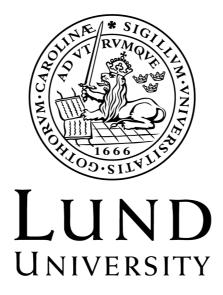# Students Without Borders?

An analysis of the role of digital media in the lives of international students at Lund University

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Abstract

International students at Lund University are constantly engaged with their mobile devices. Communication conducted through these devices across a variety of digital and social media platforms facilitates a significant amount of everyday communication, on both a local and transnational level. The overall aim of this thesis is to examine how these increasingly digitally mediated communicative practices relate to the manner in which international students construct their everyday habitus in a personal, social and academic capacity. This research also seeks to understand how individuals from culturally diverse backgrounds negotiate their everyday lives in the multicultural and media saturated context which characterises life as an international student at Lund University.

This thesis argues that the ubiquity of digital media accessed through mobile digital devices has led to the increased intersection of the offline and the online surrounding everyday communication and socialisation practices. A significant degree of this communication occurs through social media platforms, as well as other digital applications. The differing functions of these applications allow for the organisation of differing spheres of communication and sociality. The transnationally mobile respondents use digital and social media to develop a mediated sense of belonging and community while studying at Lund University, which is here defined as phenomenological geography.

This thesis also argues that Lund's heterogenous international student environment is populated by cosmopolitan individuals who are open to encountering cultural difference. An openness to these social encounters allows for the negotiation of cultural plurality, which leads not only to social harmony but also communicative tension. These social encounters are also assisted by the institutional framework provided by Lund University. While this mediated environment fosters intercultural exchange, respondents also experienced limitations integrating into Swedish society during their studies, such as making Swedish friends and learning Swedish.

Keywords: International Students, Digital Media, Social Media, Mediatization, Cosmopolitanism, Conviviality, Multiculturalism, Transnationalism, Sweden, Mobility.

Acknowledgments

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1: Introduction

Digital media use among international students

Located in the south of Sweden, the geographical placement of Lund University has historically facilitated close relationships with other European universities, contributing to a diverse profile of professors, researchers and students (Fehrman et al., 2005, 295). In a contemporary context saturated with digital media platforms accessed thorough mobile digital devices, the increased mediatization of social and cultural practices has transformed the manner in which communication occurs with the academic community in which the university is situated, on both a national, European and transnational level (Staff et al., 2016, 165). Lund University is now not only one of Sweden's oldest universities, it is also one of the most international and diverse, holding agreements with over 600 educational institutions in over 70 countries, with international students making up approximately fifteen percent of the student population (Staff et al., 2016, 164).

For many of these transnationally mobile international students, digital media facilitates a significant element of their everyday communication and socialisation practices. Many international students in Lund are technology savvy digital natives who have grown up in an era where digital media and communication systems exist as a taken for granted aspect of everyday life (Martin & Rizvi, 2014, 1017). This digital media use facilitates the development of a social and academic habitus in the Lund University environment, and also sustains transnational connections with friends and family in the student's country of origin. Even before international students arrive in Lund, research is conducted on programme pages of the Lund University website, official social media pages, and related message boards. The application process is then conducted through the centralised University Admissions website, with admission results being sent out to successful applicants via email.

Once admitted students relocate transnationally to study in Sweden, they continue to use their digital devices to engage in everything from building social networks, joining student nations and associations, and finding a second-hand bicycle, to enrolling in the correct academic course, making digital payments, and communicating with the Swedish Migration Agency about visa extensions. Without frequent communication through digital devices, international students would be cut off from participating in the essential means which facilitate both their

personal and professional lives. It is these micro-level communicative practices, and the manner in which they contribute to shaping the everyday life worlds of the international students in Lund which provide the area of focus for this research.

Situating the research

As digital media processes and the social and cultural narratives which they articulate become increasingly embedded within the everyday lives of international students, the need to understand the social and cultural implications of this change increases (Hjarvard, 2013; Driessens et al., 2017). International students are constantly attached to their digital devices. They use their laptops to take notes, conduct research and write academic articles, whilst simultaneously checking their mobile devices to scroll through their Facebook Newsfeed, make posts on Instagram, and send messages to friends and family on WhatsApp. The connections and communicative practices occurring *through* digital media are vast, providing an almost overwhelming array of networks, narratives and phenomenon to be examined (Burrell, 2017, 51).

Yet in a pluralistic and transnationally interconnected media *environment* such as Lund University, the researcher cannot simply reduce their understanding of mediated communication to a concern of production, representation and usage (Andersson, 2017, 36). Analysis must seek to develop knowledge regarding the dynamics of mediated communication as they relate to everyday life practices of international students and the subsequent transformations of the social world which they represent.

Examining the exchange of knowledge, skills and culture which occurs through everyday communication in the lives of international students can lead to more awareness and acceptance of diversity, and to the development of international networks which provide the foundation for ongoing transnational cooperation. By developing a more nuanced understanding of the perceptions and practices of international students in Lund, this study seeks to develop situated and contextual knowledge which may allow both students and university staff to better understand how boundaries are negotiated, relationship are formed, and how knowledge is generated in this diverse and culturally plural student environment. This knowledge seeks to contribute to improving the quality of life for international students in Lund and the manner in

which Lund University staff foster the conditions of transcultural communication and internationalisation.

Research Aim

The research seeks to focus on the manner in which individuals and collectives use media to negotiate social boundaries (Andersson, 2013, 388). This approach recognises the role of agency in the articulation of both the symbolic and the material, and does not make a sharp differentiation between the 'virtual' and 'real' spaces (Hsu, 2017), or between the global and the local (Appadurai, 1996). This approach is informed by the cultural turn in media studies, which acknowledges how media constitute an inexplicable part of everyday life, as a dimension of the social world, rather than a distinct or clearly demarcated phenomenon which can be examined in isolation (Morley, 2007). Given this decentralised approach, the study does not seek to focus on a particular media practice, but rather how media practices and social interactions are intertwined in the construction of the everyday life worlds which constitute the media *environment* surrounding international students at Lund University (Livingstone, 2009).

With this contextualising foundation established, the overarching aim of this research is *to examine how the increasingly digitally mediated social world relates to the manner in which international students at Lund University negotiate their everyday lives.* In addition to investigating the dynamics of mediatization regarding the everyday lives of international students, this research seeks to focus on the mediated communicative and social practices of international students in the multicultural environment of Lund by examining *how individuals from diverse backgrounds negotiate their everyday lives in the multicultural and mediated context of life as international students at Lund University.*

Building on the established framework and the stated research objectives, the questions that this research asks are:

- To what extent does digital media play a role in shaping the communicative environment of international students at Lund University?

- How do international students from a variety of cultural backgrounds negotiate their everyday lives in the culturally diverse and mediated environment of Lund University?

Investigating the dynamics of mediatization in the lives of international students requires the development of an analytic lens from which to examine socio-cultural changes to communication in conjunction with the evolving techno-material affordances of the media (Adolf, 2017, 12). In order to develop nuanced analytical findings, theoretical and analytic discourses of mediatization have been synthesised with a cultural approach to cosmopolitanism, in conjunction with a framework of conviviality, in order to explore cosmopolitan subjectivity and account for the cultural and ethnic plurality within the Lund University international student community.

2: Literature Review

Mapping an approach to mediatization

A framework of mediatization has been adopted in order to conceptualise the digitally mediated communicative practices conducted by international students whilst studying at Lund University. Couldry and Hepp (2013) note that a mediatization framework does not refer to a single theory or media 'logic', but rather an orientation towards research which seeks to investigate the wider consequences of mediated communications in relation to culture and society, as well as the manner in which both technological and communicative processes are embedded in everyday life (195). The manner in which mediatization theory allows for the conceptualisation of the dynamics of social change and how they relate to digital media use here provides a meta-perspective for analysis.

Andersson (2017) notes that a risk of employing mediatization as a meta-level concept is that other social or cultural theories can become marginalised, potentially hindering the depth and scope of the research findings (50). The strength of a mediatization framework however, is that it can be employed in conjunction with other theoretical perspectives in order to develop a more comprehensive approach towards the examination of empirical material. Mediatization is here approached in conjunction with cosmopolitan theory, which is further supplemented by the framework of conviviality in order to develop a fit-for-purpose conceptual approach from which investigate the transnational and culturally diverse social practices as they occur in the chosen context.

Approaching mediatization theory

Mediatization research is an expanding conceptual area which represents a wide range of theoretical and conceptual terrain for analysis (Couldry & Hepp, 2013; Couldry, 2012). The ubiquity of digital media and the relationship this has to the social world has led to the development of theoretical perspectives which draw attention to the manner in which the digital has become increasingly *intertwined* with everyday social and communicative practices. The extensive array of theoretical discussions regarding mediatization require the term to be contextualised and defined in order to provide it with analytic value. This analysis does not seek to reduce the abundance of conceptualisations surrounding mediatization, but rather to clarify and define mediatization as an analytical concept so that it can be coherently applied to the analysis of empirical material. Although this field of research will always remain diverse, contingent and subject to hermeneutic interpretation, two key constellations are predominantly identified from which to situate analysis (Couldry & Hepp, 2013; Adolf, 2017).

These distinctions are often defined as an *institutionalist* approach and a *social-constructivist* approach towards mediatization (Adolf, 2017, 15). Building on this analytic overview, Bolin (2014) also identifies a *third*, semiotically oriented approach to mediatization which has also been evaluated in an attempt to develop a conceptual map for research (176). Whilst a mediated social-constructivist approach is the most suitable for examining the media saturated context, all three research strands have here been evaluated in order to conceptualise the mediated relationship students have to Lund University as an educational institution.

An *institutional approach* seeks to analytically isolate the process of mediatization by focusing on the media as situated within clearly demarcated institutions, such as state and corporate media institutions (Bolin, 2014, 176; Adolf, 2017, 13). This top-down approach seeks to define the media as an external and commensurable force, and is often motivated by the analytic desire to develop causal or linear explanations regarding the relationship and power dynamics between different societal spheres such as political, religious or educational institutions (Asp, 1990). This approach focuses on the transmission of symbolic meaning and predominantly conceives of the media as a force which can alter perception and practice within differing societal spheres.

