

# **Unravelling International Student Mobility**

A New Mobilities Perspective on International Student Mobility

**Master's thesis 30 credits**

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## **Abstract**

International students' mobility has received increased appreciation for its role, and impact, in today's knowledge economy. This development has led to an increase of tourism research aiming to understand student travel motives as such knowledge is paramount to the development of appropriate marketing strategies, services, and promotions. However, due to the increased complexity of mobility, recognized in contemporary times, there seem to be contradictions within their empirical data. Through the understanding of new mobilities, the concept of lifestyle mobility was introduced as a way to better comprehend contemporary mobility, however this approach appears not yet fully introduced within research on student mobility. By studying short term international students in Lund (Sweden) through the lens of lifestyle mobility, i.e. new mobilities, the purpose of this thesis is to bridge that gap. Supported by the concepts of student mobility, lifestyle mobility, and liquid identity a thematic analysis is done of the empirical data collected through semi-structured, ethnographically inspired, interviews. The findings show that partaking in international studies is considered to be a safe and convenient way for students to travel, as a mean to support and develop their identity and desired lifestyle, rather than the academics themselves. Additionally, the experience of studying abroad is permeated with travel, strengthening the students sense of global identity and supporting their mobile lifestyle, through lifestyle travel.

Keywords: *International student mobility, International study motives, New mobilities, Lifestyle mobilities, Lifestyle travel*

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## **1. Introduction**

The number of students who move from their country of origin to enrol in educational programs abroad is increasing. This can be the result of international travel becoming more available, affordable and convenient (Llewellyn-Smith & McCabe, 2008). According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), in the year 1990 there were approximately 1.3 million students globally enrolled in higher-education programs outside their country of citizenship. This number increased to approximately 2.1 million in year 2000, and 4.5 million in 2012 (OECD, 2014). In today's knowledge economy, academic mobility of higher education has been considered to be an indicator for economic competitiveness (Kim, 2009). If the development of tertiary international students continues it could signify a possible opportunity, not only for destinations (economy and brand marketing) and universities (attracting new students, competitive advantage) (Llewellyn-Smith & McCabe, 2008), but also for tourism as international students can assist in attracting future new visitors through visiting friends and relatives (VFR) (López, Fernández & Incera, 2016) (Michael, Armstrong & King, 2003) and as ambassadors for the destinations. Additionally, international students, exchange students, language student, and other types, are all considered tourists as long as they study outside their country of origin and stay no longer than 12 months (López, Fernández, & Incera, 2016). Furthermore they can represent a type of tourist which length of stay is greater than the average tourist.

As the number of international students has increased, so has the attention towards student mobility from academics within both social and economic fields, as well as policy-makers (Cerqueira Bento, 2014)(Llewellyn-Smith & McCabe, 2008). Research regarding international students can be found in several academic schools, and in tourism studies there seems to be a growing interest towards understanding their motivations for studying abroad, through push and pull factors, why certain destinations are chosen, and what they do during time abroad (Lesjak, Juvan, Ineson, Yap, & Axelsson, 2015)(Kim, 2008)(Kim, Oh, & Jogaratnam, 2006) (Michael et al., 2003). This increased interest towards understanding student mobility can be connected to the several published studies emphasising on the importance of such knowledge. Stating that it is necessary for related stakeholders in order to develop appropriate marketing strategies, services and promotions (Kim et al., 2006)

Tourism research, within student mobility motives has traditionally focused on factors such as language of instructions, perceived quality of programmes, reputation of institution, tuition fees, immigration policy, recognition of foreign degrees, limitations in home country, geographical location, trade or historical connection to destination, future job opportunities, cultural

aspirations and ability to transfer credits (OECD, 2014). However several recent studies has shown that the 'studies' themselves are not the main purpose for partaking in international studies (Kim, Oh, & Jogaratnam, 2006), while at the same time 'academics' remain as main motivators for choice of destination (Lesjak, Juvan, Ineson, Yap, & Axelsson, 2015). Such contradicting results have led to an uncertainty as to why students partake in international studies and researchers now recommend taking a multi-dimensional approach that includes students' cognitive and affective considerations, as to understand student mobility (Kim, 2008).

This uncertainty is believed to stem from the increased complexity recognized in contemporary student mobility (Kim et al., 2006)(Lesjaket al., 2015)(Xu, Morgan, & Song, 2009) and could be related to what Williams and Hall calls *grey zone of complex forms of mobility* (Williams & Hall, 2000). The grey-zone of complex mobility refers to the knowledge gaps within mobility research resulting from the changing character, and role, of mobility in modern days. Meaning, mobility has become more of a common practice in contemporary society, and lifestyle consumption is used to confirm and create our lifestyles and identities, understanding mobility has become more complex.

The 'grey-zone of complex mobility' is one of many factors, which have encouraged the development towards a new mobility paradigm (Williams & Hall, 2000). *New mobilities* challenge social science traditional view towards travel by questioning the fixed-structures of theories, and their applicability to understand today's increasingly complex society (Coles, 2015), where mobility is becoming more fluid and the speed of movement faster (Sheller & Urry, 2006) (Coles, Hall, & Duval, 2005)(Hall, 2015). It emphasises that, to understand contemporary mobility, research much break free from the closed boundaries constraining it within the specific academic school, and to take a more multi-dimensional approach (Williams & Hall, 2000). To understand physical mobility, such as international studies, in the contemporary society we must therefore recognize a possible interlink between different types of mobility, and identify the different factors that condition it.

The concept of *Lifestyle mobility* was introduced as an alternative type of mobility that moves within this grey-zone of complex mobilities. Lifestyle mobility has been exemplified in prior research by Cohen (2011) when studying backpackers, and Rickly (2016) when studying Rock climbers, as to better understand how mobility is related to, an affected by, the lifestyles and identities among these types of travellers. However the connection between student mobility and lifestyle mobility seems yet to be explored as to better understand international student travel.

### **1.1 Research Aim, Questions and Relevance**

The connection between new mobilities and student mobility in order to understand international student travels has so far not been explicitly studied. Therefore, the purpose of this thesis is to fill that research gap by exploring student mobility through the concept of lifestyle mobility. By doing so this thesis aims to reach a greater understanding of how student mobility is motivated in contemporary society, as well as its role within students lifestyles and identities. To reach this aim this thesis seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. Which motivations characterize international students travel? and how are they subjectively shaped?
2. Is contemporary student mobility lifestyle-related? How is it affected by, and how does it shape, personal identities?

By answering these research questions this thesis not only bridges the gap between student mobility and new mobilities, but the findings could also provide relevant knowledge to the current understanding of international student mobility, as it provides a multi-dimensional approach that includes students' cognitive and affective considerations (Kim, 2008). This could be of relevance for tourism research as it provides more detailed view on how international student travel connects to, and effects, individuals lives, their identities, and the way they perceive and behave in the world (Coles, 2015).

Reaching a greater understanding of international student mobility would also provide relevant knowledge for labour market developments as understanding travel motives is considered a necessity for stakeholders in connection to student travel, as to be able to develop appropriately in terms of marketing strategies, services, and promotion (Kim et al., 2006). Additionally, lifestyles are considered to be a central aspect in debates about consumer cultures associated with contemporary times (Cohen, 2011).

## 2. Conceptual framework

### 2.1 International Students as Tourists

International students are, according to the OECD, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), Eurostat and the Institute for Statistics, those students who cross borders with the purpose to study. The student is not resident of the country of studies, and they received their prior education in another country (OECD, 2011). Included in these are the students partaking in the European Region Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students program (ERASMUS). The ERASMUS program assists short term students (3-12 months) to commence in international studies (European Commission, 2017) and provide financial support from the European Union with the goal to cover the cost of living abroad. Since its commencement it has assisted over three million students to partake in studies abroad for at least one semester (López, Fernández & Incera, 2016).

In regards to tourism, length of stay in host country is decisive among international students as only those studying for 12 months or less are considered as tourists (Llewellyn-Smith & McCabe, 2008) (López, Fernández & Incera, 2016), this includes international students, exchange students, language student and other, as presented in Table 1. Those students who study for longer than 12 months are considered to share the same characteristics of residents, and therefor not considered tourists (López, Fernández & Incera, 2016).

Type of student	Definition	Tourist/non-tourist
<b>International students</b>	All students who have crossed borders expressly with the intention to study. International students are not residents of their country of study and they have received their prior education in another country.	International students are considered tourists when they are enrolled in short-term courses (less than 12 months).
<b>Exchange students</b>	Students who arrive in a country through bilateral agreements, including ERASMUS students. All of them are International students.	They can be considered as tourists since exchange students arrive only for short-term courses.
<b>Language students</b>	Students who arrive in a country with the main aim of learning a language. All of them are International students.	They can be considered as tourists also since the great majority of language courses are short-term courses.
<b>Other type of foreign students</b>	Other foreign students (undergraduate, Master's, etc). They are not always international students, as this category includes some students who are permanent residents	They are not considered as tourists since they spend more than one year in the country of destination.

Source: Based on OECD, Eurostat and UNWTO as presented in López, Fernández and Incera (2016: 129).

## **2.2 Student Mobility and Motives**

Several studies have emphasised on the importance of understanding the travel motives of students as it is necessary knowledge for stakeholders in order to appropriately develop marketing strategies, services, and promotion (Kim et al., 2006). It has been commonly stated in previous research that the motivations for commencing in international studies is to develop personal and professional skills, to increase career opportunities and enjoy leisure (Kim, 2008)(Lesjak et al., 2015)(Stone & Petrick, 2013).

The motivation of personal skills include factors such as becoming more independent and self confident, as well as obtaining a greater global awareness through interactions with new places, people and cultures (Ingraham & Peterson, 2004). The motivation of professional skills includes factors based on the activities performed during their time abroad which allow them to acquire additional competencies and knowledge which in turn contributes to support their academic and professional development, and provide a competitive advantage on the job market (Lesjak et al., 2015). According to the OECD, the main motivational factors for student mobility are; Language of instructions, Perceived quality of programmes, Reputation of institution, Tuition fees, Immigration policy, recognition of foreign degrees, limitations in home country, geographical location, trade or historical connection to destination, future job opportunities, cultural aspirations and ability to transfer credits (OECD, 2014). These factors are often found to be used within research about student travel motivations, often as push or/and pull factors. The importance that students themselves place towards different motives for partaking in student mobility has shown to be prioritized differently, some students emphasize personal development, while others seek work life advantages. This variation has been recognized to stem from the students' social background, including economic strength, culture, opportunities available to participate in different international educations, and availability of time (Souto-Otero et al. 2013).

