and other sort of more foreign countries, it's just because it's simple, you just have one application and you have all id numbers and its very common to go to Aalborg, (...) or something from [Nordic country] (...) If you want to go somewhere else, but you don't want the hassle, of going to United States or Australia [it is easy to go to another Nordic country]" (Nordic student).

The growing presence of students from the newer EU-member states shows that Denmark is positioned on these countries' map of free mobility in Europe. However, it is worth noticing that Denmark is not a top destination for students from these countries. As I will return to below, it would seem that at least some of the students who go from say Rumania or Lithuania to Denmark are students who are interested in acquiring cultural and transnational capital, but who are unable to afford more attractive (in terms of capital) study-abroad-destinations.

The almost local

The official statistics do not reflect all the relevant categories of students at international educations in regards to assessment of educational strategies. In our sample we found two categories of students who register in statistics in ways that do not necessarily reflect their strategies. We call⁴ the first group "Danish+ students" and the other group "European+ students".

The first group consists of students who descent either from Danish emigrants or from mixed marriages where one parent is Danish and who have grown up abroad. In so far as these students have retained their Danish citizenship (or applied for Danish citizenship before they turn 22) they can be admitted to Danish universities as Danish students. While these students may identify culturally with Denmark and have a desire to explore their "Danish side", there are a number of factors which sets them apart from 'ordinary' Danish students, one being that they don't necessarily speak Danish well enough to attend university education in that language and are therefore only able to study in Denmark because programs are available in English. At the same time there is an economic aspect to their educational choice which is worth exploring further.

The European+ students are students who have often grown up overseas, who have at least one European parent and citizenship in an EU-member state. Like other students from EU-member states

⁴ At least for now!

these students don't pay tuition fee at Danish universities. And while economy is not necessarily the most relevant aspect of their choosing to study in Denmark, economy is definitely important in their educational strategy. I will get back to that below. In the next section I discuss ranking in relation to educational strategies.

Ranking and reputation

Since the "Shanghai Ranking list" (AWRU) and Times Higher Education Supplement list (THEs) were first launched in 2003 and 2004 respectively (Kauppi & Erkkilä 2011) university managers as well as scholars have paid increasing attention to ranking as a means to position universities in the emerging global space of higher education and as a possible structuring principle for the increasingly international competition to attract mobile students and scholars.

While university managers generally tend to perceive ranking lists as recipes for reform, and increasingly attempt to promote a development of universities that has impact on ranking, scholars have been more interested in ranking lists as a battleground for the definition of the hierarchical order between universities around the world and in the symbolic violence that makes it increasingly difficult to escape the logic of ranking (Boltanski 2011, Kauppi & Erkkilä 2011).

Like a number of other universities in North-West Europe Danish universities rank fairly high on the dominating ranking lists. 5 of the 7 national universities thus appear on THES 2012 with 3 in top 150; 4 appear on AWRU with two in the top 100.

[insert table]

As already mentioned it is sometimes assumed that students are the main consumers of ranking lists (refs). However there is very little actual research exploring the ways that students make sense of ranking and how they use ranking lists when making educational choices.

In our study which looks at international students at Denmark's second highest ranked university, Aarhus, we saw very different approaches to ranking among the students, indicating that the importance of ranking depends on a number of other factors. In the data we have analyzed so far we are able to construct four different approaches to ranking.

1. The students in our sample who had applied for other and often higher ranked universities besides Aarhus e.g. London School of Economics or SciencePo in Paris claimed that Aarhus's position on ranking lists had been decisive in narrowing down study abroad opportunities. These students - who count both European and Asian students - stress the importance of a university's position on ranking in relation to career opportunities later.
2. Some of the students who have received scholarships (see below) claimed that position on ranking list had been important for their choice of university (as was the scholarship). For these students, who often come from third world countries and who appear to make a lot of sacrifices to be able to go to Aarhus (e.g. leaving spouses and children behind), the symbolic capital of the education appears to be at least as important as the content of the education. The scholarship thus enables them to make an educational investment that was not otherwise possible.
3. Many of the students in our study, however seems to have navigated more in relation to assumptions about how Aarhus 'rank' than knowledge about Aarhus's position on ranking lists. Some of the students worked from the assumption that Aarhus was "an okay university"; they would for instance say that:

"No, I didn't look at the ranking, but I assumed that Aarhus was an okay university since it is part of an Erasmus Mundus cooperation. So it couldn't be a bad university" (Latin American student);

or

"No, I didn't look at ranking, but my friends had told me that it was a good university" (Eastern European student).