With its roots in journalism studies and political communication theory, this approach seeks to approach the media as an independent social institution with its own set of rules in order to

understand what is often described as a 'media logic' (Coulry & Hepp, 2013, 196). This approach can allow for an analysis of media power as articulated through traditional media institutions and organisations and their relationships to other institutional and societal spheres. A strength of the institutionalist approach to mediatization is the identification that a media system is not *exclusively* a collection of individual media users and mediated practices, but is also comprised of official institutional bodies, many of which are often legitimised through egalitarian and democratic procedures (Peruško, 2017, 62). It is this recognition which is perhaps most relevant for examining digitally mediated communications in the Lund University international student environment. Whilst this research does not wholeheartedly embrace the institutionalist perspective, and indeed critiques the manner in which it seeks to reduce an understanding of the bottom-up communication flows which characterise a contemporary digitally mediated environment, it does provide a referent point for understanding how symbolic power can be disseminated between institutions.

Yet the structuralist nature of this approach can be considered conceptually and analytically reductive, particularly in the context of an environment which is saturated with digital media producers constantly connected to mobile devices. In the desire to find analytic coherence through the examination of clearly demarcated societal and communicative spheres, an institutional approach neglects the role that less centralised forms of media play in the socialisation process. This perspective also has a tendency to rely on reductive generalisations with regard to communicative complexity in the pursuit of creating clearly defined boundaries for analysis (Bolin, 2014, 178).

The second, at times overlooked approach to mediatization which is evaluated here, is a far more conceptual, hermeneutic approach influenced by linguistic and semiotic discourses which emphasise the role of signs, signification and interpretation in the communicative process (Bolin, 2014, 194). This semiotic-focused perspective was made prominent though the work of Baudrillard (1981; 1994). In these discourses, mediatization is equated with the technological features of media, rather than being conceived of exclusively from institutional media structures (Bolin, 2014, 185). This strand of mediatization research also emphasises the moment of interpretation or consumption that occurs thorough processes of digitally mediated communication, making it suitable for the analysis of digital media accessed through mobile devices. This approach conceives of mediatization at a linguistic and hermeneutic level, as part of a broader system of signification which constantly undergoes a perpetual process of

reinterpretation during the communication process across society.

This semiotic-oriented approach to mediatization offers a vast array of hermeneutic possibilities for analysis, but has been criticised for the manner in which it seeks to denounce the existence of objective reality, making it impossible to distinguish between the 'real' and 'unreal' in media saturated environments. Although the complex interpretative network of signifiers and signifieds emphasised in Baudrillard's work may be intangible, they can be and are interpreted and acted upon in ways which can lead to tangible action in society (Boiln, 2014, 185). Yet while this approach has some theoretical and analytical merit, it tends to overemphasize the process of consumption and interpretation in the communication process, whilst largely neglecting the role of the production of media and communicative content within society.

The third, and most comprehensive approach to examining mediatization is a *social-constructivist* perspective, which highlights how the communicative construction of social reality is manifested *through* processes of media and communication (Bolin, 2014, 186; Adolf, 2017, 15; Couldry & Hepp, 2013, 196). This approach explores the role of media as a force which operates within societies, as part of the communicative practices which shape everyday life, rendering it the most fitting approach for conceptualising the role of digitally mediated communications in shaping the habitus of international students in Lund. A social-constructivist approach stresses the contextual and contingent elements of the meaning making process, existing in relation to and part of other social and cultural processes (Adolf, 2017, 27). This non-linear, contextually sensitive approach to mediatization does not seek to isolate the role of media within institutional frameworks or at the site of consumption and interpretation, but rather conceives of mediatization as a process where social and cultural action is carried out within, with, and through a media environment (Nowak, 1996, 164).

This perspective acknowledges the manner in which meaning can circulate through society via the process of interpretation explored in a semiotic approach, but places greater emphasis on the *production* of meaning as it occurs across a given society or community. Andersson (2017) also notes that a social-constructivist approach to mediatization is indeed grounded in a process of symbolic interaction, a process where people perpetually interpret, create and recreate their perception of the world though interaction with one another (37).

Given the comprehensive and bottom-up approach to mediatization that this research strand

seeks to develop, a social-constructivist approach to the digitally mediated construction of social reality here acts as the primary hermeneutic point of departure from which to critically examine the interrelation between media and communication technologies and their intersection with the social interactions, perceptions and practices of international students studying at Lund. The breadth of this approach establishes it as the most suitable hermeneutic perspective from which to approach the chosen empirical material, however this analysis does not seek to disregard the semiotic or institutional perspectives of mediatization which have been discussed, as these conceptualisations also offer value in framing and analysing the manner in which the ongoing process of mediatization occurs throughout society.

This conceptual and analytic orientation, as explored by Couldry and Hepp (2016), is derived from the now seminal social constructivist position made prominent by Berger and Luckman (1966) as well as by Schultz (1932). Their approach defines the social world as intersubjective, as the overall outcome of joint processes of social and particularly communicative construction (Couldry & Hepp, 2016, 44). Developing the analytically reductive elements identified in an institutional approach to mediatization, Couldry (2012) notes that digital media technologies have, in certain contexts, become so interconnected with daily social lives that examining 'media' and media processes in isolation offers limited analytic value (16). Couldry notes that analysis must instead take a broader focus and examine the *media environment* and the interrelation between digital communicative practices and the social word (16).

These processes of digital mediation have led not only to changes in social interactions between individuals and collectives, but have also altered the broader cultural, societal and institutional frameworks which are comprised to a significant extent from the communicative practices that occur between individuals (Silverstone, 2005, 189). Identifying this change further highlights the need to maintain an awareness to differing perspective of mediatization when conducting research. While a social-constructivist approach to mediatization does not naïvely seek to provide a comprehensive approach to research, the comprehensive, bottom-up approach offered by digitally mediated social-constructivism does to some extent account for the changing communicative practices which occur between not only individuals, but the individuals that constitute established institutions.

Digital media saturation: The interlaced nature of the material and the digital

The manner in which the dynamics of the social world change when they become interwoven

with processes of digital media has also led to the development of conceptualisations of communication which no longer take face-to-face interaction as the unquestioned centre (Couldry & Hepp, 2016, 73). Here the development of the notion of the *mediated* construction of social reality is most evident, as the digitally mediated nature which compromises much of contemporary communication is developed as a derivative of the traditional social-constructivist approach. By developing a theory of communication which emphasises the interdependencies and nuanced layers of contemporary communication, both digital and material, Couldry and Hepp seek to develop an analytic approach from which to conceptualise and conduct empirical social inquiry in a world where the many elements and building blocks of the social have become embedded within technologically based processes of mediation (25).

The emerging field of digital ethnographic research provides additional theoretical perspectives from which to examine the phenomenon of mediatization and its relationship to social interaction and practices of international students in Lund. Hine (2015) notes that as the internet becomes increasingly "embedded" and "embodied" in our everyday lives, and as the entwining of the material and the digital practices deepens, the potential field sites and connections to pursue through empirical social inquiry become increasingly diversified (86). Approaching communication with an implicit understanding of the embedded and embodied nature of digital communication allows for the examination of a world where the internet has become ingrained in everyday life.

This perspective allows for the expansion of conceptual horizons as they relate to the analysis of empirical material (Postill, 2012), allowing for an understanding of not only the functional but also the emotive manner in which international students shape their life worlds. By approaching the binary distinction between 'online' and 'offline' as analytically reductive, and instead focusing on the omnipresent and interlaced aspects of digital technologies and material practices alike, this approach attempts to develop a nuanced understanding of how the material and the digital are networked together and how this intersection contributes to the mediated construction of reality (Fortue et al., 2017, 12).

Investigating digital media and the relationship this has to perceptions and social practices within a specified context must also take into consideration the potential for encountering the plurality of perception and the associated social contingency which arises from this. An awareness of this ontological multiplicity emphasises the interlacing of sense perception, materiality, and digital networks in the construction of everyday socialisation (Richardson &

Keogh, 2017, 212). Hine (2015) also emphasises that maintaining an openness to plurality is a significant concept for the contemporary media researcher, noting that the internet and digital media multiplies the diverse frames of meaning making which occur in the communication process (88). Through focusing on connections as they emerge, rather than focusing on the existence of boundaries, the researcher is able to explore new socialities and networks (88). Fortun et al. (2017) also draws attention to the plurality afforded by networked media technologies, noting that the interlaced digital technologies of the contemporary moment present a vast research terrain for the contemporary researcher (12).

Conceptualising the cosmopolitan vision

The extensive array of theoretical perspectives encompassed in the cosmopolitan vision provide both a conceptual and analytical signpost from which to investigate the social and cultural dimensions which characterise many elements of contemporary transnational mobility (Christensen & Jansson, 2015, 5). Theoretical approaches to cosmopolitanism also strive to provide an analytical framework from which to understand and investigate the diverse, transnational and contingent networks which characterise the material and digital communication environment in which this empirical study is situated. While mediatization discourses provide a nuanced conceptual frame for comprehending the complex array of interconnected communication within the chosen empirical context, the complimenting lens of cosmopolitanism presents a conscious attempt to conduct value-based research which counters the growing forces of market driven neoliberal individualism, surveillance and nationalism present in a transnational environment (Christensen & Jansson, 2015, 5).

Cosmopolitanism is often broken down into two key strands which can be identified as political and cultural cosmopolitanism. Approached through a political lens, cosmopolitanism primarily refers to transnational institutional, often political, frameworks which foster multilateral cooperation and the attempt to spread democratic and egalitarian values transnationally (Molz, 2011, 33). When approached from a cultural perspective, the cosmopolitan lens turns its attention to the cultural realm of citizenship, which focuses more on issues cosmopolitan subjectivity such as identity, community, and the perceptions and practices associated with belonging in a globalized community (33). Here the foundational values of cosmopolitanism as a concept are outlined, then refined through the lens of cultural cosmopolitanism, with particular emphasis being placed on cosmopolitan subjectivity in order to develop a coherent

hermeneutic lens which can be used for the analysis of empirical material in conjunction with the established framework of mediatization.