It is however necessary to distinguish between long and short term international students, an aspect that has not been considered in key publications like the OECD (OECD, 2014) commented above. In regards to short term International students, the personal motivators appears to be of greater importance than the professional ones (Lesjak et al., 2015)(Daly, 2011). Meaning that individuals partaking in student mobility for 12 months, or less, desire to be more independent and gain self-confidence, while at the same time seek to experience new places, people and cultures. It has been stated that the studies themselves are not the main purpose for partaking in international exchange programs (Kim, 2006). This statement is supported by research about ERASMUS students where it has been shown that students' motives to participate is manly

related to leisure activities (Teichler, 2004) and adventure opportunities (Findlay et al, 2010) rather than professional skills, such as educational enrichment and career development.

However when students decide where to go, studies has shown that, quality of education has been found to be of major importance, along with content of the courses, cost of study and recommendations (Michel et al., 2003). This would mean that even though the benefit of partaking in student mobility is based on personal motivators, such as discover new places, people and cultures, and that studies are not the main purpose, the decision for where to go is mainly based on professional motivators connected to academics. Such inconsistency in regards to student mobility has been recognized in recent years as it has been noticed that there is contrasting empirical evidence in regards to international student mobility motives, based on the contextual and personal factors of the students (Llewellyn-Smith & McCabe, 2008). This inconsistency has also been put in relation to the recognition towards the increased complexity of understanding students motivations to travel (Cerdeira Bento, 2014)(Lesjak et al., 2015)(Kim, 2008)(Kim et al. , 2006) (Michael et al., 2003).

The origins of this contrasting empirical evidence has been connected to the common use of the push-pull model within travel and tourism research, associated with motivation (Daly, 2011) (Kim et al., 2006)(Kim, 2008). The push-pull model focuses on exploring two main forces connected to motivation, the *push* forces (treating the desire to travel), and the *pull* forces (concerning the choice of where to go) (Kim et al., 2006). Even though the push-pull model provides some insight as to what motivates international studies, it does not consider students' personal characteristics, thoughts and perceptions behind the motives (Daly, 2011). Recognizing the limitations of the model, researchers have attempted adjust the push-pull model and find additional factors that would incorporate personal perceptions and characteristics

In an attempt to seek additional factors that would strengthen quality and use of a revised push-pull model Kim, Oh and Jogaratnam (2006) recognized that among international students there were three factors that were most dominant, 'Knowledge', 'Sports', and 'Adventure'. *Knowledge* refers to students' desire to learn new things and increase knowledge by for instance experiencing new and different lifestyles, destinations and historical places. *Sports* contains partaking in physical activity, such as participating or watching sports. *Adventure* regards the students desire to have fun, to seek excitement and adventure, to be free to act the way they desire. However there was one additional and distinct push factor '*Lifestyle*' that emerged among the others. The lifestyle factor includes 'experiencing a simple lifestyle' and 'rediscover oneself'.

The factor of lifestyle was regarded as separate, however students recognized it to be dependant on additional factors, representing a sort of umbrella factor.

The factors identified, with purpose to be able to include personal perceptions and characteristics, has since then been put into practice through quantitative and qualitative use of push-pull model, however the results has shown that they still lack the ability to include the students reasoning and attitudes towards their involvement (Kim, 2008) (Lesjak et al., 2015).

Adapting the factors used in push-pull model does not seam sufficient as to incorporate the aspects of cognitive and affective involvement as needed to understand students' motives for partaking in international studies (Kim, 2008). The challenge for current research has now turned to the recognition that study travel is multidimensional and can therefore not be explained by a common factors (Kim et al., 2006)(Kim, 2008). This complexity of mobility motives goes in hand with the expressed need within tourism research, calling for a more detailed view on how travel connects to, and effects, individuals lives, their identities, and the way they perceive and behave in the world (Coles, 2015). This acknowledgment goes well in hand with the contemporary ideas of new mobilities and lifestyle mobility. This approach not only takes into account a multidimensional perspective, but also seek to understand the values, attitudes and orientations of the travellers as to understand why they travel, its relation to lifestyle, and how it affects identity (Cohen, 2011)

### **2.2.1 Travel motives through a new mobilities perspective**

When using a new mobilities perspective towards travel motives the purpose steps away from trying to predict who will travel and in what circumstances. Instead the interest lies within understanding the fluid, multidimensional, interconnections of the several different factors that support the action to travel in contemporary society (Schwanen & Lucas, 2011), as represented in figure 1. Some of the key notes expressed in regards to the new-mobilities approach for understanding motivational factors through new-mobilities has recognized that travel is a form of lifestyle consumption that assist to establish, shape and enforce specific lifestyles and identities. Additionally it has been recognized that travel motives are culturally inflected, and might stem form a young age, based on people in their surrounding, knowledge, ideas and objects (Schwanen & Lucas, 2011). Therefore, as to be able to understand the motivational factors for commencing in international student travel through new mobilities, it is important to explore individuals' values, norms and orientations, as well as their relation to the specific travel practice from an early age. However understanding travel motives through new mobilities comes with some recognized weaknesses as the findings are seldom generalizable across space and time, and the insights produced might not always provide evident support for policy making

(Schwanen & Lucas, 2011). In an attempt to introduce new mobilities as a viewpoint for motivational factors regarding car travel into contemporary times, Tim Shwanen and Karen Lucas highlights the complex mixture, and interdependency, of factors resulting in an individuals decision making (Schwanen & Lucas, 2011), similar to the findings within tourism research in regards to the complexity of international students travel motives (Kim, Oh, & Jogaratnam, 2006) Cerdeira Bento, 2014)(Lesjak, Juvan, Ineson, Yap, & Axelsson, 2015)(Kim, 2008)(Kim, Oh, & Jogaratnam, 2006) (Michael et al., 2003). To better understand the interconnection between different factors they created a conceptual model of auto motives, based on the understanding of new mobilities paradigm and current knowledge within the auto motive field, shown in Figure 1 (Schwanen & Lucas, 2011). This model was constructed as to facilitate the understanding of the complexity of new mobility motives, however not intended to be used as a conclusive statement. Even though this model was constructed for understanding the motives for car use, it fits very well for understanding student mobility through a new mobilities perspective as it provides a good illustrative view towards how international student mobility can be motivated within contemporary society.

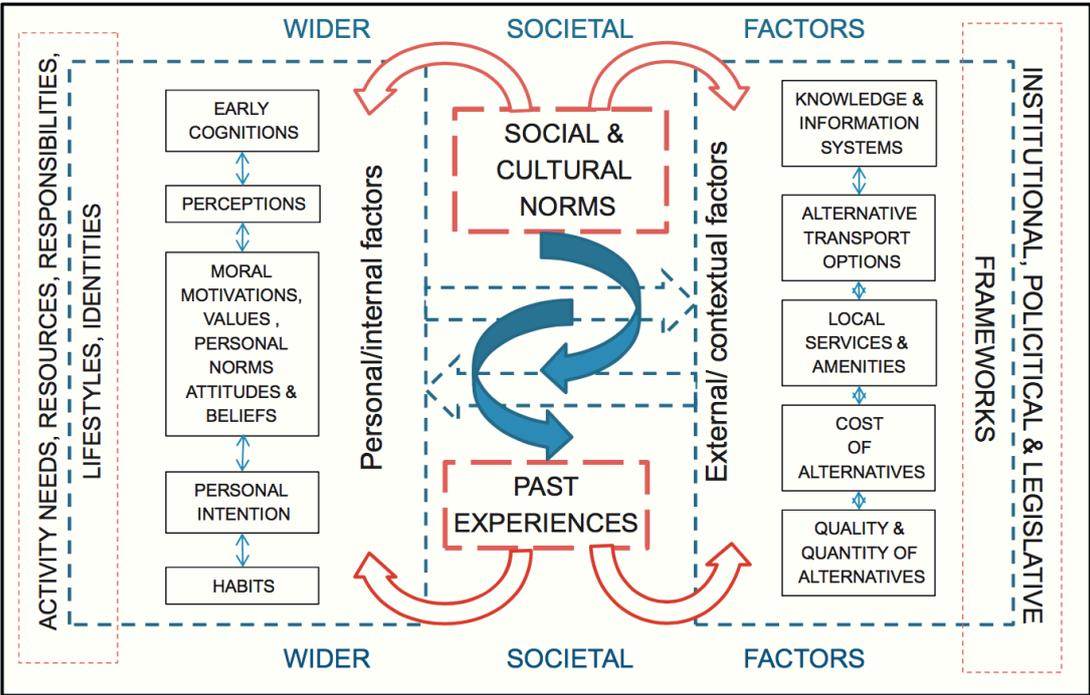


Figure 1: Integrative representation of key motivational factors involved in car use (Schwanen & Lucas, 2011: 31)

This illustrative model shows that to understand international student mobility, it is important to explore the past experiences of the students, as well as their social and cultural background as travel motives are culturally inflected, and might stem from a young age, based on people in their surrounding, knowledge, ideas and objects. This background provides a base for which the internal and external motives are chosen and prioritized. While external factors focus more towards institutional, political and legislative frameworks, the internal factors concern the students' desire to enforce and shape their lifestyles and identity, as well as fulfilling desires and responsibilities. These external and internal factors also affect each other, and stand to weight differently depending on the individuals. Where some students might put greater importance towards the internal motives, rather than the external, based on their past experience and social cultural norms. The illustration presented in Figure 1 also shows the reasoning behind how research in regards to lifestyle mobility has been conducted in previous research in regards to understanding the motives behind lifestyle travellers such as Backpackers (Cohen, 2011) and Rock climbers (Rickly, 2016)

Placing international students within this model could present external factors to be represented by financial support such as scholarships, the academic program offered, information provided about the university, socio-political situation at destination, and more. While in terms of internal factors could be represented by motives such as increase independency, lifestyle, increase in self-confidence and more. The external and internal factors show great similarities to the once identified in research using the push-pull model. However through the new mobilities approach, individuals' values, norms and orientations, are explored, as well as their relation to the specific travel practice from an early age, hence takes into account their cognitive and affective involvement as desired to understand student mobility. Additionally through this approach it becomes possible to explore student connection to lifestyle mobility and how travel connects to, and effects, individuals' lives, identities, and the way they perceive and behave in the world. Knowledge desired within tourism research (Coles, 2015)

The model shown in figure 1 (representing the reasoning of new mobility motives), together with the concept of lifestyle mobility, has inspired the research approach used in this thesis as to understand the reasoning behind student mobility motives, and to reach the answers of the presented research questions.

## **2.3 Lifestyle Mobility**

### **2.3.1 Lifestyle and consumption**

Lifestyles are today a common part within the debates about consumer cultures (Cohen, 2011).