Others however had started from an assumption that Aarhus was probably ranked much lower than is actually the case. From the interviews we have done, we have a number of practically similar statements stressing surprise when realizing how Aarhus is ranked:

"[I looked at the ranking and] I was surprised because I didn't think that it was so high up" (Danish+ student).

"I was surprised that Aarhus is actually in the top-100" (Eastern European student).

"It wasn't until a few days ago that I realized that Aarhus is one of the higher ranked universities".

The surprise, that students show with regards to Aarhus's position on international ranking lists may be related to the fact that many of the students have not actually heard about Aarhus University before, which means that Aarhus has no or very little reputation among students. Another factor might be that students feel that Aarhus has very little to offer besides the education. Munk et al (2012) have suggested that some universities are located in what they call "Zones of Prestige" which is defined as places where one is able to accumulate more than "just" academic credentials, such as for instance an exam with global recognition and useful linguistic capitals (see also Börjesson 2005). And while Danish universities may have a high ranking, Denmark is not a Zone of Prestige. This is expressed nicely in the following quote from one of our informants:

"To get an exam from USA, Canada and England means that you have a very good exam, better than from a European university. Even if some universities in these countries are worse than Aarhus, it is still better. This is because they [people in home country] don't know Aarhus. They don't know European universities. It is more like, America first, then England, then ... Australia too because of the language. English is the language of the world. Fluency in English will come when studying in an English language country. It is an added bonus on top of the degree" (Asian student).

It is all about the money

As already hinted several times, it is apparent from our data that economy plays an important role in relation to international students' choice of Denmark as a study-abroad- destination. And while this is probably self-evident to the majority of people who come from education systems with a tradition for tuition fees this is a new situation in Denmark, where there has traditionally been a very high degree of economic equality in the educational system.

It is also clear that internationalization has created a complex economic situation for students at Danish universities.

With regards to economy the analysis we have done of our data so far suggests that students may be divided into seven different types which may be related to different forms of educational strategies: First there are 'ordinary' Danish students; that is Danes of whatever ethnic and religious affiliation who went through the Danish education system and are now pursuing a university education 'at home'. They don't pay tuition fee and they are entitled to a state stipend to help cover living expenses.

Then there is what we have called "Danish+ students"; these are students with Danish citizenship who for the most part grew up in another country and who moved to Denmark to study at an international master program. These students also don't pay tuition fee, and they are also entitled to a state stipend. They need to be classified separately, however, because many of them are only able to study in Denmark because the education is in English and because a number of them do in fact identify themselves as international students.

The Danish+ students we have talked to have all been discussing their choice of education in Denmark as an opportunity to 'get in touch' with their 'Danish side' and get more acquainted with their mothers' or father's homeland. Some of them belong to emigrant groups who have a long tradition for sending their grown children to Denmark for a couple of years. However economy – and economic entitlement – also plays a role in their discussion of educational choices. Some mention that it is "easier to be a Danish student" than other kinds of students, and that you "get more time to enjoy your studies". The educational strategies of these students are however complicated.

The third group consists of Nordic students. They don't pay tuition fee, but they are not entitled to a stipend from the Danish state. When they are classified separately from other European students, it is because they are usually able to bring stipends with them from their home countries which puts them in an economic situation which is similar to or sometimes better than that of Danish students.

The fourth group is other European students with parental economic support. They don't pay tuition fee and they are not entitled to a stipend in Denmark. As the classification stresses, they usually receives economic support from parents.

The fifth group is other European students without parental support. These students don't pay tuition fee and they don't receive any economic support. The European students without parental support usually come from the newer member states in Eastern Europe and they often already have a master degree from a national university which has not secured them any jobs. Going to Western Europe is therefore an attempt to get a more valuable education, and for the students who are in Denmark the fact that there is no tuition fee have often been a decisive factor in their choice which is clear from the following quote:

"I had some former university colleague who came to Denmark, and he told me that it's free. Because that's an issue, I mean, I couldn't afford to pay tuition fee like in Germany or Spain. Then I searched the [web] site, and I applied for two master degrees here" (Eastern European student).

These students usually have to work a lot to cover their living expenses, and as they don't speak Danish they usually have unskilled work during the night or early in the morning. In interviews they sometimes express a certain bitterness towards Danish students because they feel that Danish students have much better study conditions than they have themselves because they have a stipend:

"The Danes are more relaxed. They know they are gonna do good stuff, and they have the time. They get an SU [stipend] and then they can, I don't know, I don't know exactly, but they can do a master degree in three years [instead of two] if they want to. Okay they can prologue the time for the thesis" (Eastern European student).