Beck (2011) notes that processes of globalization have led to a transnational *interconnectedness*, dependency and interdependency which cannot be ignored by researchers (19). Transnationally mobile international students and their mediated communications are situated within this interconnected global network, with approximately four and a half million international students studying outside of their own country annually (Martin & Rizvi, 2014, 1017). This mobility and interconnectivity has led to an increase in trans-border migration, making it increasingly difficult to ignore and exclude the global Other due to increased proximity, both tangible and mediated (Beck, 2011, 20). Cosmopolitanism allows us to reshape how we relate to these social dynamics as it accounts for the increased mobility, exchange and fluidity found within the international student community.

At its moral core, cosmopolitanism is a utopian concept which is opposed to the cultural *Othering* of people and places, as it emphasises openness towards unknown cultures and value systems (Beck, 2011, 3). Although this offers an expansive and potentially overwhelming worldview, what most cosmopolitan subjects share is a disposition of openness to the world around them (Skrbis et al., 2011, 53). Kant (1795) is often referenced as one of the principal originators of cosmopolitan though in social scientific scholarship. In *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Essay* he advocated for mutual respect among individuals through a recognition of common humanity. In a transnational climate where nationalist, populist and in some instances xenophobic views are increasingly prevalent, the cosmopolitan vision of universalism and unity is often presented as a remedy to these forces. It stands as a counterpoint to what many perceive to be an ingrained position of methodological nationalism, which denotes the nation state as the normative referent point of the cultural and sociological imagination (Beck, 2011, 18).

Cosmopolitanism presents an egalitarian vision which strives to recognise that individuals are in a fundamental sense equal, that they deserve equal treatment, care, and consideration irrespective of the community or nation in which they were brought up in or the skills that they can offer to society (Held, 2011, 165). Held (2010) provides a useful macro-scale definition for conceptualising the cosmopolitan vision when he emphasises the universal values shared by humanity, many of which are codified in human rights, international laws, and in multilateral institutional frameworks and institutions (239). He notes that while the

coordinated pursuit of the global public through the enactment of cosmopolitan values is recognised transnationally, the concrete manner in which this development should occur often remains contested (177).

Commenting on the methodological nationalism which cosmopolitanism critiques, Held (2011) does acknowledge that nation states are necessary for providing the administrative foundations for delivering the social justice and equal liberty which cosmopolitanism advocates for, yet he notes that they should not be thought of as ontologically privileged (163). He argues that when our communication and everyday frames of cultural reference cross national boundaries with the frequency with which they do today, nation states can no longer claim the deep legal, cultural and moral significance which they had in an era of pre-digital sovereignty (2011, 165). Whilst Held's approach has a tendency to focus on the political and institutional elements which constitute his vision of the cosmopolitan framework, he also notes that the moral and cultural elements of the cosmopolitan vision are more worthy of our consideration than ever before, as processes of trans-border mobility and our increased proximity to the Other continue to highlight not only our mutual similarities, but also communicative and cultural differences, which can lead to tension, confusion and conflict (Held, 2011, 164).

Appiah's (2005) articulation of cosmopolitanism provides further detail to the development of the term as a hermeneutic tool for analysis. Appiah advocates for an altruistic definition of the cosmopolitan vision, emphasising that cosmopolitanism denotes a loyalty to all humanity, stating that no local loyalty should be imposed over a broader moral value system (32). Adopting a somewhat utopian perspective which characterises much of the discourses surrounding cosmopolitanism, Appiah observes that the global cosmopolitan citizen should remain open to the achievements of other cultures, noting that we all have obligations to those outside the scope of our own horizons (34). In accordance with the cosmopolitan principles as outlined by Held (2010; 2011), Appiah notes that the cosmopolitan thinks that they can learn from those that they differ with, even those that they disagree with (39). This acceptance of cultural, even epistemological plurality, as well as a willingness to negotiate these cultural differences is another core element of the cosmopolitan vision, both as a cultural and political framework. Appiah notes that the cosmopolitan should always recognise that everyone has the right to define the terms of their own life, and it is the recognition of this connection which ties cosmopolitans together on both a subjective and institutional level (39).

Yet these sweeping definitions of the cosmopolitan project are often criticised for being western-centric, advocating for a narrowly defined understanding of human rights, and a surface level sense of 'universalism' (Reilly, 367, 2011). In drawing upon cosmopolitan perspectives in conjunction with a social-constructivist approach to mediatization, this analysis does not claim to overlook what many perceive to be the inherent biases and western-centric shortcomings of the cosmopolitan vision. Rather, in drawing upon cosmopolitan perspectives this research simply attempts to analyse empirical material and generate knowledge which approaches research with a critical perspective towards methodological nationalism.

Cultural cosmopolitanism: Examining the cosmopolitan subject and cosmopolitan agency

While the cosmopolitan vision articulates the need for an overarching political-institutional framework from which to facilitate the transnational mobility and associated communicative practices, a more nuanced perspective of the cosmopolitan subject as the carrier of cultural cosmopolitan values will now be developed. Such an approach is undertaken in order to grasp the mediation of everyday communicative and social dynamics as they relate to international students as cosmopolitan subjects.

Cooper and Rumford (2011) adopt a critical perspective towards the broad nature which characterises much of the discourses surrounding cosmopolitanism, noting that as an abstract utopian concept, it promises a comprehensive range of solutions and possibilities for transnational cooperation and harmonious integration (261). Yet these ideals are often difficult to enact empirically. When explored through the lens of cosmopolitan subjectivity, cosmopolitanism is rendered as a far more refined conceptual and analytical tool. Focusing on cosmopolitan subjectivity allows for not only theoretical, but also empirical analysis to develop an understanding the possibilities for bringing individuals into contact with Others and causing them to reassess their relations with communities and social groups in which they or may not initially identify with (262).

Stressing the cultural and communicative elements of cosmopolitanism, Molz (2011) draws attention to the cosmopolitan subject as an individual who possesses or seeks to possess the communicative capacity and affective pleasure in experiencing and navigating cultural difference (35). Molz describes the cosmopolitan individual as a mobile, curious and reflexive subject who enjoys and often seeks out diversity of cultural perspectives in their daily

enactment of cosmopolitan openness (35). Through the pursuit of plurality and social difference, the cosmopolitan subject remains open to new experiences and encounters, focusing on the opportunities which arise through this interaction, rather than focusing on the potential distance, rejection and difference which they may encounter (Skrbis et al., 2011, 53). Skrbis et al. (2011) also warns against idealising the cosmopolitan subject, noting that it is often reflective not of an ideal type, but of a constantly negotiated frame of reference for dealing with the encounter of everyday difference (66). The cosmopolitan subject is likely to deploy their values and as a tool from which to negotiate the opportunities and circumstances they encounter in an increasingly global, interconnected and mediated world (66).

Developing an understanding of cosmopolitan subjectivity and agency provides a more horizonal, bottom-up perspective for understanding the cosmopolitan vision, a perspective which finds a significant degree of consensus with a social-constructivist approach to mediatization. Drawing attention to cosmopolitan subjectivity allows for analysis to explore how cosmopolitanism can be enacted collectively, and how this manifests in the sphere of everyday life through communication. This approach emphasises that cosmopolitanism exists on a subjective level as a result of the integration of symbolic processes through which identities are negotiated and renegotiated in relation to the surrounding social world (Christensen & Jansson, 2015, 31). The mediatized elements of this symbolic interaction play a significant role in the development of this sense of identity, further highlighting the need for empirical studies which examine the dynamics of mediatization in a cosmopolitan context (86). When examined through this lens, digital media does not necessarily detach identities from place, but rather relocates and recreates identity through mediated systems of networked sociality, as well as through digital and popular media consumption (87).

Examining the intersection of cosmopolitanism and mediatization, Christensen and Jansson (2015) note that for the transnationally mobile cosmopolitan, a sense of identity can be increasingly constructed around transnational relationships built on networked sociality and mediated social spaces (2015, 86). While this mobilities approach itself contains a vast amount of conceptual perspectives, this research does seek to acknowledge the increasing possibilities facilitated by digital media for the construction of a digital cosmopolitan identity which is not necessarily bound to a specific geographical location.

Conviviality: The communicative enactment of cosmopolitan values

While cosmopolitanism offers an expansive theoretical lens from which to comprehend the contingent circumstances which characterise the transnational communicative dynamics in the lives of international students, this lens can be further refined through the framework of conviviality. Conviviality allows for the examination of communicative and social interaction which occurs in contexts which have been made possible through both cosmopolitan frameworks and subjects. By focusing on the everyday communicative interaction which occurs in diverse and transnational contexts, conviviality rejects the the binary distinction which suggests multiculturalism and diversity are opposed to a cohesive society or community (Duru, 2015; Duru, 2016). Conviviality focuses on the daily interactions and social communication which occur between diverse communities when they live together in a specific shared location (244). Duru (2015) explores conviviality as the bridging element in a pluralistic society, as a way of understanding the shared ways of living which occur to move a community *beyond* coexistence to more cohesive form of social unity (260). Rather than focusing on predefined ethnic or cultural traits, the framework of conviviality focuses on individual socialisation, on shared and common interests, and collective needs and lifestyles in a specific context.

While mediatization here acts as an overarching meta-approach, and cosmopolitanism accounts for the diversity and transnational dynamics found within the international student community in Lund, conviviality firmly focuses the lens on how communication occurs in this context. Duru (2015) notes that conviviality means achieving a companionable state, occasion, or atmosphere which is not necessarily permanent (244). This communicative state includes not only periods of social harmony, but also the inevitable tensions and disputes which arise from social interactions in a heterogeneous communicative environment (Karner & Parker, 2011). Whereas *coexistence* focuses on the tolerance of pre-existing categories of ethnicity and religion, conviviality focuses on breaking down these barriers in an attempt to develop new forms of social cohesion.