The western class system started to blur in post-Fordist times when production became more specialised which provided greater consumption opportunities for the masses. As consumption now allows individuals' to consume in accordance to their lifestyles, it has become a way to display and enforce, who to be and how to act (Cohen, 2011)(Cohen, Duncan & Thulmark 2015). Such consumption practices has undermined the traditional importance of *tradition* and *obligations* in relation to individuals identity (Cohen, 2010), and instead lifestyle consumption has started to take its place in contemporary society (Cohen, 2011)(Cohen, Duncan & Thulmark 2015). Lifestyle consumption has become a way to express, enforce and shape our sense of self i.e. identity, which in turn affects our consumption and lifestyle practices (Åkerlund & Sandberg, 2013) (Cohen, Duncan & Thulmark 2015). Acknowledging the relationship between lifestyle and identity is not new, however what has gained increasing interest in recent years is how lifestyles are chosen (Cohen, Duncan & Thulmark 2015).

The development of the world with technological advancements and increased connectivity between different destinations, has made it easier to travel and mobility has become ever more common in todays society (Sheller & Urry, 2006). With greater accessibility to corporeal mobility, the consumption of such practices has become a central part of how some make their lifestyle choices (Cohen, Duncan & Thulemark, 2015), i.e. 'Being on the move' is now considered a way of life for many (Urry, 2002). This suggests that individuals, such as students, can use mobility choices as a way to conform and express their lifestyle and identity (Cohen et al., 2015). However it should be recognised that the ability, and rights, to travel are still unevenly distributed between countries and social classes, and mobility is something that not everyone has equal relationship to (Sheller & Urry, 2006). Often it is still restricted as a practice for the people in developed countries or for the more fortunate in developing countries (Hall, 2008).

With individuals using mobility consumption as a result of lifestyle choices, it has been noted that mobility has become increasingly complex and dynamic, and researchers has found it challenging to apply theories that allow to study the nature of such new types of mobility (Sheller & Urry, 2006). Such realisations show great similarities to the current situation of student mobility research, as presented above. An article by William and Hall (2000) concluded that corporeal mobility could have connection to, and move in-between, several different types of mobility, therefore research should not be constrained to the conceptualized guidelines that earlier studies tended to focus on. These limitations, or boundaries, are due to the weak

conceptualizations that exists between different types of mobilities, not grasping the relation that they have to each other in contemporary times, resulting in blurred areas of mobility (Williams and Hall, 2000). As lifestyles are fluid and dynamic, it has also been questioned if it is possible to confirm mobility into recognizable and stereotypic forms (Rickly, 2016). Inspired by the ideas of new mobilities, Cohen, Duncan and Thulemark published an article in 2015, that aims to provide a contemporary approach as to understand the blurred areas of mobility. Their contribution was the introduction of the concept *lifestyle mobility* (Cohen et al., 2015).

### **2.3.2 Lifestyle Mobility**

Mobility in the world today might stem from different reasons, both forced and voluntary ones, and examples of such can be noted in everyday life. On the news we can hear about political and economical refugees, people escaping war-zones or natural disaster. We can also observe voluntary mobility, such people traveling on vacations, international studies or enjoying their pension abroad, and so on. Voluntary mobility, when on going, has a key role in performing specific lifestyle choices in modern-day society (Cohen et al., 2015). Lifestyles today are commonly shaped by consumption, through goods or services, as a way to create and enforce meaning and sense of self (i.e. identity) in contemporary society (Urry & Sheller, 2005)(Benson, 2011)(Åkerlund & Sandberg, 2015). For some such mobility consumption is on-going and could therefore be considered to be way of life, as it becomes part of the individuals identity, and a source of meaning in their life (Cohen, 2011)(Rickly, 2015)(Cohen et al., 2015). As corporeal mobility has become ever more common, and available, the use of consumption has become an important factor in todays formation of identity, the interrelation between mobility and lifestyle has come to have a vital role in the lives of some individuals who have the means as to practice mobility as a lifestyle (Cohen et al., 2015).

As contemporary lifestyle consumption revolves around the notion of freedom of choice, so does lifestyle mobility, and it has been commonly recognized to be a form of mobility connected to individuals with relatively well-off stature (Åkerlund & Sandberg, 2013)(Rickly, 2016). Such fortunate circumstances facilitates the performance of lifestyle mobility and includes factors such as socio-political privileges, including wealth and national belonging, but also on a more individual level, such as social and symbolic capital (Åkerlund & Sandberg, 2013).

However as some individuals might benefit from their privilege of travel, allowing them to produce a lifestyle through corporeal mobility, it does not certify that everyone will do it, since individuals have different relationships to mobilities depending on their different life discourses (Cohen et al., 2015). For the individuals who practice lifestyle mobility, to be constantly on the move represents an important characteristic of their sense of self, and they incorporated it in

their everyday practice. As mobility represents a 'constant' within the personality of lifestyle travellers, their mobility practices can share several similarities with other types of mobility, however they are distinctive.

Lifestyle mobility involves semi-permanent moves of varying amount of time, which are part of an on-going permanent practices incorporated into everyday life (Åkerlund & Sandberg, 2015)(Cohen, 2011). The on-going practice of travel might have roots from a very early age, stretching throughout their life, and they might have multiple homes, moorings and belongings (Cohen et al., 2015)(Rickly, 2016). Through the freedom of choice, lifestyle based travellers might construct seemingly irregular pattern of movements, changing their 'position' between e.g. tourist, migrant, resident, return migrant and more (Rickly, 2016). However the core focus of being continuously on the move remains the same (Åkerlund & Sandberg, 2013). As lifestyle mobility offers a broader view on the interconnections of contemporary travel, migration and leisure (Cohen et al., 2015) it is understandable that lifestyle mobility shares characteristics with other types of mobility. To better understand those who travel as a lifestyle it has been suggested to examine the interdependency and relation between different types of mobility such as travel, migration and leisure (Cohen et al., 2015)(Rickly, 2016). The concept of *lifestyle mobility* was introduced, providing a combination of these three types of mobility, as an approach to better understand corporeal mobility in contemporary society. It breaks down the traditional types of mobility, as to understand the 'mobilities in-between'. By doing so the concept of lifestyle mobility sets aside the boundaries of distinctive types of mobility and allows to explore the relationships between them, i.e. it allows to shed light on to the *grey-zones of complex mobility* which currently seems insufficiently researched (Willams & Hall, 2000) (Cohen et al., 2015).

### **2.2.3 Lifestyle mobility and its relation to other types of mobility**

Lifestyle mobility represents an on-going and fluid process of everyday practices over time, where physical mobility is of high significance in defining the lifestyle-travellers identity (Cohen et al., 2015). As identification for lifestyle-travellers lies within the physical mobility, and is therefore not linked to a specific place (Cohen, 2011), lifestyle travellers can have multiple homes, moorings and belongings (Åkerlund & Sandberg, 2013). This separates lifestyle mobility from migration and temporary mobility as no identification lies towards one specific place from which they can leave or return to (Cohen et al., 2015).

Lifestyle mobility further differs from temporary mobility as it is an on-going process, and not a one-time occurrence. However, they are closely connected and are commonly overlapping one another in everyday life (Cohen et al., 2015). As an example, a lifestyle traveller might stay at one destination for a longer period of time and perform temporary mobility while there, as to fulfil their desire to continuously be on the move, even though they return to the destination from which they went. Additionally as lifestyle travellers can regard multiple places as 'homes', which they can re-visit, it can therefore not be presumed that a return to any specific origin will occur, as in temporary mobility. (Rickly, 2016) (Cohen et al., 2015). Having multiple homes share similarities with seasonal migration, where individuals might have several homes to which visit depending on seasons, holidays, or more. This dependency on certain periods of time, and time frames is typical for seasonal migration and represents a distinction between the fluid character of lifestyle mobility (Rickly, 2016).

Permanent migration, where individuals move to one place with the purpose to stay there, also share similarities with lifestyle mobility. This is based on the idea that lifestyle travellers reject the notion of moving back. However, this does not mean that they will not return to a certain point of origin, as presumed in permanent migration. Rather the return is seen as a part of the continuous on-going, semi-permanent, movement (Cohen, 2011). Also lifestyle migration differs from lifestyle mobility, even though they share similar characteristics with being continuously on the move. However the difference lies in their future aspirations, where lifestyle migration values a possible future immobility when finding a place to settle down (Benson, 2011), and lifestyle mobility values its continuous on-going movements.

Even though lifestyle mobility is characterised with the continuous "on the go" movement, it is sometimes interrupted either by the need to work for the ability to finance future travels, or by social reasons (Cohen, 2011)(Cohen et al., 2015). To note is that lifestyle mobility does not exclude work and career, instead the purpose of work and career becomes part of their on-going movement, supporting further travels (Rickly, 2016)(Cohen et al., 2015)(Cohen, 2011). To easier grasp lifestyle mobility the main characteristics has been encapsulated below in figure 2.

By highlighting the distinctions between different types of mobility and putting them in connection to lifestyle mobility, it is possible to realize the interconnectedness present within the boundaries of traditional mobility. It becomes apparent that lifestyle mobility moves in-between these boundaries of different types of mobility, an area which Williams and Hall calls the '*grey zone of complex forms of mobility*' (Williams & Hall, 2000), and is the result of mobility becoming part of lifestyle consumption, as a way of life, in contemporary society.

Figure 2: Lifestyle Mobility Characteristics

<b>Lifestyle Mobility</b>	
<b>Key characteristics</b>	
A way of life defined by constantly being on the move, through semi permanent moves of varying durations.	
<b>Key concepts</b>	
<i>Usual residence</i>	Multiple moorings
<i>Return</i>	May involve return (to) home(s)
<i>Belongings</i>	Not fixed to any one (or more) location
<b>Key dimensions</b>	
<i>Duration</i>	Varying durations of stay
<i>Frequency</i>	Multi-transitional and on-going
<i>Seasonality</i>	Some seasonal variation
<i>Temporality</i>	On-going throughout the life-course

(Adapted from Cohen et al., 2015)

It has been recognized that lifestyles, apart from sharing certain behaviour, also share common attitudes, values and orientations. These personal factors represent the foundation of a specific social identity, separating one lifestyle from another (Stebbins, 1997). Lifestyle mobility can therefore be considered a type of mobility that consists of on going, semi-permanent moves which expresses the practitioners identity, based on their values, norms and attitudes.