The fifth group consists of "Europe+ students". These are students who technically come from an overseas destination but who have EU-citizenship (usually because one of their parents is an EU citizen) and who are therefore entitled to free education in Denmark. The Europe+ students we have interviewed have not themselves mentioned the free tuition as a reason to come to Denmark. Rather they stress other important factors like resident boy- or girlfriends. However it appears that it would not

have been possible for them to go to Denmark to live with their boy- or girlfriend and continue their education at the same time unless tuition was free. The initial choice is thus not related to the education or the country but to the boy- or girlfriend.

The sixth group consists of oversea students who receive scholarships and tuition fee waivers and who therefore have economic circumstances similar to Danish students. From our interviews it appears that there are two different strategies at stake for scholarship students. Some students use the scholarship as an opportunity to get away from home and out into the world. Often they have applied for scholarships at several universities and through several organizations, and they have chosen the opportunity that became available. Often they know very little about Aarhus or their education before they come. They would not have come without the scholarship, and they might have gone somewhere else if the opportunity had been there. Other scholarship students have been approached by mentors or by teachers - who may even have relations to Aarhus University - and have been encouraged to apply to the university in the hope that they would be awarded a scholarship. For these students going to Aarhus is perceived as an investment in an exam from a highly ranked university which may lead to a better life.

The seventh and last group is overseas students who pay tuition fees to study in Aarhus. As mentioned previously, there are fairly few students who pay tuition fee something which is also expressed in the following quote:

"I am a special case as I am paying for my studies here in Aarhus. I see this is not very normal because either you are a Dane and you have the SU [state stipend], or you come here with a scholarship which I never got, but I came here with support from my family and [I live on] the money I have" (Latin American student)

Tuition fee paying students appear to have operated from different economic logic when they made their choice of education, than they do when they talk about it in interviews after having settled in in Denmark and have discovered that they are indeed very alone in paying for the education. As it can be seen from the quote below, this particular student started from an assumption that tuition fee is part of getting an education, and he was not necessarily aware that this could be different in other countries. It wasn't until he came to Denmark that he realized that only a minority of students do in fact pay anything to be here:

"One of the things that I've been noticing especially in regards to studying here is that the education system is approached in a very different way than in [home country]. And, you know, I'm very used to paying for my education. And so it's very, its, you know I don't necessarily think about it every day, but it is a very strange thing to be put into a classroom and know, that, like the people who go here are not only not paying, but they are getting stipends, and I had to like take a loan out in [home country] to fund this" (North American student).

Some initial concluding remarks

With reference to the discussion presented above, it is difficult to make anything but very general concluding remarks, as the data from the questionnaires which were supposed to help us identify educational strategies have not yet been analyzed.

There are however a number of interesting points that will be explored further in the analysis to come:

The nationalities of international students coming to Denmark indicate that Denmark is still – and despite heavy investment in English-medium and international education – still primarily a destination for Nordic students. While a number of Nordic students do in fact follow English-medium education they are capable of attending Danish-medium courses

Denmark appears to be in the process of becoming a very interesting destination for students from the new EU-member states in Eastern Europe. Denmark is not a top-destination for students in any of the new member states (in fact not of any EU member state except for Sweden), but it is in the top-ten. From the analysis we have done so far it is difficult to say why Denmark is an interesting destination for students from these countries, but we have two hypotheses that will be explored further:

One is that Denmark attracts social science and humanities students from Eastern Europe because it offers a number of innovative programs in these fields. The majority of the international who come to Denmark attend programs in the social sciences and the humanities, so this might be that Denmark is developing a reputation as an attractive study destination.

Another hypothesis is that Denmark attracts students from Eastern Europe who are more or less desperate to get an education from a recognized university abroad in the hope that it will help their employability but who are unable to afford tuition fees at more expensive destinations. This would of course not explain “why Aarhus” so we would have to couple it with an exploration of existing network in Denmark/Aarhus, and of how information flow in student communities in different countries.

With the skyrocketing of tuition fees at universities around the world it is also interesting to look at the students who discovers Denmark as a possible study destination, for instance because they already other ties to the country, such as partners, roots or network there.

While one of the initial ideas was to focus on cultural capital the development of an increasingly complex economic situation for students at Danish universities following internationalization has caught our attention in the interviews. In the analysis of our data will therefore be particularly interested in exploring how the changing economic conditions of students are changing Danish universities and how this impacts student interactions, their academic achievements and their attitudes towards education.

Bibliography to follow