The manner in which conviviality seeks to provide an understanding for how diverse groups negotiate their shared lives in a new or heterogenous location renders it as an optimistic hermeneutic tool in the context of international student life (Duru, 2015, 248). Of particular

use for the study of international students in Lund is the manner in which conviviality examines how migrants and other transnationally mobile populations from different social, cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds come together to develop similar patterns of living in the society of their choice in a shared habitus of living (Duru & Trenz, 2016). Duru and Trenz (2016) note that digital communications, particularly social media, can also facilitate this socialisation and place-making process as a sense of belonging and community is forged (623). Their empirical research articulates an understanding of the intersection of the offline and the online, noting that social media allows for the possibility of encounters and interaction which bridge the distinction between the 'virtual' and the 'everyday' (623).

Yet the cosmopolitan openness embedded within conviviality is often afforded to those who occupy privileged societal positions in terms of higher education, social status, income opportunities and legal rights (624). Duru and Trenz (2016) note the possibility that those afforded the privileges of conviviality and transnational mobility can be perceived to be cosmopolitan elites detached from the domestic concerns of the society within which they are situated, a position which can lead to the generation of resentment in local communities, particularly if those elites regard themselves as being 'above' cultural assimilation (625). The researcher must remain aware that international mobility and the accompanying social practices are not simply a phenomenon which is capable of exponentially expanding and embracing increasingly larger numbers of transnational citizens (630). Despite the idealistic moral values embedded within the cosmopolitan vision, there remains limitations as to who can participate in transnational migration and engage in the negotiation of a shared habitus as an international student.

Another shortcoming of the framework of conviviality is that it presents a relatively descriptive approach to analysis. Yet in the context of this situated and contextual empirical research, conviviality does allow for the development of a specific understanding of the dynamics of mediatization in a media environment saturated with literate digital media users, and the manner in which international students negotiate their lives in this culturally pluralistic and mobile society. While cosmopolitanism provides a vision of universal recognition, integrity and openness toward the Other, conviviality provides the analytical tools to examine the everyday communicative enactment of this perspective.

3: Methodology

A qualitative methodological approach

The research conducted has been informed by a qualitative methodological approach which emphasises interpreting and analysing perception and experience as they relate to the dynamics of mediatization in shaping the social habitus and communicative practices of international students. This non-positivist orientation strives to acknowledge the interwoven nature of qualitative methodological paradigms, embracing this paradigmatic confluence as a key element of the analysis conducted (Guba & Lincoln, 2005, 192). This awareness allows for the development of a methodological position which investigates the intersubjective exchange of knowledge which arises from the plurality of perceptions being analysed (Guba & Lincoln, 2005, 203). This methodological orientation is of particular value when researching the plurality of perception and associated social practices of international students, both material and digital.

Methodological pragmatism: Examining phenomenological plurality

Refining this qualitative methodological orientation further, a fit-for-purpose methodological approach has been developed which strives to inform qualitative inquiry surrounding the intersubjective perceptions and practices of international students in Lund. This position is primarily informed from Rorty's (1979; 1982; 1999) conception of philosophical pragmatism, which focuses on developing solutions to social problems regarding sensory perception, thought and language through an anti-essentialist, social constructivist position (1999, 51). This research orientation acts as an epistemological foundation and finds consensus with the established theoretical framework informed primarily by a social-constructivist approach to mediatization, as well as a cultural orientation to the cosmopolitan vision which draws attention to cosmopolitan subjectivity. At the hermeneutic core of this epistemological foundation is a recognition of the ontological multiplicity and inherent diversity associated with social dynamics and communication.

Embedded within the field of media and communication scholarship is an acknowledgment that in order to investigate social dynamics and their associated mediations, the intersubjective communication process must be investigated, however contingent this process may be. Rorty

(1982) notes that accepting and embracing the contingency associated with communicative practices, which is shaped *through* shared collective interaction rather than derived from an external source, is a salient element of the social, cultural and political tradition associated with qualitative analysis within the field of social scientific inquiry (164). Subsequently Rorty's (1982) conception of methodological pragmatism is critical towards what he perceives to be the fruitless pursuit of analytic philosophy, a process which seeks to 'uncover' pre-existing or externally defined information (160). He argues that through pursuing the accurate representation of an unattainable objective reality which can be 'rationally' and 'logically' described, analytic philosophy serves only as a self-descriptive effort to externalise prevalent and contemporary discourses (Rorty, 1979, 11).

Rorty's conceptualisation of methodological pragmatism does not strive to develop objective theories of truth or knowledge, instead advocating for a vocabulary of practice over theory and of action over contemplation, providing a suitable epistemological backdrop for conducting a situated qualitative case study (1982, 163). Rorty embraces the postmodern scepticism towards truth and knowledge claims and unequivocally rejects the position of methodological naturalism, noting that the researcher must embrace the contingency which arises through dialogue and communication with other human beings (1982, 166). In this manner the knowledge generated through the examination of empirical material in this research will relate directly to the everyday life of international students in Lund and the manner in which digital media is interlaced with the social elements of their lives.

Drawing on both Kuhn and Dewey, Rorty's argument stresses that the researcher should abandon the entrenched foundationalist-epistemological notion that the researcher can develop a concrete correspondence with an external, non-contextually situated sense of objective reality. Rorty argues against the pretence of ostensibly value-neutral research when investigating social phenomena, instead advocating for the development of a contextual and situated vocabulary which can be developed to function effectively within a certain context or assist in the outcome of a certain goal (1982, 193). Instead, Rorty argues for a hermeneutically focused, dialectically oriented approach to research. This approach does not proceed on the foundationalist-epistemological assumption that contributions to a discourse can proceed under a decontextualized set of 'rules' under which rational agreement can be reached (1979, 316). Rorty emphasises the importance of *dialogue* as a significant element of hermeneutic inquiry in the knowledge generation process (1979, 318). This hermeneutic pragmatism sees the

"relations between various discourses as those of strands in a possible conversation", a position which emphasises that there is no "special set of terms" in which all contributions to such a conversation should be put (318).

The consensus which Rorty's principles find with a social-constructivist approach to mediatization further strengthen this established foundation for analysis. Yet Rorty's unambiguous rejection of foundationalism and the subsequent reluctance to commit to any moral philosophical principles could be considered to be a regrettable drawback of his methodological orientation. Due to this, the epistemological perspectives surrounding the cosmopolitan vision which reject methodological nationalism and advocate for a sense of shared moral framework external to that of the nation state are additionally drawn upon in order to provide a sense of moral guidance in the methodological foundation which guides the research process.

Case study: Developing situated and contextual knowledge

The case study approach is informed by the work of Bent Flyvbjerg (2001), who argues in favour of creating situated, context-dependent knowledge which rejects the predictive and universal theories derived from misguided approaches to emulate the methodological naturalism found in the natural sciences (73). Flyvbjerg argues that human behavior cannot be understood by rule governed acts, and that subjectivism and bias towards verification apply to all methods, even those found in the qualitative research process (83). He stresses that in the study of human affairs, there exists only context-dependent knowledge, stating that social scientific research should abandon its fruitless "attempts to emulate natural science" (129).

4: Method

A narratological approach

Building from the established methodological frame, a qualitative method has been employed from which to collect and analyse empirical data. This process has been conducted with what Bazely (2013) calls a "planned flexibility" which attempts to account for the contingences inherent in conducting the nonlinear process of empirical social inquiry (Bazely, 32). This flexibility is particularly applicable given the contingency of conducting research with a diverse group of millennial and culturally diverse respondents from a variety of transnational

backgrounds. This planned flexibility approaches the collection and analysis of empirical material with an awareness of the outlined conceptual framework and focus of research in conjunction with a sensitivity for the potential emergence of themes from the empirical data.

This approach to the application of methods is influenced by elements of both an abductive and inductive logic (Bazely, 336). The abductive elements of this research emphasise the dialectical interplay established between the established mediatization-cosmopolitan framework in conjunction with the analysis of empirical material (Bazely, 336). In this manner, the research investigates how the *dynamics* of mediatization play out in the cosmopolitan lives of internationals students in Lund. While the abductive nature of research emphasises the development of situated and contextual knowledge which is relevant both to students and staff at Lund University, the inductive elements of the research process also remain sensitive to possibility of emergence during the analysis of empirical material in accordance with Bazely's maxim of planned flexibility.

Collecting empirical material: Semi-structured qualitative interviews

Nine qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted with non-European international students currently living and studying in Lund **(Appendix 1)**. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. Respondents were contacted using the snowball technique from within the Lund University international and exchange student community. All respondents signed a consent form prior to conducting their interviews to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of their personal data **(Appendix 2)**. A pilot interview guide acted as a reference point from which to conduct a pilot interview. This guide was then continuously developed for subsequent interviews in accordance with emergent concepts from the empirical material (**Appendix 3**). Interviews were conducted with respondents until no new information was being added to the analytical categories, indicating that data saturation had been reached with the established context of the study (Bazely, 2013, 50). This nonlinear approach to the interview process was conducted to allow for the emergence of concepts during the interview stage. All respondents were born between the early 1980's to the late 1990's, constituting part of the demographic commonly referred to as millennials.

Qualitative semi-structured interviews were selected as a method for empirically examining the perception and experience of the international students being interviewed. These semi-

structured interviews undertaken involve the interactional exchange of dialogue built around a set of interview questions, which were then approached with the described fluid and flexible structure (Edwards & Holland, 2013, 3). The knowledge generated from these interviews is considered situated and contextual, and valuable to both the community of international students in the Lund University environment from which it is generated, and to the staff of Lund University who engage with these students (Edwards, Holland, 2013, 3; Flyvbjerg, 82, 2001). The chosen research method seeks to explore how social practices are constructed through social-political circumstances which relate to the particular place at a particular moment in history (Kemmis et al., 2014, 21).