## **2.4 Identity**

In modern days lifestyle consumption has been identified as a way to express, enforce and shape our sense of self, i.e. identity. Traditionally identities were known to be established through societal factors such as nationality, gender, class, ethnicity as well as tradition and obligations, and those factors are still relevant today. However as societies are becoming more global through increased social connectedness, we are now open to vast range of different people, opinions, opportunities, choices and varieties of relationships, from which we can construct our identities (Cohen, 2010). In such environments identities becomes increasingly flexible and proactively constructed, due to constant evaluations by oneself and others within the global societies, as to maintain a certain story about oneself (Gössling & Stavrinidi, 2015) (Cohen, 2010). Meaning that in modern days, identities are the results of individuals' capacity to maintain certain self-stories, as to achieve social belonging (Gössling & Stavrinidi, 2015) (Cohen, 2010).

### **2.4.1 Identity and travel**

Travellers adjust their self-stories according to the new norms of additional cultures and social groups/networks they meet during their travels (Rickly, 2016)(Åkerlund & Sandberg, 2013), and frequent travellers can therefore experience a transformation of social identities (Cohen, 2011), whereas local characteristics, such as place, time and memory, start to lose their relevance to the individual's identity (Gössling & Stavrinidi, 2015). With identities being proactively constructed, travel experiences have been shown to be deliberately used as to construct and define identities, such as international identities (Rickly, 2016)(Cohen, 2010). Examples of this have been noticed among backpackers, where travel experiences are not only used to construct and enforce identities, but also to differentiate the true backpackers from the rest (Cohen, 2011). As identities are flexible and adapt to changing cultures, environments, norms and values, in order to seek social connection.

Gössling and Stavrinidi (2015) has used the notion of *liquid identity* which represents the acceptance of lifestyles shaped by being on the move, incorporating 'nomadic life' into one's sense of self (Gössling & Stavrinidi, 2015: 73). These authors further described identities as multiple and flexible, allowing for temporary adjustments that become necessary in the ever-changing social environments that the travellers encounter. Such flowing changes of identity are not merely related to new geographical locations through travel, but can also occur in any multicultural context where there is a need to temporarily adapt for social acceptance and inclusion (Gössling & Stavrinidi, 2015).

However, lifestyle-travellers seeking to express their identity through mobility and their continuous adjustment to their self-stories can also lead to identity confusion. Lifestyle mobility travellers might feel a certain identity crisis as the construction of identity through their mobility can lead to more questions than clarity about their own identity (Cohen, 2010). In turn, this situation can result in a sense of isolation due to constantly changing relationships (Gössling & Stavrinidi, 2015), and when returning to home societies, it can become hard to readapt and adjust, resulting in a possible feeling of detachment to their old norms and values (Cohen, 2010).

### **2.4.2 Identity crisis**

As Recognised by Richards and Wilson (2006), with the increased social connectedness, the ability to incorporate several different experiences within one unified self-story has become increasingly important. If not achieved, individuals might risk having an overload of multiple self stories, resulting with an identity confusion as the stories might overlap and differ, in regards to opinions, behaviour and more (Hall, 2011). This type of identity confusion shows similarities to

other personal development crisis, like, for instance that suffered by adolescents when they no longer relate themselves to their young identity, however have not yet established their adult one, leaving them stuck in between (Cohen, 2011). To construct and uphold a cohesive self-story has been recognized as a modern issue for many, resulting from the increased freedom of choice, that replaces the old factors of tradition and obligation (Cohen, 2010), as previously touched upon when discussing lifestyle consumption.

### **3. Method**

#### **3.1. Research approach**

This thesis aims to understand contemporary international student mobility with the lens of new mobilities, through lifestyle mobility. This is done by exploring how students motivate their decision to partake in short term international studies, based on their values, norms and attitudes, as well as their past experiences and future aspirations. This approach is inspired by previous research within new mobility motives (Schwanen & Lucas, 2011), and lifestyle mobility (Cohen, 2011)(Rickly, 2016)(Cohen et al., 2015).

Based on the nature of this thesis, seeking to understand students' subjective values, norms and attitudes, this thesis follows a *qualitative* strategy with an *interpretivist* and *social constructivist* approach. This allows to grasp the subjective meanings of the students' social actions (Bryman, 2008), based on how they develop and give meaning to the world (Howell, 2013). By analysing empirical data from short term international students, and putting their mobility characteristics into a wider context, it can be possible to shed light on the blurred areas of student mobility, which has been recognized to lay in-between different types of categorised mobilities (Cohen, 2011). This would also allow for an understanding towards a connection between lifestyle and mobility, as well as an insight towards how mobility affects, and is affected by, identity. Hence answering the research questions of this thesis.

#### **3.2 Interviews**

The empirical material collected in this thesis derived from 15 semi-structured interviews as it seeks for a deeper view into the international students' values, attitudes and orientations (May, 2011). The use of semi-structured interviews was chosen as it can be considered a hybrid of open-ended and structured interviews. Meaning it allows for open discussions between the interviewee and interviewer, while at the same time assisting in keeping the interview within the field of interest and ensuring relevant information for the study (Howell, 2013). In regards to open-ended interviews it has been recognized that ethnographic interviews could be considered

one of the most efficient ways to collect information regarding values, attitudes and orientations (Cohen, 2011). Therefore ethnographic interview reasoning has inspired the semi-structured interviews of this thesis.

Ethnographic interviews are commonly performed as longitudinal, allowing for greater interaction through repeated interviews with the same subjects (Stebbins, 1997). However, due to the timeframe of this thesis, a cross-sectional approach was chosen. As this eliminates follow-up interviews, which could have provided additional relationship building, and 'training' of the interviewee reducing communication barriers (Spradley, 1979), additional emphasis was put towards the communication and structure, both prior and during the interviews.

The interviews followed the participants' narratives about their lives, guided by the purpose of this thesis, and focused on the periods before and during their international studies, as well as future ambitions. The interviews aimed to collect empirical data that assist in understanding the participants' patterns of practices, how they justify these practices, and how they reason these behaviours (Howell, 2013) (Stebbins, 1997). Together these aspects assist in exploring the participants values, attitudes and orientations as to get greater understanding regarding international students relation towards mobility, concerning its roles and functions (Schwanen & Lucas, 2011). Similar approach has been used by Cohen (2011) when studying lifestyle mobility among backpackers, and it also takes into consideration the recommendations given in previous student research, suggesting that student travel motives should be considered through a multi-dimensional perspective (Kim, Oh, & Jogaratnam, 2006)(Lesjak et al., 2015).

As the interview participants are taking part in international studies, hence originates from a variety of nationalities, the interviews were conducted in English as it was the main common language spoken by all participants. By conducting the interviews in English it also allowed to minimize the risk of bias from translation. Prior to the interviews all participants were informed regarding the ethical considerations taken into account in this thesis. The interviewees were reminded of the purpose of the interview and their role in participating. They were informed that the interviews would be recorded. That only the interviewer would have access to the recordings. That the participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the interview at anytime. That the recordings would be transcribed with the use of pseudonyms and that any information deemed possible to use as to identify who they are would be adjusted to secure anonymity. That the recording and material collected would only be used for this thesis (Bryman, 2008). Additionally a member check was offered allowing them to read their transcript prior to use as to clarify any possible misunderstandings, hence also secure the credibility of the interpretations of the interview

### 3.2.1 Interview process

The open-ended interviews aimed to be conducted informally and as natural as possible, and only six questions were prepared (Appendix 1). The interviews were conducted in a discussion-based manner, as friendly conversations, and the questions were only used when necessary. As the interviews were cross-sectional the relationship between interviewee and interviewer could not grow over time. Therefore all communication in connection to the interview had to be well thought out as to ensure a comfortable and genuine relation between the interviewee and interviewer. This was managed through the sampling method, by allowing the introduction to be done by one of their friends. Additionally the communication was then conducted through Facebook messenger, which allowed a more relaxed communication tool, and made it possible for the interviewees to accustom themselves with the interviewer prior to the interview, through his profile page. The interviews were inspired by three main elements of how to conduct ethnographic interviews; *explicit purpose*, *Ethnographic explanations* and *Ethnographic questions* (Spradley, 1979).

1. *Explicit purpose*: The interviews have a purpose, and a direction; hence it is of importance that the interviewee knows what is desired. However this comes with the risk of formality, instead of casual friendliness (Spradley, 1979). As the interviews of this thesis were cross-sectional, the element of explicit purpose was approached as follows: The interview took place at a coffee shop of the interviewees preference, it allowed for a familiar surrounding in which the interviewees were comfortable. Additionally the interviewee was always invited for a beverage upon arrival that followed by small talk. The small talk instigated a discussion between the interviewee and interviewer where the interviewer shared experiences from the time when he studied abroad, as to introduce a common ground. During this time clarification in regards to the purpose of the research was also provided. Later the conversation was guided into the interest of the study. The discussion was gradually developed allowing for the casual feeling to remain throughout the interview. In cases where the interview would turn more formal the conversation was guided elsewhere as to reinstate a casual feel, and then return to the field of interest.

2. *Ethnographic explanations*: The explanations are used as to facilitate the process of ensuring that the interviewee understands what the research is about as to be able to provide information that is of interest (Spradley, 1979). The interviewees were provided with a general explanation of the research when asked to participate. During the small talk prior to the interview the purpose of the interview then complemented prior knowledge based on what the interviewees remembered. During the interview conversations, topics were then first introduced through a general question, and then developed into more specific questions, which allow the interviewees to provide information of interest, while maintaining a friendly and comfortable conversation.

The *recording explanation* and ethical explanation became the most formal part of the interview. However it was well received by the interviewees, as the majority of them were familiar with the process from their own studies. Additionally, as the recording did not commence until after the small talk, a level of understanding and friendliness could be established beforehand, allowing the ethical and recording explanation to have minimal impact on the ambiance. *Question explanations* were rarely needed as the questions usually followed the conversation and the language used was adapted to the interviewees' level of English, based on the small talk prior to the interview. However, greater details of the questions were provided and follow up questions were made in specific cases.

3. *Ethnographic questions*: During the interviews, three ethnographic questions were commonly used; *Descriptive, Structural* and *Contrast questions* (Spradley, 1979). The prepared questions for the interview were foremost descriptive questions and when a new topic was introduced it commonly started with a descriptive question as well. Reason for this stems from the character of the responds that is received, as such questions provide a wide array of information about the person, which allow the thesis to dig deeper. Commonly a topic was introduced with descriptive questions, followed by structural questions as to identify the domains that the interviewee relate to the topic discussed. Contrast questions were used at times in the case that the relation between different domains would be desired.