The coding process: Narratological analysis

All interviews were transcribed and examined using a two-tiered coding process designed to provide a core of analytical concepts and categories from which to develop a comprehensive picture of the empirical material collected (Bazely, 2013, 15). Transcripts were initially coded on a first level using a process of "open coding" where the transcribed interviews were examined and labelled at a descriptive level (Bazely, 2013, 126). The codes were then refined into "analytical categories" (126) by listing the descriptive codes in narrative clusters which related to the research questions. Finally, these narrative clusters were organised into themes from which to organise analysis (**Appendix 4).**

Narratological analysis has been employed not only to develop an exhaustive biographical account of the respondent's life history, but to develop perspectives on the perceptions and experiences that play a role in identify formation and a feeling of belonging, as well as the development of spaces of belonging which occurs through the mediation of everyday communication and socialisation (Christensen and Jansson, 2015, 88). Building an understanding of narrative analysis into the framework of the coding schedule and research design allows for a degree of analytical coherence to be brought to the findings. Semi-structured interviews allow for the examination of the ways in which members of a particular cultural or social collective comprehend their surroundings and how they attribute meaning and value to the world around them though personal and intersubjective narratives of their own lives (Bazely, 2013, 113). Narrative analysis focuses on the connections across aspects of respondents lives through the synthesis of statements which are made which connect to larger aspects of their lived or perceived experience (Bazely, 2013,114). By examining the manner in

which respondents portray events occurring in their own lives, insight can be gained into their purpose for recounting particular elements of the narrative.

The cultural, linguistic and geographical diversity embedded in the narrative accounts of the respondents posed both a challenge and opportunity for analysis. The inevitable heterogeneity in the narrative accounts rendered the possibility of deriving structural narrative units difficult, yet still provided an empirically rich and intellectually stimulating source of data which reflected the transnational diversity and abundance of cultural perspectives present in the international student community in Lund. Given the cultural heterogeneity present in the international students interviewed, the flexible and interpretive paradigm of postmodern narrative theory has been selected in order appreciate this diversity being examined (Hart, 10). Whilst narrative theory is a vast and interdisciplinary area of research, Mark Currie's (1998) *Postmodern Narrative Theory* was taken as a starting point from which to inform the coding process.

Currie presents narratology as a flexibly hermeneutic framework which has been liberated from the rigidities of structuralism, and is applicable not only to the study of literature or film, but to the diverse field of social science more broadly (Currie, 1998, 2). Contemporary narratological theory can be characterised by the rejection of the idea that narratology could 'discover' inherent structural or objective properties in people's lives or personal narrative (2). Postmodern narrative theory recognises that the reading and interpretation of content is itself a process of narratological invention and is characterised by deconstruction and diversification. For Kuhn, a paradigm is a period of consensus regarding the questions asked and the methods used by scientific investigation (Currie, 1998, 9). The postmodern narrative theorist seeks to conduct analysis with an awareness that paradigmatic knowledge is flexible, subject to hermeneutic fluidity, and that the ideal of serene methodological consensus is unattainable (9). In this manner narratological analysis allows the researcher to proceed with an appreciation of plurality within the collected data.

Despite postmodern narratology's awareness of plurality, implicit within the study of narrative itself is the recognition of the possibility of some degree of intersubjective hegemony when perceiving or interpreting events, experience, or other social phenomenon. Of particular significance to the chosen case for research is the manner in which narratives provide a sense of an imagined community with which to affiliate (Currie, 1998, 91, Bhabha, 1994, 140). Bhabha (1994) also notes that a cultural construction of belonging often arises out of social

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and textual affiliation with particular narratives (140). This theoretical framework provides a suitable analytic springboard from which to begin to analyse this process in a transnational and mediated context.

The field site as a heterogeneous network

The proliferation of digital mobile technologies and the subsequent diversification of social practices has led to developments in the conceptualisation of an increasingly complex field site when researching digital media environments. Burrell (2017) provides an entry point for undertaking this process when she describes a field site as "the stage on which the social processes under study take place" (51). Burrell also demonstrates an awareness of the complexity of defining the field site, noting that this analytical issue can be configured as a heterogeneous network (52). This is particularly applicable given the frequency with which students' digital communications cross transnational borders.

This notion can be further developed by conceiving of a "multi-sited field", one which emerges through a process of detailed engagement and research (Hine, 2015, 62). This element of the research process is informed by ethnographic methods of analysis. Given the plurality and contingency of the perception and practices being examined, and the emerging nature of digital ethnography as a paradigm, the "multi-sited field" has here been approached as one which emerges to the researcher during the research process (62). Rather than the field being a pre-defined site or construct, the process of ethnographic investigation itself brings the field into being, providing analytically enriching perspectives on a previously underexamined area of material or digital practices (25).

Such a conceptualisation is a valuable hermeneutic tool for this research, as the field site being examined involves a tracing of networks through the intersection of material and digital communicative practices across transnational geographical spaces. This approach also seeks to account for the convergence of social practices that have occurred from the rise of mobile media, and the increasingly interrelated boundaries between media consumption, production and distribution. This mobile, multi-sited, and networked conceptualisation of the field acknowledges that situated qualitative analysis, in this case influenced by digital ethnographic methods, can seek to explore a phenomenon which is spatially distributed across geographical regions (Hine, 2015, 66). This allows for the emergence of objects of study which are not bound to a single geographical location, or even a liner conceptualisation of temporality.

Whilst such a conceptualisation of the field may seem intricate, it is significant to note that the ethnographic tradition as it has evolved from cultural anthropology has seldom been restricted to a specific geographical space or unit (Hine, 2015, 5). Whilst the digital ethnographer must consider an increasingly diverse range of social practices, the networked, non-spatially defined field site remains best approached through the maxim of "linking it up, rather than nailing it down" (Schatzman, Strauss, 1973, 8).

5: Analysis

The intersection of the material and the digital

Respondents discussed their use of digital media as an embedded practice which constitutes a significant element of their everyday communication. This digital media use applied both to the process of socialising in Lund and also regarding the more functional aspects of student's lives, such as communication with the university regarding studies; conducting academic research; finding accommodation; joining extra-curricular associations and unions; and networking for future employment opportunities. This digital media use was narrated by the respondents not only in their capacity as current international and exchange students, but also as prospective students prior to living in Lund. This was particularly applicable when conducting research regarding international postgraduate study possibilities, and throughout the application process, which is conducted digitally. The information and communication technologies which facilitated the respondent's everyday communication were predominantly mobile digital devices such as smartphones and laptops. This respondent reported a significant amount of time spent on digital devices each day.

> Now iPhones have that thing where it tracks how much time you spend on it and I got one on Sunday morning which said, you're down twenty percent, you've only spent five hours per day on your phone and I was like, that cannot be possible.

> *Sarah (25, F, Student)*

The manner in which everyday communication is facilitated through digital devices, in this case the iPhone, indicates that digital media plays a significant role throughout many spheres of the respondent's life as an international student. Rebecca (21, F, Student) noted that she would have "no hope of having a social or professional life" without maintaining a digital

presence on social media and continuously engaging with her digital devices throughout the day. Jacob (34, M, Student) observed that his phone is "always connected to Facebook" and that he always has "so many notifications". Digital communication through an iPhone is here discussed as an interwoven element of daily life communication and socialisation. The respondents do not think of "going online" as a clearly demarcated experience, but rather as an embodied element of interacting in the social world which occurs seamlessly throughout the day (Hine, 2015, 14; Christensen and Jansson, 2015, 89).

The degree to which digital media constitutes an integral element of the respondent's lives indicates that distinguishing between the 'virtual' and the 'real' does not adequately account for the role that digital media plays in their everyday communications (Miller et al., 2016, 112). Given that respondents can spend upwards of five hours per day engaging with digital media, distinguishing between traditional conceptions of online communication against more 'authentic' offline relationships can lead to a reduced understanding of the communicative nuance that occurs *through* digital media devices (100). Digital communication is in this context an *interwoven* element of social life. For international students, digital media use and literacy is essential, a key and irreplaceable element of their everyday communication which allows them to shape and function within their own habitus.

These responses indicate that while face-to-face interaction remains an integral element of social life, it should not be considered to constitute the solitary, or in some cases even the principal building block of social interaction (Couldry & Hepp, 2012, 73). Masahiro (26, M, Student) discussed the need to engage with digital media "everyday" so that he could see what his "friends are doing", both in Lund and also in his home country. This constant use is particularly applicable in affluent environments saturated with literate digital media users, such as higher density urban areas or university towns such as Lund.

Yet analysis should proceed with a degree of caution, paying attention not to overemphasise the role of the newest technologies and the relationship which they have to social dynamics. While unquestionably significant, the digital media revolution is not the first major communicative transnational paradigm shift to have occurred. Prior to the digital revolution, pre-digital media platforms such as the printing press and radio held the capacity to alter the dynamics of everyday communication. This respondent who worked as a radio producer for

six years using analogue radio technology in a developing nation, expresses an awareness of this symbolic power.

> When I got to university I thought of going to study journalism and communication. I thought, when you are part of journalism and communication, you are part of history. You can write books, you can make history, so I decided to orient my career in journalism and communication.

Jacob (M, 34, Student)

This acknowledgement highlights that while the prevalence of digital communications may have amplified the manner in which communication is circulated both locally and transnationally, digital media platforms do not hold a monopoly over the manner in which everyday communication is mediated. However, many respondents are also not able to speak Swedish fluently, isolating them from participating in the public discourse circulated though printed news media, radio, Swedish television, and other discussion. Given these circumstances, as well as the acknowledgment that the symbolic power of digital media is the most omnipresent mediating force in the context under investigation, the role of digital media here remains the foci of analysis. One respondent recounts how the digitization of archaeological research in Lund appealed to him as a prospective international student. The potential for new forms of research and analysis in the field of archaeological scholarship was influential enough to convince this prospective student to consider transnationally relocating from Istanbul to further pursue research in this area.

> [A] lecturer and archaeologist came to Istanbul for a conference, for a digital Archaeology conference…it was the most contemporary form of documentation and implementation and visualisation of archaeology… It sparked a light into me. Then I started to search for Lund University and it started, so the story really goes like that.