### **3.3 Sampling**

#### **3.3.1 Purposive sampling**

As to ensure that the data collected from the thesis participants is relevant for the purpose of the thesis, and will be useful for answering the research questions, purposive sampling was used. This as it was needed to ensure that the participants followed the desired characteristics, hence the inclusion criteria for this thesis was; being international students, and that their studies abroad lasted for a maximum of 12 months. Since purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling approach it needs to be recognized that the data collected will not be able to be generalized (Bryman, 2008). However as this study is interested in going deeper into the understanding of short-term international students and their relation to mobility, it is considered acceptable to focus on specific cases as to raise awareness. Similar approaches have been used in previous qualitative studies when attempting to understand mobility in contemporary society (Cohen, 2011) (Rickly 2014). My previous experience as an international student (2006 and 2008 to 2011), and my current position as a student partaking in an international program at Lund University assisted in gaining access to the social world of the

desired interview participants. This experience not only assisted in the communication with, but also interpretation of, short term international students. Additionally the previous experience becomes apparent in this thesis as a more critical approach towards international students, and their motivations for commencing in short term studies abroad.

### **3.3.2 Snowballing**

Due to the inclusion of international students within the school system, and the limited time span of which the desired students are available, an accurate sampling frame of the desired population that can be considered trustworthy can be very difficult to create. Hence snowball sampling was considered to be the most feasible approach to collect relevant data in relation to the research questions (Bryman, 2008). Being a student producing the thesis, it facilitated in the collection of participants that fit the desired criteria for the study. A local student assisted in getting in contact with the first interview participant, which in turn introduced additional students suitable for the study, and these students then introduced to more. Through this chain of introduction, it was not only possible to acquire the desired amount of research participants, but it also allowed for a personal introduction to the participants, by someone they trust. This assisted in creating the trust-based relationship needed between the interviewer and interviewee to obtain relevant information about their values, attitudes and orientations. A good relation between the interviewer and interviewee also increase the reliability of the data collected, and strengthens the use of ethnographically inspired semi-structured interviews (Howell, 2013).

### **3.5 Coding, Categorizing and Analysing**

An abductive thematic analysis method was used for analysing the empirical information collected from the interviews. This approach entails reducing the collected material into themes which are based on the narratives of the interview participants, in line with the aim of this thesis (Bryman, 2008) (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2014). An abductive approach was chosen as it allows exploring the data collected with a certain base of knowledge from previous research that can assist in finding relevant information, while at the same time allows for inclusion of additional concepts and theories based on the findings developed through the analysis (Ong, 2012). Additionally it is an approach firmly rooted in interpretivism, hence following the philosophical stance of this thesis (Ong, 2012). In this thesis the thematic analysis approach followed four steps. The *first step* was reading the transcripts of the collected empirical data. An overall read-through of the transcripts, as a whole, allowed first impressions and an overview of the collected data. In this step notes were taken, which in combination with the notes from the interviews, provided assistance for creation of categories and conceptualization. This was then followed by more detailed readings of each transcript. The *second step* was to code the empirical

data by labelling relevant information based elements such as; repetition between transcripts, interviewees direct note of importance, similarities to results in previous published reports, deviating or surprising information, connection to relevant concepts, and more. The coding process aimed to be open minded as to be able to conceptualise underlying patterns. The *third step* was to categorise the codes by selecting the once of importance for this thesis, and grouping them together into different themes. When creating themes, emphasis was put on being unbiased and open-minded. The *final step* was to first label the themes, and then describe the connection between them. These themes and their connections are then used to answer the research questions of this study and represents the results of this thesis.

An early transcription and theming was conducted, based on the first four interviews, as to ensure that the structure and process of the interviews allowed to obtain relevant information for this thesis. This then supported for improving the interview After the completion of the empirical data collection, coding and theming of all 15 interviews was then conducted to then be analysed.

### **3.4 Secondary data**

The secondary data was all derived from published and per reviewed papers as to strengthen the trustworthiness of its content. The main search engines used were Lub-Search, Ebscohost, Emerald, Science Direct and Google scholar by which searches was done with the use of key search words such as International student travel, student travel motives, mobility, new mobilities, lifestyle, liquid identity, lifestyle mobility, and more. Additionally, referenced sources from articles was followed up, which provided additional references leading to further research papers. Through references it was possible to recognize specific work, and authors, which plays a key role within the different topics treated in this thesis.

The conceptual framework of this thesis is based on the contemporary ideas which has come to blossom during the last decades. Therefore articles found through search words was limited based on their publication year, no older than 10 years from the date of search. However, older articles and books were used based on them being referenced and cited in relevant papers, supporting their credibility for the topic of this thesis.

#### 4. Empirical Analysis

For the analysis of the empirical material an abductive thematic analysis approach was used based on the transcribed interview recordings and repeated reading of the collected material.

The analysis of this study focuses on four themes, brought forward from the narratives of the interview participants in the empirical data; *Relation to travel, International studies, Personality and Identity*, and *Future aspirations*. These themes are analysed, with support from their related categories and sub-categories in connection to relevant concepts from previous research. The analysis then goes to connect the four themes in focus towards the research questions.

Table 1. Profile summary of Interview participants

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Nationality	Field of study	Educational Level	Program type	Time of studies (months)	Enrolment status
Alex	Male	27	Canada	Sustainability Management International	Bachelor	Exchange	4	Post
Nami	Female	21	Japan	Business Business	Bachelor	Exchange	12	Current
Thomas	Male	22	France	Administration	Bachelor	Exchange	4	Current
Sonja	Female	23	India	Nutrition	Master	Master	12	Current
Erika	Female	26	Germany	Communication	Bachelor	Exchange	4	Post
Ellinore	Female	21	France	Anthropology	Bachelor	Exchange	12	Current
May	Female	21	Japan	Law	Bachelor	Exchange	12	Current
Tina	Female	24	Germany	Tourism	Bachelor	Exchange	4	Current
Fiona	Female	22	Switzerland	Bio Chemistry	Bachelor	Exchange	12	Current
Tim	Male	21	France	Mathematics	Bachelor	Exchange	12	Current
David	Male	22	Italy	Economics International relations	Bachelor	Exchange	12	Current
Stina	Female	21	Japan	Language / Psychology	Bachelor	Exchange	12	Current
Simon	Male	23	Singapore	Law	Bachelor	Exchange	12	Current
Sanna	Female	28	Spain	Psychology	Masters	Distance	4	Current
Rick	Male	27	Austria	Economics	Bachelor	Exchange	4	Current

The interviews were performed in April 2017 in Lund and Malmö (Sweden) and varied between 45 minutes to 1,5 hours each. As can be seen in Table 1. the ages of the participants range from 21 to 28 years old and there were 6 male and 9 female. Among the 15 participants there was 9 European Students and 6 non-European students, together representing 10 different nationalities with a slight majority originating from France and Japan. The vast majority (13) out of the 15 participants were exchange students, apart from one whom did a one-year master program and one who lived abroad while taking a distance course from her native country. The length of studies varied between 4 to 12 months, representing one-semester and two-semester studies, with majority of participants studying two semesters. Among the one-semester students there was a noticeable majority of European students. The great majority (14) of the students

partaking in this thesis had their international study experience form being enrolled at Lund University. 12 of the participants were currently enrolled in courses, and two had recently finished their short-term international studies at Lund University, but were still present in Sweden after their studies. One student was during the interview enrolled in a course at native home university (Spain), however studied at distance living in Lund.

#### **4.1 Relation to travel**

##### **4.1.1 Socio-political situation**

The international students participating in this thesis shared common traits in regards to the socio-political characteristics such as economical strength, and political situation allowing them for international travel. These characteristics share similarities to round-the-world travellers as described by Jennie German Molz (2006). The participants all shared a certain economic strength, which was apparent among the students in different ways. Commonly exemplified by the financial support obtained by a majority of the interviewees, which was considered mainly a bonus as opposed to a necessity for commencing in international studies. As Nami (21, Japan) expressed: 'if I wouldn't have gotten any scholarship at all I would still have gone. The money is more of a bonus'. This support was generally regarded as an additional income during their studies that foremost went to leisure activity, often to travel. Additionally among the once who did not have financial support, frequent travel was common during their time in Sweden, and based on their early travels can be considered to represent a financially sound family background. The high frequency of travelling, common among the students, could in itself represent a financially and politically strong situation, enforcing the idea that international studies might be reserved for the economically and politically fortunate.

##### **4.1.2 Prior travel experience**

All participants had experience to travel when growing up, however it was recognized that their earlier travel experiences was greatly dependent on the preferences and lifestyles of their parents. The variety of travel stretched from traveling once a year, and only within the borders of their native nations, to students having extensive international experience, some even having lived in a number of different countries. Apart from the tangible differences, there were also intangible, expressed in the purpose of traveling while growing up. For Sonja travelling was about spending time with family, it was represented the moments where they got to know each other since both parents worked. And in Alex (27, Canada) case he described his relation to travel as a result of his parents' values, believing that exposing him to international travel was something important for his cultural education when growing up. The students background to travel during their upbringing varied extensively, however as this practice was a result of their parents desire to travel, it can only represent their upbringing, and not the students themselves.

The participants of this thesis, regardless of their upbringing, shared a common approach to travel that became more prevalent as they grew older. Among the students with extensive experience of international travel there was a certain feeling of normalization, expressing a personal connection to travel, as it being part of who they are. In turn, among the students who expressed to have less experience of international travel, many identified it as something that they have desired for a long time. A good example of this can be seen in Ellinore (21, France) who expressed that international travel has always been a part of her desires, and Tim (21, France) stating that since he was a kid he always had a desire to travel as far as possible. Even though the backgrounds of the participants in this study varied in many ways. Common among the students is that, prior to their international studies a desire had grown to seek further international experience.

These desires shared mutual characteristics among all the students, most pressingly, the desire for self-development through the experience of new cultures. Commonly the students desired to experience new cultures as to develop a greater view of the world, which in turn would broaden their mind and allow them to develop as to be better persons. Similar findings have been recognized in previous studies that included 'lifestyle' as additional push-factor for student travel (Kim, Oh & Jogaratnam, 2006). For the participants in this thesis who already had extensive international exposure, travel was a way as to 're-charge the battery', meaning a needed act as to re-discover oneself and remain open minded in accordance to their self-perception and lifestyle. Sanna (28, Spain) expressed her relation to travel as: by traveling I become more appreciative towards what I have, and also it gives me a more open view towards the world... its hard to explain, but its like a stack of papers, I look at it before I travel and I see it as a mess, then I come back and I see the same stack of papers, but with different eyes and new possibilities. It is who I am, I need travel to be myself.

However among the less travelled individuals a common depiction of travel represented, a 'missing piece of the puzzle', a desire for self-development and self-understanding, deemed only possible to fulfil by exposing themselves to new cultures and environments. Tim (21, France) expressed this as: 'If you don't know much, than you cannot imagine much. So I want to expand my boundaries to make a better life. So that is the real summary of why I travel, and why I am here '.