Ahmet (M, 34, Student)

Lund's use of GIS and virtual reality technologies to visualise archaeological sites and data, here "sparked a light" for the prospective student. This embrace of progressive digital research platforms and communication systems is articulated as a key element in the student's decision in coming to Lund, an arduous process which took the student "three years" as a result of the bureaucratic and financial hurdles associated with relocating from Turkey to Sweden. The

increased digitization within the field of museums and museum assets, here in the context of their relationship to higher education research institutions, further illustrates the comprehensive manner in which digital media technologies and platforms are permeating across the societal spectrum (Rudloff, 271, 2013). Of particular significance is the manner in which the respondent equates an embrace of new technologies with societal progression, specifically noting the digitization of his chosen research field as "the reason why" he ranked Lund in first place during the application process.

While the use of digital technologies was viewed positively by respondents, any perceived inability to demonstrate digital literacy or embrace digital platforms was also sharply criticised. This highlights the expectations surrounding the overall quality of digital interfaces, particularly when they relate to functional aspects of student's lives such as admission applications and course selection. This was particularly noticeable in several of the respondent's comments surrounding the application process, which is entirely managed by the centrally administered University Admissions website who screen applications before they are sent to the applicable university. In this instance the respondent critiques the University Admissions document application interface for not being "friendly" or "intuitive", noting that this interface was a memorably frustrating element of the overall application process.

> Even after I made my own list I wasn't confident every time I looked at the webpage and the information on the website… it was a feeling of constantly being on your toes and feeling like you might have overlooked something because of the way the information was organised.

> *James (M, 32, Student)*

The respondent's frustration indicates that an organisation's competence surrounding digital technologies and interfaces is equated with the overall aptitude of that organisation, further reinforcing the perceived intersection of the material and the digital. The respondent's frustration also highlights his expectations as a non-European fee-paying student, which situates him as a consumer, a position which differs from that of a non-fee-paying student from within the European Union. Respondents also critically reflected on the Lund University web pages which present housing options for international students, equating a lack of photographs of housing options as a lack of options for international students.

One thing that I think I was frustrated with in the process, was at least as far as picking housing there was no real resources to determine which housing area you should choose. There was a little page about each one, with a diagram of what each room looks like.

Sarah (F, 25, Student)

This comment emphasises the manner in which digital media plays a role in shaping the *perceptions* of international students, in this case for admitted students before they arrive in Lund. Lund University provides all admitted, non-European international students with a housing guarantee assuring them they will be offered student accommodation in Lund. This option is not provided to European or Swedish students. Yet when asked about their accommodation in Lund and the process of selecting and applying for this accommodation, this respondent recalled her negative perception surrounding the manner in which the housing options are presented on the Lund University website, instead of focusing on the guaranteed housing made available to international students once they receive admission. When asked about aspects of student life which could have been improved, James (M, 32, Student), who also qualifies for the housing guarantee, noted that "housing is always a big issue, but that's pretty well known".

What is evident from the empirical material examined is that digital media, predominantly accessed through mobile digital devices, plays a significant role in facilitating the everyday communicative practices of international students in the capacity of both prospective and current students. Non-digital forms of media still has the potential to play a role in the lives of the respondent's, but to a significantly lesser degree. Digital media is not only used to facilitate everyday socialisation, but also the functional aspects of the respondent's lives. This media use is so prevalent and ingrained in daily life that often no clear distinction is made by users between the material and the digital. The interwoven nature of the material and the digital also leads many users to have a critical perspective to many digital interfaces. With the significance of digital media in the everyday lives of international students empirically established, the focus of analysis now turns to *how* and *why* these communicative circumstances occur.

Social media, scalable sociality and digital devices: Developing a digitally mediated sense of belonging

A significant element of the everyday mediated communication reported by respondents occurred through social media platforms. While Facebook, Facebook Messenger and Instagram, and to a lesser extend Snapchat, were used frequently, respondents also noted that they used other applications such as WhatsApp, Line and Telegram. Many respondents discussed their social media use extensively, even when they were not asked directly, indicating that digital media use is often equated directly with social media, which is primarily accessed through mobile digital devices. In many instances different applications were attributed with a specific communicative function to coordinate different spheres of social, academic, or family life. Amisha (F, 25, Student) noted that she uses WhatApp for "daily communication", while Facebook was for organising "academic things", such as group work, study sessions or discussing course related information. Instagram was noted as being primarily "for fun" while Telegram and Line are used for communicating with friends in Indonesia where these applications are more prevalent.

Annya (F, 20, Student) reported a similar use of social media applications, which allow for the organisation of different spheres of daily life, or for differing modes of communication with transnational clusters of friends and family. The respondent noted that "Line is for my family because we have group chat" while Instagram is mainly used to share images and with "friends in the US, or Taiwan". The respondent commented that different applications often compete with one another to facilitate a certain communicative function, noting that in her opinion Facebook and Instagram "serve the same purpose" and that "people nowadays use less of Facebook".

These detailed descriptions of social media use reflect a high degree of fluency regarding the communicative functionality of differing social media platforms, particularly regarding their use among differing social groups transnationally. As the social media landscape becomes increasingly saturated with a diverse array of applications which ostensibly offer new communicative functions, differing social media platforms increasingly become associated with specific modes of communication (Miller, 2016, 5). When seeking to understand this media environment in the context of the respondent's personal narratives, Madianou's (2014) notion of "polymedia" recognises that in order to understand social media use, no individual

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application can be examined in isolation. The differing conventions associated with social media applications allows users to coordinate their social networks through the use of these applications (Miller et al., 2016, 104).

These categories existed prior to the existence of smartphones and social media, yet the prevalence of social media makes them more clearly identifiable through their embodiment in different applications (Miller et al., 2016, 104). While some applications are used in order to maintain family connections transnationally, others are used to develop new networks, social bonds, and a sense of community and belonging in Lund. This sense of community often transgresses any perceived cultural or linguistic barriers and allows for the development of social cohesion among international students from differing backgrounds, in addition to developing relationship with local Swedish and Nordic students.

> I got involved with Wermlands Nation, they have a brunch every Saturday. They make posts on Facebook for workers to make the dishes.

> *Annya (F, 20, Student)*

Facebook is often used to coordinate events at student nations, given the scope of organisational functions available on the platform and the prevalence of use amongst Swedes and many international and exchange students. Student nations were noted as key point of socialisation between international students and Swedish students. James (M, 32, Student) noted that he attended his "first sittning" as well as enjoying "pub events" and "doing stuff in the kitchen" at Wermlands nation, where he now lives. In this instance Facebook was first used to develop social connections, which then provided the foundation for further integration into student life in Lund.

Different uses of social and digital media demonstrate the possibility of a "scalable sociality" for each user, where each platform corresponds to a greater or lesser extent of privacy as information is shared with different social groups in that user's life (Miller, 2016, 5). While more open platforms such as Facebook or Instagram may increase the scope of one's social connections, this broad network of connections and acquaintances does not necessarily deepen the relationships with a smaller more intimate group of friends where more meaningful bonds are formed. More private applications oriented around messaging such as Line, WhatsApp and

Facebook Messenger allow respondents to conduct more personal and scaled socialisation, allowing them to maintain strong social bonds.

Rebecca (F, 21, Student) noted that she received so many notifications from Facebook that she "only checked them sometimes" and that these notifications often felt like "automated spam". She placed a higher value on private messenger threads where she could "properly catch up" with people she referred to as "genuine friends", indicating a withdrawal from the open and broad network which many social media platforms advocate for. Juan (M, 24, Student) noted that "Instagram" was the most frequent application that he used. WhatsApp was noted as being "more personal" because it involved the exchange of numbers, while Juan used "a mixture of messenger and WhatsApp" to talk friends back home, and "exclusively WhatsApp" to talk to his family. When organising social events at his Nation or an International Mentor group he used "mostly Facebook" especially "Facebook groups" when asking for volunteers for Nation events.

For many respondents the frequent use of social media to assist in defining one's relationships, emotions and sense of belonging and community during their life in Lund arises from their status as a mobile international student. As a new arrival in Lund, most international students do not have permanent social or cultural bonds tying them to Sweden, even though many would like to develop these relationships. When commenting on the relationship with Swedes in her class, in Lund, and in the surrounding area more broadly, Amisha (F, 25, Student) noted that mixing with local Swedes is "like oil and water". She noted that "at first I tried hard to mingle with them" but noted that it took a lot of energy, finally commenting that "chemistry is not easy especially when it comes to friendships and relationships here". It is significant to note that this respondent reflected positively on their time in Lund and values their study programme, yet also finds it challenging to develop permanent social bonds with Swedish students. Ahmet (M, 34, Student) observed a similar difficulty in developing permanent social bonds while studying as an international student. While qualifying his statement by noting that "of course it depends on the individual", the respondent commented that he had some "trouble to communicate properly" with Swedish students. Again, this student stated that he thoroughly enjoyed his experience studying in Lund, but was unable to form lasting personal relationships outside of an academic context.

When the difficulty to develop lasting social bonds is examined in the context of media use among international students in Lund, it provides a degree of contextualisation. International students in Lund use digital media to build a *sense* of community and belonging as they shape their life world with the assistance of their digital devices. While this sense of belonging relates to tangible factors in Lund, such as participating in student nations, unions, and academic work, it is also heavily mediated in nature through a near constant engagement with mobile digital devices. By developing a network in Lund whilst still maintaining close contact with friends and family located across the globe, these mobile international students use their digital devices to develop their own sense of "phenomenological geography' (Christensen & Jansson, 2015, 86). This mediated sense of belonging is derived from the feeling of place which arises out of routine practices and shared feelings of the inhabitants, many of which are often digitally mediated. Increased communication *through* digital media technologies leads to the development of a phenomenological geography among international students in Lund, a network of intersubjective mediated spaces which a sense of belonging and identity is created.