#### **4.1.3 Travel behaviour during studies**

Travel commenced during their studies represented a great part of the students' ambitions while abroad. This could be noted among the many temporary travels conducted and planned up until the time of the interview, with some students travelling as much as every second weekend.

Such frequent travel was considered a way to fulfil their desire to explore new cultures and see the world. According to the participants of this thesis, the academic structure offered at Lund University, where focus lies on fewer lectures and more individual studies, played an important role in their planning of travels. With less lectures, sometimes only having two days per week scheduled, encouraged some students to skip lectures allowing them a full week's travel. This behaviour of skipping class for travels was most common among the non-European students, and considered beneficial as it allowed for additional days of travel when visiting different parts of Europe. This behaviour was deemed understandable among all international students, as travels to other countries requires more time to experience and studies were considered less important. Even though considered justifiable to skip class for travels, the majority of the students expressed a preference as to find equilibrium between the two. This balance was found possible due to the academic structure at Lund University, as it made it possible to attend lectures while at the same time travel as much as possible: "The course here helps us to find balance during our time here. It gives us a scope to explore the world and do what you love." (Sonja, 23, India).

For non-European students travel was commenced as often as possible as to fulfil their desire of exploring Europe. However for the European students the frequency of travels was similar, though often within the Scandinavian borders, related to their expressed interest of exploring the exotic parts of the north. All students interviewed placed great importance to their travel experiences and it seemed common to regard studies to be of less importance.

## **4.2 International studies**

### **4.2.1 Desire to study abroad**

The point in time to which the interest of studying abroad differed somewhat between the students. The students who recognized themselves as becoming familiar to travel during their upbringing tended to have a rather fluid approach to deciding to study abroad. While among the students who considered their travel experience limited during their upbringing recognized an early desire for international studies. However it was seldom related to the studies itself, but rather the experience of going abroad to discover new places. Among the students who considered themselves less travelled, Tim (21, France) recollected that the desire to study abroad stemmed from when he was a kid and his mother told him stories about when she had travelled around the world, making him want to create his own experiences. Also Ellinore (21, France) described that going on exchange studies was an obvious choice as it had always been part of her desires. Noticeable was that regardless of their parents' travel practices, the majority of them supported, and encouraged, their children's decision of travel to study. This was often justified by the educational value of such experience, not only academic, but also for personal

development and global awareness. This view of the benefits of travel, recognized by the parents, has roots that goes in hand with the 18<sup>th</sup> century European grand tour, where travel was considered as an educational experience, increasing sophistication, global understanding and social awareness (Loker-Murphy & Pearce, 1995)

In contrast to the definition of international students, those students who cross borders with the purpose to study (OECD, 2011), all students participating in this thesis shared the belief that the academics, and professional growth, was more of convenient benefit of the experience, however not representing any greater importance. This goes well in hand with previous research regarding short term international students, where the motive of 'fun' was found to be a main motivator for commencing in such studies (Kim, Oh & Jogaratnam, 2006)(Kim, 2008)(Lesjak et al., 2015). Instead the decision for partaking in international studies was more based on their desire to travel, and international studies provided a safe and comfortable way of performing such activities.

'So it felt like a very safe way to get international experience. So that's really how it started out' (Alex, Canda, 27)

#### **4.2.2 Choice of Destination and university**

The selection process of university was also enforced by the students desire to explore new cultures and travel. When describing their selection process of university the students all described similar reasoning and desires. The first step, and recognized as most important, was that the studies were to take place in a country 'far away' in which provided an environment with an unknown culture and new language, often described as searching for an exotic feel. Combined with the exotic feel was that the university in which they chose provided courses in English. However, as long as these criteria's were met the students expressed no greater importance as to the programs offered, or the quality of the university. The reasons as to why choosing Lund University were commonly expressed as travel related, due to its close connection to Copenhagen Airport which simplified additional travel, and recognized high acceptance for international students. This differ from previous research findings, highlighting that quality of education is of major importance, followed by recommendations, content of the courses and the cost of study (Michel et al., 2003), and instead emphasises that the purpose of studying abroad was less related to academic offering, but rather the experience of living abroad in an international surrounding.

'I had two expectations mainly. First one was traveling! I wanted to travel A LOT, so that is why I chose Lund, because it is near to Copenhagen, so yea I thought it would be kind of easy to travel from here. Also I wanted to get with more international people and, people from all over the world, so that is why I also chose Lund, because Lund has kind of a big acceptance for international students, and there are a lot of, you know, the country is so far away, so that's why I choose here' (Nami, 21, Japan)

#### **4.2.3 Motives for commencing in International studies**

The participants of this thesis showed strong similarities between their prior relation to travel and reasons for commencing in international studies. The more travelled participants approached it as an on-going activity in relation to their travel behaviour, while less travelled participants saw it as the start of something new. This difference among students, based on their relation to travel while growing up, represents a similar reasoning as highlighted by Cohen (2011), based on Ryan (2010), identifying that on-going involvement in travel may result in travel becoming part of the persons life, rather than a mean for escape. In regards to travel motives, the participants commonly showed more emphasis towards internal motives, rather than external motives, as to why they decided to partake in such studies. The internal motives were often rooted in a desire for self-development, common among the less travelled students, or as a mean to reinforce their sense of self, common among more travelled students.

In the pursue of finding one self, international studies was considered a way as to finally become independent and take responsibility for their own life. This was clearly expressed in Sonjas reasoning for why commencing in international studies: 'I wanted to become completely independent, in every aspect, and I wanted to take my own decisions even if they might be right or wrong...I wanted to go abroad and learn who I am, not who my parents tell me to be...I felt that unless I move out from my home I will not learn who I am.'

Sonja later express that she considered herself as to have been living in a bubble, protected by her mother, and that unless she moved out from her home, she would not learn who she is. This reasoning can also be connected to a sense of escape, motivated by a form of transition in life related to the individuals rites-de-passage. The connection between international studies and rites-de-passage is portrayed among several of the less travelled students. Often in the connection to a desire for seeking independence and self-exploration, as to better understand who they are, and what they want to do with their lives. Even though such life transitions are not as noticeable among the more travelled students, they do present a desire of escape, often related to a need of detachment from the routines of everyday life.

However there were also external motivators supporting their choice of studying abroad, though these were generally less related to the desire to go abroad, and more related to the choice of location. Example of this can be noted in the quote above, mentioning that she chose Lund based on the proximity to an international airport, supporting her desire to travel. Furthermore students also showed interest towards practical relevance that Swedish society had in relation to their academic interest. Alex (27, Canada) studying sustainability wanted to experience how Sweden is organised around this topic, and May (21, Japan) who studied law, had heard that Sweden was a model country in regards to Social equality, hence wanted to see this first hand. Apart from this, the organisational agreements that were made in between home university and Lund University allowed for comfortable, and safe, transition between the countries. Commodity and safety was commonly recognised among the students as an important support for participating in international studies. For the students with less travel experience, some of them never leaving their native country before, emphasised on the importance of security and commodity connected to international studies.

‘In this context of security, it is easy to study abroad with ERASMUS program. Everything is kind of settled from the beginning. You just sign the papers and OK im going there, I’m going to study, I will have a student house and it is easy for starting when you don’t really have any experience.’ (Tim, 22, France)

The importance of sense of security was also recollected by Alex from his first international academic experience, stating that the safety aspect provided was how it all started out, representing an important factor for first time international travellers going alone.

#### **4.3 Personality and Identity**

All students participating in this thesis recognized that their international study experience had an impact on their sense of self and identity, as a result from their international experience. Not only based on them living independently in a new country, but also as a result from their social surrounding. Commonly among the students there was recognition of a divide between Swedish and International students. Some did socialise with Swedish students, however these Swedish students had usually prior international experience and were considered more open-minded and welcoming compared to the others. This sense of open mind was a common trait among the international students and was described as certain subjective openness towards different cultures and an interest of others without judgement, depicting similarities to cosmopolitan character (Molz, 2006)(Enoch & Grossma, 2010). It was also considered one of the main traits common among the international community, which was considered almost mandatory to

obtain as to be included. Interestingly open-mindedness is a recognised cognition within psychology where it has been brought forward that it can fluctuate as it has situational and attitudinal constraints (Wilson, Ottati & Price, 2017). Meaning that open-mindedness among the international students of this thesis might have been constructed and shaped as to fit with the international community at Lund University. Apart from the development of an open-mind, several students also recognized changes in terms of behaviour. Even though travel was recognised by all as being a main reason to study abroad, the amount to which they travelled was for some un-expected, though recognised as almost being the norm while in Sweden, inspired by the students in their surrounding. Through the process of self-development, combined with open-mindedness, some students also showed renewed interest in childhood activities. This can be exemplified with Ellinore who took up singing in a quire which she had not done since she was young. She expressed that her reason for this was to find a social group with more Swedish people, also Tim took up his childhood interests of drawing. As a result of his experience in Sweden he, among many others, experienced an increase in self-confidence, and through the influence of new cultures he not only awoke his interest in art, but additionally he decided to become a vegetarian and planned a change in career, going from mathematics to international social work. He explain his personal change to be the result form being able to distance himself from his prior life and culture, and view his situation with new eyes. Similar personal insights was recognized among other students, commonly related to a realised possibility of an international life, which was deemed attractive and desired, both as experience but also as lifestyle. Regardless of their prior experience to travel, the participants of this study identified themselves as being international citizens with multiple homes at the point of the interview.

This realization goes well in hand with Molz (2006) describing how travellers embody cosmopolitanism, by experiencing new environments and becoming culturally flexible, while moving within difference places. In regards to the recognition of multiple homes, a common perception is that home will always be where they grew up, however by spending time at a different place for a long period of time creates a feeling of belonging, security and self-recognition, which to them strongly symbolises home. All students interviewed considered Lund as home, with some students having multiple homes. However the level to which they considered Lund as home varied somewhat between the narratives of students, regardless of their previous travel relation. This variation stretched between recognising Lund as a home away from home, to more commonly considering Lund as their current home, expressing native home as something connected to the past.

The recognition of a cosmopolitan way of life stems firmly within mobility, and is commonly justified by the participants of this thesis through their current relation to travel, emphasised with their open mind which distances them from one single culture. Students with more travel experience from their upbringing connected travel as being part of who they are. An example of this can be seen in Sanna who made regular travels as to escape from the routine of her everyday life. She recognized that she needs travel as to maintain an open mind and a certain perspective of the world. Hence she decided to take a semester break from her psychology program and study abroad as to refresh her mind-set. The connection between travel and identity among the students with less travel experience was mentioned to be an eye-opener, rooted in their self-realisation during their international studies. This was narrated with emphasis on the sense of increased global awareness obtained from their travels during their studies, and the international environment they were in, which distanced them from the limitations of the local culture.