The manner in which this sense of belonging is created is not restricted to communication through social media applications, but rather all digital communicative applications accessible through digital devices. Amisha (F, 25, Student) reported that in her spare time she volunteers as a teacher in a community centre, and that given the formal nature of this commitment, they "communicate using email, not group chat or Facebook". When asked about digital media use via a smartphone Ahmet (M, 34, Student) noted that he used not only social media but other applications such as "Google Chrome, Email, Weather, Sony Camera, a 'learn Swedish' app" and an app for "booking" and a "recorder for classes". While he uses some social media applications such as Instagram and Facebook in a more social capacity to "share photos" and to "hear ideas about photography", other applications such as the recording app are used to record lectures so that the respondent can "capture the things" that he might miss during a lecture. Juan (M, 24, Student) noted that although he frequently used social media he also used the collaborative platform Podium to organise events within the faculty of science, as well as Flickr for "storing photos" and also frequently listened to Spotify, although his use of Spotify was personal as he did not "share stuff" using this application.

These responses indicate that while the social media platforms and applications do offer functionality for organising the differing spheres of everyday communication, the mobile

digital *device* itself also plays a significant role in shaping the habitus for respondents (Goggin, 2012, 11). It is the mobile, ubiquitous and constantly connected nature of these digital devices which allows for the deconstruction of the online and the offline, for constant access via digital interfaces, and also of the mediated deconstruction of the binary distinction of "here" and "there" in the shaping of social spheres (Martin & Rizvi, 2014, 1028). By simultaneously facilitating thousands of local and transnational mediated communication actions each day, the phenomenological aspects of the individual's life world become less fixed to a singular location, and more embedded within a transnational network of connections which offers instantaneous communicative possibilities. Yet these mediated communications still occur *in the Lund environment*, when respondents are in lectures, in their accommodation, and partaking in other activities in the city. The material presence of the individual is not simply erased by the mediated omnipresence of other locations which can be accessed instantaneously (Martin & Rizvi, 2014, 1028). Through a digitally mediated process of reterritorialization, respondents develop a sense of belonging in Lund which is in part related to the reoccurring media practices undertaken both *through* and *with* smartphone devices.

Structure and agency in a digitally mediated environment

While digital, particularly social media play a substantial role in facilitating everyday communication and developing a mediated sense of belonging for international students, the empirical material examined indicates a tension between individual agency and the structural imperatives relating to students through their use of digital devices and applications. While respondents indicated that they possess agency in the construction of their social habitus, Lund University also produces digital and social media content and manages a number of social media accounts on Facebook and Instagram. This allows for the encoding of key narrative messages, which provides a degree of influence over user generated content and communication between students (Hjarvard, 2014, 200). It is primarily staff in the department of External Relations who control the Lund University Facebook pages, LinkedIn page, University website, CRM email system, and Instagram account, although the latter contains a high degree of student generated content through the Lund University Instagram Ambassador programme.

Yet the high volume of social media users and producers present in the student community in the Lund University environment dilutes the institutional power located within this perceived

sphere of communication. This media environment allows individuals to not only receive, but to also circulate and actively engage with media content (Hjarvard, 2014, 203). This relationship applies not only exclusively to Lund, but also to other university environments. Speaking on her time as a student worker at her home university, one respondent commented on the multitude of social media platforms used by both the university staff and students.

> We used Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, I think we played with the idea of Tumblr for a bit, but there's just not enough students that really like doing Tumblr. It's such weird platform. Snapchat yeah, Snapchat was still big.

> *Sarah (F, 25, Student)*

The respondent notes how at her home university, as with Lund University, social media is used to "promote different articles or things that come out like rankings about the university" as well as managing a lot of "twitter and snapchat contests". Such media use is reflective of the constant negotiation of symbolic power which exists within the digital communication architecture present in the lives of the respondents. Institutions can act as resources to facilitate social interaction, but these structures are also reproduced and even altered through the agency of the individuals and collectives which use them (Hjarvard, 2014, 203).

The use of social media through digital devices here creates a layering of communication repertoires for all users (Goggin, 2012, 11). These communicative layers exist at the "micro" level of mediated interactions of an individual, the "meso" level of social relationships, and the "macro" level of broader communicative networks (Goggin, 13). Whilst all communicative layers are here simultaneously in action, digital and social media use by both the individuals and the university facilitates a macro-level communicative framework surrounding the Lund University environment and the international student community. This respondent commented on her use of a state-wide Facebook group in California which she used to gain information about courses, student life, and exchange possibilities.

> It's not just UC Irvine but the system is called UC education abroad. So, all of the students on that system are in the Facebook group, so that's a lot of students. It's a really good connection and source of information.

> *Annya (F, 20, Student)*

The respondent attributed a significant degree of authority to this student-oriented Facebook group. The high volume of students on the group and the first-hand reporting of student experience was highly valued by the respondent who noted that she "inboxed some people" to gain more detailed account into student life and exchange possibilities in Lund. The respondent also used additional message boards outside of Facebook, noting that she "used Reddit" to get "information for housing". The more anonymous nature of Reddit was deemed to allow for a higher degree of authenticity by the respondent. Significantly, the respondent did not take a critical stance towards the information found in these groups and message boards. Given the near anonymous nature of Reddit in particular, the trust that the respondent placed in this information raises questions about the authenticity of information derived from anonymous, unregulated sources. This is particularly applicable in the context of international applications to Lund University, a digitally mediated process which is governed by deadlines and strict application criteria. Another respondent indicated a similar level of trust when consuming information on digital platforms, particularly on social media.

> The real idea can be spread out. I think digital media plays an important, crucial role in diffusing what is really going on.

Ahmet (M, 34, Student)

The respondent perceives information regarding study opportunities and student life sourced on social media and anonymous message boards such as Reddit as authentic, often attributing a high level of trust to this information. Yet embedded within the problematic perception that these platforms provide an authentic and empowering source of information lies the problematic issue of how much trust should be placed in the mediated structure provided by increasingly influential multi-national technology corporations such as Facebook and Google. With search logics built around neoliberal imperatives and personal profiling which often lead to bias confirmation, the answer which two people can find based on a search though a search engine can differ significantly, a process which erodes shared forms of public knowledge (Dahlgren, 2013, 58).

The difficulty in regulating and verifying the factual nature of the information transnationally circulated through the digital architecture of these platforms raises serious questions not only

about the genuine amount of agency afforded to students, but also surrounding accountability, privacy, and the possibility for egalitarian modes of participation and personal empowerment when communicating on these platforms (Dahlgren, 2013, 58). The lack of transparency with which digital platforms prioritise search results at the expense of others, notably those supported by powerful interests, jeopardises the possibility for democratic and transparent engagement online (Dahlgren, 2013, 58). It also has serious implications for the possibilities for empowerment and digital agency when using these platforms. Almost all participation conducted online feeds data into a commercial, quantifiable, and largely unaccountable infrastructure, however boycotting these platforms would effectively isolate oneself from the major source of information within society.

As users of digital platforms, particularly on Facebook, become increasingly used to encountering people who share the same social, cultural and political views as themselves as a result of the embedded algorithms, a societal danger arises in which people can lose their ability to encounter and debate different perspectives (Dahlgren, 2013, 61). This can lead not only to bias confirmation, but to a situation where different outlooks to one's own can be viewed as unreasonable, illogical, or even not factual. This potential for the erosion of shared societal knowledge highlights the importance of regulated institutional knowledge, especially in the context of the mediated communication environment surrounding Lund University.

Yet some respondents reported less dependence on message boards and other commercial digital platforms, noting that they relied solely on the information provided by the university when conducting research as a prospective international student. This approach almost guarantees the validity of information as it is situated within a formal and accountable structure. Amisha (F, 25, Student) noted that she "got information from the booklet" as well as from the university website because it's totally complete". The respondent also noted that she could "contact the programme director easily" as this staff member was "very responsive" to the questions asked via email. When digital communication is situated within this framework, it provides a regulated and trustworthy source of institutional information, but may not provide the diversity of perspectives which can be found thorough more open platforms.

The diversity in the respondent's outlook regarding the variety of digital platforms available to both prospective and current students do not allow for any concrete conclusions to be drawn regarding the tension surrounding individual agency and institutional structure as it relates to

the role of digital media in the respondent's lives. Yet the results do indicate that this is an ongoing and often contested process. The vast variety of digital platforms and message boards available offer the possibility for empowerment through access to different users, but they are also largely unregulated and situated within a borderless neoliberal framework. The formal communication channels developed by the university provide trustworthy and regulated information, but are also in a constant competition for student's attention with other platforms.

Discussing their communications with Lund University throughout the application process, many respondent's recall moments of personalised or face-to-face communications which were influential in their decision to come to Lund. Such a recollection indicates that although screen-based transformations of the communication process have rendered the face-to-face domain of communications as less primary than it once was, respondents still place significant value in a personalised communication setting in which agency can be enacted. This respondent noted the significance of conversation with a Lund University staff member during a Study in Europe event in Istanbul.

> She gave me her mail and from Istanbul after I had made a thirty-minute discussion with them: "How is Lund? How is the global scholarship" and so on. Then I got confidence actually. Before that I didn't have any confidence really.
>
> *Ahmet (M, 34, Student)*

Digital communication in the form of email correspondence with a member of the International Marketing and Recruitment team at External Relations, provided the then prospective student with the information and reassurance necessary to successfully complete the admission process. This is particularly significant given that many international students are often admitted into more than one university, often completing multiple admission procedures then making a final decision shortly before programmes commence. Ahmet notes that this process was arduous, taking "almost three years". While the conditions of transnational media convergence made it possible for the respondent to complete the application process over this period, the respondent distinctly remembers the brief personal conversation as perhaps the most genuine and reassuring element of the process in coming to Lund. While digital, often automated communications play an increasingly significant role in the everyday lives of

applicants and students alike, this acknowledgment highlights that personalised and face to face communication is a play an equally significant role in the communication process.

This identification is significant in a mediatized environment where communications with both prospective and current students are becoming more automated and less personalised. As communication and broader processes of socialisation become increasingly embedded in electronic processes of communication, the need to communicate with another human through these communication channels also increases. Commenting on her previous employment in an American university prior to coming to Lund, Sarah (F, 25, Student) noted that in one academic year that the university sent an estimated "10.5 million emails" to prospective students. Prospective students' details are submitted into a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system which activates a "25 email long campaign". This level of automated communication can lead to a situation where much digital communication is simply discarded or ignored.