‘now I rather think of my life on a global scale, with an open mind, and not being part of a small community. I have become more and more a citizen of the world...But when I live here, its normal casual life...its becoming a home.’ (Tim, 21, France)

#### **4.4 Future aspirations**

The majority of the students expressed a common desire to continue with their travels long after they finish their studies, and some of them were actively searching for ways as to secure international experience right after their time in Sweden ended. Continuous studies at Lund university, through PhD and masters programs, was a relatively common approach as to extend their international experience. This type of behaviour brings similarities for the act of bridging a travel-occupation gap (Cohen, 2011), referring to the act of securing an international environment without having to travel them-selves, by ensuring an environment that attracts likeminded. Ellinore described her decision to apply for continuous studies as a means to remain in an international environment, not needing to go home. Additionally the masters program she applied to was chosen as it included one semester in Asia, providing an easy introduction to a new culture. Common among the students was the expressed desire to find professions that supported international travel, commonly in NGOs and international corporations. Many students expressed greater emphasis towards how professions could support their desired way of life with travel, rather than career opportunities and financial gain. This work / leisure approach shows strong similarities to Global nomads, as expressed by D’Andrea (2007) and Richards (2015), described as migrant expatriates seeking an profession which allows the fulfilment of an international lifestyle associated with freedom, pleasure, and self-expression.

Barriers to sustain international travels was recognized by several of the participants of this study, however with some differences. The most common barrier was narrated as a form of life-crisis, representing a turning point in life where continuous travel would result in substantial hindrance for returning to native society. Nami narrated such situation: 'I want to travel, and I want to stay abroad. But it is kind of hard to... In Japan it is difficult to work if you don't have any working experience in Japan before, it is hard to find a job there. And if you are not newly graduated, then it is also hard to get a job in Japan. So, if I want to work abroad then I have to work abroad for a long time' (Nami, 21, Japan). Among the students there was only one who expressed relationship as possible barrier for sustaining his international travel behaviour, referring to the need of adjustment as to ensure a healthy relationship. However he emphasised on his current goal, to introduce the girlfriend to a more international lifestyle, with the aim of sharing the passion for travel (Alex, 27, Canada). Among the other students the importance of relationship was considered to be uncertain, and part of the future to come, not putting any significant thought towards it at the moment.

#### **4.5 Motivations charactering international students travel**

The motivational factors as described by the participants show great resemblance towards the factors recognized in earlier research (Kim, 2008)(Lesjak et al., 2015). Not only in the motivational factors present, but also in regards to the preference of personal factors, in contrast to professional factors (Lesjak et al., 2015). The decision of commencing in international studies among the participants in this thesis showed great emphasis towards internal motivational factors such as self-development, escape, global awareness and way of life, based on their personal values, norms and beliefs. These internal factors show great resemblance to what previous researchers has categorised as personal factors (Kim, 2008) (Lesjak et al., 2015), and has also been recognized in earlier research to be key motivators as to commence in short term international studies (Lesjak et al., 2015). The narratives of the participants in this thesis did portray some external motives such as institutional agreements between universities, political situation of the host country and services included when partaking as international student experience. Noticeable was that the narratives of these motives depicted an emphasis towards safety and commodity for traveling abroad. The external motives recognized in previous research, such as academic reputation and future job opportunities (OECD, 2014) (Kim, Oh, & Jogaratnam, 2006) Cerdeira Bento, 2014)(Lesjak, Juvan, Ineson, Yap, & Axelsson, 2015)(Kim, 2008)(Kim, Oh, & Jogaratnam, 2006) (Michael et al., 2003), were regarded to have some guiding implication, however they were commonly taken into consideration after the internal desires has been met, and were regarded to be of less importance.

The motives and desires presented by the students in this thesis also show great resemblance to the findings presented in Paulina Luzeckas (2016) study about students taking a gap year. In her study she defines the 'gap-year' as a constructive time-out connected to personal-development, increased global and cultural awareness, benefits recognized to be important at the time of transition for young individuals entering adulthood (i.e., rites-de-passage) (Luzecka, 2016)(King, 2011). Recognizing the motivational similarities between short-term international students in this thesis and the practice of taking a gap year, based on the time of practice and purpose for activity and desired outcome. It goes to question if short-term international studies could be considered an alternative form of gap-year experience, which could also be expressed through the high desire for travel and limited importance of academic performance.

Rather than seeking academic and professional growth, the narratives of the students partaking in this thesis expressed their reasoning behind commencing in international studies by emphasising on their desire for self-development and identity reinforcement through travel. Commonly the interviewees considered their international studies as a way to develop and maintain a cosmopolitan lifestyle and identity by discovering new cultures in a safe and comfortable way. Therefor, bearing in mind the values, orientations and practices expressed by the international students partaking in this thesis, it goes to consider that international studies could be regarded as an instrument for travel. Expressing a mobility consumption logic recognized by new mobilities (Cohen, Duncan & Thulemark, 2015), and sharing similarities to the reasoning of lifestyle mobility travellers (Cohen, 2011)(Rickly, 2016).

#### **4.6 Lifestyle-related travel**

The relatively similar socio-political situation among the participants in this thesis represents a privileged base in regards to travel, which is repeatedly expressed through their continuous travel behaviour. Commonly their repeated travel was justified through the positive impact travel has on them as individuals, not only providing a greater perspective on the world but also shaping them into becoming better persons. Among he students there was a strong connection between travel and sense of self, expressing that travel is part of who they are, and by traveling they maintained their lifestyle. Interestingly this was also expressed among several of the students with limited travel experience prior to international studies. In these cases it was noticeable that they have had an urge for travel since an early age, and partaking in international studies was their first opportunity to properly act on this urge.

Even though travel experiences varied among the participants during their time of growing up, their values, orientations and beliefs in regards to current and future travel behaviour show

striking similarities, sharing a common desire for on-going travel (Åkerlund & Sandberg, 2015)(Cohen, 2011). All students practiced frequent temporary travel during their studies, as they would travel as often as possible. These travels could be considered irregular, as they were not dependant on elements such as weather, special events or holidays, but travel was rather performed ad hoc without any greater need for planning.

The narratives of the interviewees also expressed of a mixture of mobility types, combing a form of migrant mobility, as the students commonly regarded their host destination as one of their multiple homes and belongings (Cohen, Duncan & Thulemark, 2015)(Rickly, 2016), while at the same time performing temporary mobility on a frequent and irregular basis, changing their 'position' between being tourist, migrant, resident, return migrant (Åkerlund & Sandberg, 2013), depending on where they went. They also expressed strong desire to continue with their travels in the future by living and experiencing different parts of the world, for a variety of time, as an on-going practice representing a part of who they are (Cohen, Duncan & Thulemark, 2015).

I want to continue to travel, as much as I can. And I know that I don't want to stay too long in a place (Ellinore, 21, France)

While some recognized that they might need to return to their country of origin at some point, they did not see this as going back, but rather as a possibly needed temporary destination to support further travels (Cohen, 2011). This freedom of travel as illustrated in the narratives of the interviewees, combined with their description of on-going corporeal mobility being part of who they are, can be connected to lifestyle mobility. A type of mobility identified among individuals with relatively well-of stature (Åkerlund & Sandberg, 2013)(Rickly, 2016).

In Cohens' study regarding backpackers and lifestyle mobility (Cohen, 2011) he recognized that backpackers shared a sense of cosmopolitan lifestyle, which was often expressed among the practitioners through their consumption of local food and use of specific clothing. However for the international students in this thesis, their main characteristics of being cosmopolitan was expressed through mutual acceptance of cultural differences and their consumption of physical mobility. Such lifestyle consumption links mobility not only to lifestyle, but also to identity.

#### **4.7 Relation to identity**

The connection between lifestyle, consumption (mobility) and identity, in regards to how they affect and are affected by each other is commonly noticed in the narratives of the interviewees and has been recognized as a key indicator for how mobility affect individuals sense of self

(identity) (Cohen, Duncan & Thulemark, 2015). The effect that the experience of international studies has had on the interviewees' identity, and way of life, is commonly related to their desire of shaping, creating and enforcing their identities in line with a cosmopolitan lifestyle. As mobility has shown to be commonly considered a lifestyle pursuit among the participants, it goes to argue that mobility has a significant role in the way these international students construct their sense of self, and identity (Rickly, 2016)(Åkerlund & Sandberg, 2013).

This indicates that international students of this thesis utilise mobility as a mean to re-enforce and maintain their sense of self, but also as a way to create and shape their identities as to get recognition for being part of a cosmopolitan lifestyle. Similar to the description of liquid identity as presented by Gössling and Stavrinidi (2015), stating that in today's contemporary society mobility can be used to proactively construct identities, with great flexibility, as a way to seek social connectedness and portray social status and network capital (Gössling & Stavrinidi, 2015).

Even though the participants express a desire to experience and be part of the local culture in their host destination, they share similar social groups, consisting primarily of other international students, and rarely any Swedish locals. Even though the international students share a common desire of experiencing the local culture, they surround themselves with international students, providing them with a social network which they depict as being international, sharing common beliefs, values and practices. Therefore it is possible that their local experience represents a more 'international student' culture instead of the local 'authentic' culture.

The common values and beliefs of the international social groups were commonly referred to as a sense of openness stemming from a cosmopolitan lifestyle. The sense of openness is something that the students with a history of frequent travel recognized as part of their personality prior to international studies, which became confirmed and enforced during their time in Sweden. For the less travelled students it was introduced to them during their experience. However, as recognized within psychology, the sense of openness can fluctuate as it has situational and attitudinal constraints (Wilson, Ottati & Price, 2017). When seeking social belonging, humans tend to conform to the norms of their desired social group, or social-network, and might therefore change their sense of self when seeking acceptance of the group (Gössling & Stavrinidi, 2015) (Cohen, 2010). Therefore it is possible that the sense of openness, unifying the international students, is something created and shaped during their time at the host destination, as to seek social acceptance and sense of belonging among their social groups, a behaviour that has been recognized among frequent travellers (Rickly, 2016)(Åkerlund & Sandberg, 2013). Frequent travellers can therefore experience a transformation of social

identities (Cohen, 2011), where local characteristics, such as space, time and memory, start to lose their relevance to the individual's identity (Gössling & Stavrinidi, 2015), embracing the cosmopolitan identity that was commonly portrayed among the interviewees when describing themselves. Apart from the commonly recognized sense of openness, some participants of this thesis described a revived interest for childhood hobbies. Such hobbies resulted in them becoming included into additional social groups which allowed them to socialise with Swedish nationals. As the identities of the participants of this thesis have shown to adapt to the individual's new surrounding, adapting to the cosmopolitan culture, its norms and values, it enforces the idea of 'liquid identity' among the students (Gössling & Stavrinidi, 2015).

## **5. Conclusions and discussion**

### **5.1 Conclusion**

#### **5.1.1 New mobility motives**

Motivational factors of internal character seems to be of main importance for commencing in short term international studies, as described in the empirical data of this thesis, and were commonly portrayed as stemming from their time growing up. Such factors included; self-development, to be more independent, practice a desired lifestyle, discover new cultures and to experience the true world i.e. become more globally aware. These findings support previous statements from tourism research, expressing that short term international studies are mainly based on internal factors connected to self development (Lesjak et al., 2015)(Kim, 2006)(Kim et al., 2008)(Daly, 2011). In terms of external motives recognized in previous research, such as academic reputation and future job opportunities (OECD, 2014) (Kim, Oh, & Jogaratnam, 2006) Cerdeira Bento, 2014)(Lesjak, Juvan, Ineson, Yap, & Axelsson, 2015)(Kim, 2008)(Kim, Oh, & Jogaratnam, 2006) (Michael et al., 2003), these were understood to have some guiding implication, but they were commonly taken into consideration after the internal desires had been met, and were regarded to be of less importance. When analysing the importance of 'quality of studies', 'language of courses', 'reputation of university', 'financial support', 'socio-political situation', which has previously been recognized to be of key importance for selection of destination and university (Kim et al., 2008)(Lesjak et al., 2015)(OECD, 2014)(EuropeanComission, 2017), the participants of this thesis only recognized 'Language of courses' and 'socio-political situation', to be of any greater importance as to ensure certain security during their stay, and ability to make use of the lectures provided. In regards to the other factors previously recognised, these were mainly considered to be fortunate benefits from their experience in Lund, however not recognised as having a decisive role of their decision process for commencing in international studies. Examples of this can be seen in their attitude towards financial support that was commonly considered as travel money. However an additional external factor was recognized among the interviewees to be of significant importance, this was 'proximity to airport', as travel was considered to be of key importance when participating in international studies. The importance of travel permeated the participants' relation to international studies, and some even skipped lectures as to allow for additional travel days. The reasoning behind their frequent travels commonly shared many similar internal-factors motivating their commencement of partaking in international studies. In fact the students considered travel to be a key method as to seek global awareness, self development and to maintain a certain open-mindedness.

The motivational factors recognized among the international students of this thesis show strong similarities with previous tourism research in regards to the personal factors motivating short term student mobility. However by approaching student mobility through the lens of new mobilities, this thesis also recognize that the desire to partake in international studies, stem from an early age, and relate to the students desire for travel as part of their self perception. Hence, short term international studies seem to be considered a safe and comfortable type of mobility lifestyle consumption, practiced for the purpose of travel and motivated through internal factors, such as self-development, increase global awareness and maintain a mobile lifestyle.

### **5.1.2 Lifestyle mobility**

Even though the students in this thesis came from a many different countries, stretching from Canada to India and Japan, they all revealed certain economic and socio-political privileges that was needed for the vast amount of frequently performed temporary travels. The intensity of travel varied somewhat between individual students, however through their narrated values, attitudes and orientations in regards to travel it became noticeable that, similar to lifestyle travellers, they shared a common desire to continuously be on the move, which was not limited to their time in Lund, but was an on-going desire that also seam to guide their decisions about future plans. Considering the international students in this thesis as lifestyle travellers is given a strong base in the empirical data. Not only through their desire for maintaining on-going travels as practiced during their studies, and them planning their future as to be able to maintain such travels. But also through their personification of travel, connecting it to who they are. Even though their the backgrounds and past travel experiences varied extensively among the students participating in this thesis, they showed great similarities in terms of cognitive and affective position towards travel, recognizing it as part of their sense of self, i.e. Identity. Travel was considered as a way of life that the students expressed desire to maintain. Another characteristic of lifestyle traveller among the students interviewed was how they related to places and homes. Among the interviewees, home was not referred to as a specific location, but rather a place in which they could find themselves, i.e. a place of mental rest. Commonly one such place was referred to be wherever their parents were. However all students' also recognised that Lund had become a home during their time there, and several of the students identified additional homes and belongings as result of previous travels.

Based on the narrated relation to mobility, expressed in the empirical data, it goes to consider that students participating in this thesis should be considered as lifestyle travellers. This is greatly supported by their attitudes, norms and values expressed in regards to mobility, and which is supported by their continuous practice of temporary travel, and future aspirations that

represents a clear desire to continuously be on the move. However, even though the practice of participating in international studies tends to represent a lifestyle travel, it is noticeable that some of the participants, even though currently highly motivated to maintain an on-going movement, express a possible desire to settle down in a distant future. The international students of this thesis should therefore be considered to express different types of lifestyle travel, most common in this thesis was the use of lifestyle mobility, but also lifestyle migration.

### **5.1.3 Identity**

Through the analysis of the empirical data it became noticeable that, short term international studies were considered a form of lifestyle consumption. As lifestyle consumption has been recognised as a way to express, enforce and shape individuals identities (Cohen, 2011)(Rickly, 2016), and identities are now increasingly flexible and are proactively constructed (Cohen, 2010)(Gössling & Stavrinidi, 2015), it becomes relevant to understand how student mobility is affected by, and affects, the students identities. This as identities can be considered to be self-inspiring as, who we are shapes what we do and, what we do shape who we are.

The connection between international studies and 'rites-de-passage' (Luzeckas, 2016) show strong presence in the analysis of the empirical data. International studies was often considered the first time in which the student was allowed to travel independently for a long period time and far away, becoming a form of symbol of adulthood. Rites-de-passage as a motivational factor was especially prominent in one of the student who expressed her main motivation to partake in international studies as a result of identity confusion. She explained this to be connected to a controlled upbringing, not allowing her to discover her adult self. For her international studies represented a type of escape that allowed her to 'find herself' through travel. Describing her self-story as an international student revealed changes that were distinctively new and showed strong similarities to the other students in this thesis. Among these was the sense of openness, a characteristic considered to unify the international students as a social group and distinguish them as cosmopolitan individuals. As research has shown (Wilson et al, 2017) that this sense is situational and can fluctuate, it goes to consider it as an example of how student mobility can affect students' identities in search for social belonging. Through the analysis of the empirical data, it was possible to identify several identity adjustments resulting from their frequent travels which can result in identity confusion among lifestyle travellers, however non of the participants in this study expressed any such negative affect of their travels. Rather the contrary as their repeated travel was commonly justified through the positive impact travel has on them as individuals, not only providing a greater perspective on the world but also shaping them into becoming better persons.

## **5.2 Discussion**

By approaching international student travel through the perspective of new mobilities this thesis has been able shed light on-to the complex area of student mobility. By shining light onto its connection to lifestyle travel, the findings has introduced a contemporary understanding of international student mobility, how its related to, and shaped by, students lifestyles and identities. This approach seems, as far as I know, previously not explored, but can now be considered for future research. This thesis has not only contributed to the wider discourse of new mobilities (Sheller & Urry, 2006), but also adds knowledge to the current understanding of international student mobility, emphasising on how it is affected by, and affects, students lifestyles and identities. Such knowledge is also relevant within the field of tourism research in its strive to better understand how travel connects to, and effects, individuals lives, their identities, and the way they perceive and behave in the world (Coles, 2015).

The findings in this thesis can also be considered to have societal relevance as it contributes with knowledge pertinent for labour market developments. As service has become ever more prominent in todays economy and represents a key role in the society today (Lush & Vargo, 2014)(Skålen, 2010) and lifestyles are considered to be a central aspect in debates about consumer cultures associated with contemporary times (Cohen, 2011). This thesis adds to the knowledge needed for the ability to provide accurate service, but also enriches the understanding of international students as a target segment. Understanding travel motives is considered a necessity for stakeholders in connection to student travel (Kim et al., 2006), in order to allow and appropriate development of marketing strategies, services, and promotions. This thesis supports such developments, and in turn also becomes relevant for social research within these fields.

## **6. Strengths and limitations**

The strength of this thesis lies in the in the very choice of this research area as explained (section 5.2). However there are some limitations that should be taken into consideration as to appropriately make use of the findings in this thesis. The interview participants in this thesis provided rich and interesting information, however the limited amount of interviews conducted (i.e. fifteen) could restrict the scope of the conclusions. Also as the vast majority of the participants were enrolled at Lund University during the time of the data collection the findings become reasonably situational, in both time and space. Meaning, even though this thesis found that travels seem more important than the studies themselves when partaking in international studies, it does not mean that the findings should be generalized to other universities.

### **6.1 Future research**

As previous research has recognized potential 'grey-zone of complex mobility', in regards to international students, this thesis calls for more studies to be conducted in the future to better grasp and understand international students in today's modern world. Ideally these researches could be conducted in a longitudinal manner (by collecting data both pre, during and post studies), with greater sample size and at different universities. Additionally it would be interesting to explore possible seasonal differentiations.

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## Appendix 1: Interview guide

### **\*\* Could tell me a little bit about yourself?**

What's your age? What do you study? Where are you from? Is there anything that you would say that you are passionate about?

#### ➤ **What does travel /mobility mean to you?**

What does mobility mean to you? How would you describe your relation with travel? How do you decide when & where to travel? Why do you travel? Do you perform different types of travel?, What role has travel/mobility had in your life until now? How do you think you will travel in the future? How important is travel/mobility to you?

#### ➤ **Do you see any difference between being a tourist and being a short-term international student?**

What differences are there between these two concepts? And what would you consider yourself to be? Why?

#### ➤ **What expectations did you have for your experience here?**

What was important to you when deciding to come here? Why was this important? Similar experience(s) before?, what are the benefits of such experience?

#### ➤ **Describe your general perception of the other short-term international students that you have met here? (e.g. in your housing complex)**

Why are they studying short term?, where are they from?, how is your relation to each other?, What do they do?, Do you notice any major differences between each-other?

#### ➤ **Describe your decision process for commencing in studying abroad, what thoughts led you here?**

Why did you choose to study abroad?, Why only this amount of time? How did you arrive to the conclusion of choosing Lund University? Were there any other alternatives? What motivated you the most?

#### ➤ **How has your experience here impacted you?**

Any differences in your behaviour from pre-arrival? Any new activities that you do now which you did not do before?, Any change of views? Why do you think this has changed?

#### ➤ **Describe your future plans?**

Go back 'home'?, Plans to travel?, etc.

### **\*\* Is there anything that you would like to add?**