This method of automated communication is systematic in its ability to distribute important application information to large quantities of prospective students transnationally. Yet automated digital communication systems such as Salesforce that focus on quantifying data sets have an embedded neoliberal market logic which can result in students being treated as consumers and become desensitised to the information that they receive. Sarah (25, F, Student) positively recalls when they received a personal email from an External Relations staff member.

> A staff member emailed me and was like "Hey I can see that you have an open spot. I think you would be really interested in the MACA programme. Here's some information about it, you should look into it." From then on I started paying much more attention to everything that came through about Lund, and I also noticed that all of the digital communications that I got from Lund were much more detailed and much more international student focused than everything I was getting from any other school.

> *Sarah (25, F, Student)*

Once again, this student reflects positively on the personalised, non-automated communication received form a Lund University staff member, noting that it was perhaps the most memorable moment for them in their capacity as an international student. This reflection further highlights

the significance which respondents place on personalised communication through which agency can be enacted.

Negotiating cultural plurality

An understanding of the role which digital media plays in the lives of the respondents can be complemented by an understanding of cosmopolitan perspectives in order to develop a more comprehensive understanding of how international students negotiate their everyday lives in the culturally diverse and mediated context of Lund University. When examining the manner in which international students in Lund negotiate their everyday lives, digitally mediated communication is examined as an embedded, embodied, and everyday element of student life (Hine, 2015). Many respondents who reported an affinity for the diverse and culturally plural environment which characterises much of everyday life as an international student in Lund also noted previous experience and a positive association of living in a culturally diverse environment. This respondent fondly recalls the abundance of religious, cultural and ethnic diversity which exists in his native city of Istanbul.

> It's the place where you can see west and east all together in conjunction. You see the components of western values and eastern values, so it is like a bridge. It is reflected on your identity. What I really like about it is that it is really multicultural in a sense. My friend from France he came to visit Istanbul and I showed him one street with three religious icons there. A Mosque, a Church and a Jewish synagogue, they were all in the same street. I think that really reflects what we are, you can see different cultures and different religions in one spot.

> *Ahmet (M, 34, Student)*

The respondent reflects positively on how Istanbul's bridging of western and eastern values has become embedded in his own cosmopolitan identity. This understanding of a pluralistic society indicates that through adopting an openness to perspectives that differ from one's own, international students can live together and foster a sense of social cohesion and unity. Annya (F, 20, Student) noted that in her early teens her parents took her on trips "to Europe in the summer" so she had already visited locations such as "Paris, Italy, Austria, Belgium, Spain and the UK" before she decided to pursue exchange studies in Sweden. Juan (M, 24, Student) had previously undergone an exchange in Stockholm and summer internship in British Colombia

before deciding to study a master's programme in Lund, noting that he sees the world with a "multicultural and international point of view". This openness to encountering cultural difference stands in sharp contrast to the growing discourses which reject the possibility of a multicultural society, and which perceive multiculturalism to be incompatible with social cohesion and stability (Grillo, 2010; Kymlicka 2010; Alexander 2013).

Through both adopting and enacting a perspective characterised by an openness towards the notion of the Other, many respondents were able to build a diverse range of social bonds during their time in Lund. Forging these bonds required the respondents to not only harbour these values, but also to proactively enact them in order to avoid spending a majority of one's time in the comfort of the diaspora. Ahmet (M, 34, Student) noted that while "it is good to have friends from the same country", if you socialise only with them "you just cannot capture the culture that you live in". Significantly, the respondent noted that "in order to integrate you should really give an effort". This proactive commitment to building social connections allowed for the respondent to begin the integration process and avoid a situation which he observed in some of his friends where they failed to develop a new support network, leading them to become "frustrated and depressed".

Sharing a disposition of openness towards encountering new experiences was a key value for many of the respondents, and one which allows and indeed drives them to socially navigate the culturally diverse landscape of life as an international student in Lund. Embedded in this perspective is an implicit rejection of the nation state as the sole normative referent point for understanding student mobility and the intercultural exchange that it facilitates. However, this utopian outlook remains in many instances a theoretical signpost which is not always reflected empirically. Some respondents noted that the experience of studying as an international student in Lund presents many daily cultural and communicative challenges. International students often engage in group work tasks, which requires the considerable negotiation of tensions and differences to achieve a specific task under an established deadline.

> It very much depends on your team and the dynamics. I mean, it's group work. You have to work around – there's always going to be someone who is overdoing and someone who is underdoing.
>
> *Sarah (F, 25, Student)*

Here the abstract valuing of universalism and the embrace of diversity must be supplemented with the communicative pragmatism of conviviality in order to negotiate difference through communication or, as the respondent notes, to "manage in between". While a cosmopolitan outlook provides an overarching world view and a utopian theoretical vision, the respondent's communicative pragmatism allows for the navigation of everyday life encounters, not only through harmonious interactions but also the tensions, conflicts and disputes which inevitably arise in a multicultural international student environment. Conducting group work and other educational objectives allow students to negotiate and practice negotiating their differences through accomplishing a specific task. Another responded articulated an even more refined understanding of living with plurality, growing up not only in a multi-ethnic society, but also in a family unit that had differing religious beliefs.

> We were born in a very secular environment. On the other hand my parents and my grandmother were at the same time Muslims, so there was a secular life going on but also on particular religious days you could see the traditions as well. So, two things were going on as I was growing up, you know, two values.

Ahmet (M,34, Student)

Here the respondent discusses the lived experience associated with negotiating the cultural and religious plurality in the intimate communicative sphere of family life. The acknowledgment that one can live with an appreciation for "two values" throughout their personal upbringing highlights the attitude which allows the student to live in the diverse student environment of Lund. The embodiment of this practice allows international students to become part of a joint or shared life in a new location and negotiate their understanding of this new existence collectively (Duru, 2015, 248). Another respondent notes a similar lived experience, growing up in a linguistically plural transnational environment in Taiwan.

> I went to the international school. We talked in Chinese the whole time, but we were taught in English and we were taught by foreign teachers.

Annya (F, 20, Student)

The respondent's international school here provides a framework where the negotiation of cultural plurality can be learned, trained and enacted. Previous lived experience in a culturally

diverse environment which is not defined by a narrative of national identity, but rather characterised by cultural diversity and communicative negotiation provides the foundation for a cosmopolitan outlook which this student can employ to negotiate their daily life. As with the educational framework provided by Lund University, this student was afforded the benefits of enacting a lifestyle of cosmopolitan diversity to a significant degree as a result of their social class. This social status allowed them the privilege of attending a bilingual international school and then continuing to live in a cosmopolitan environment at university level.

This empirical material reinforces the perception that cosmopolitan values are a privilege afforded only to global elites, and are difficult to enact at a grassroots level (Rovisco & Nowicka, 2011, 5). The exclusive nature of international schools, which are often expensive to attend, and more significantly the statistically challenging nature of gaining acceptance into Lund University as an international student, indicates the cosmopolitan attitudes being fostered in this research context derive from a degree of social affluence which is often associated with, in Western terms, middle or upper-middle class lifestyles. This acknowledgment does not seek to detract from the intercultural exchange and negotiation of cultural diversity which is empirically demonstrated, but does seek to note that in this context, social class plays a significant role in facilitating the development of the cosmopolitan vision and allowing international students to negotiate their culturally diverse environment.

This research acknowledges that the affluent and supportive educational environment found in the relatively small university town of Lund, which is supported by the generous Swedish welfare system, is not a model which can be easily or universally replicated. There are a host of cultural, economic and geographical factors which make the environment of Lund and the multicultural harmony which it fosters possible. In investigating the chosen context this research does not seek to appear elitist or ignorant to the economic inequalities that exist in other regions, or even in the Lund environment itself, but rather attempts to examine what qualities and conditions are present which allow mediated multicultural social cohesion to exist so that they can be evaluated and generalised to other contexts. Despite the fact that the privileged educational model would be difficult to replicate in other locations, the educational framework offered at university level still does attempt to provide a cosmopolitan solution to the challenges faced by diverse societies. Another respondent notes how the racial segregation

at her university in the eastern United States was approached, where she was employed as a student worker.

> I worked as a multi-cultural recruitment intern, so that was cool. We focused on recruiting diverse populations and international students, then we would hold two weekend events for those students…that was always really fun. That was a fairly homogenous population at the university so that was fun.

Sarah (F, 25, Student

The proactive institutionally supported approach described by the respondent seeks to facilitate the conditions from which a diverse institution can help to foster a more diverse society. Through institutional support provided by the university, individuals are given the opportunity to live and study in a pluralistic environment, negotiating everyday challenges rather than becoming socially segmented and focusing on perceived cultural differences. These practices often act as a remedy to the potentially negative influences of increasingly hostile debates on immigration and integration which often arise from a lack of lived experience in cohesive multi-cultural environments (Jensen, 2016, 95).

Yet providing a cosmopolitan framework through which a pluralistic society can exist, in this instance through education, does not lead to an instant environment of solidarity. Some individuals will always focus on boundary maintenance based on their own notions of self-identification. The presence of a position of multi-cultural recruitment intern within the respondent's higher educational institution created the possibility for a diverse student culture to expand and develop. The same respondent reflects on the absence of these cosmopolitan cultural values when contrasted with her secondary school environment.

> My high school experience was a very segmented because my town was a very low income, heavily minority town…[we] were separate from the other population of the school so it really crated a very large dynamic shift.

Sarah (F, 25, Student)

Here the absence of institutional structural assistance reinforces cultural segmentation and a retreat from cultural integration and solidarity between those from different backgrounds being fostered. This contrast indicates that while cosmopolitan *agency* can be negotiated in a

culturally diverse society through both material and digital communicative practices, it also requires the assistance of cosmopolitan *structure* through which it can be enacted.

Cosmopolitan structure and cosmopolitan agency: Institutional implications in a transnational context

In making the decision to live in Sweden as an international student, respondents demonstrated an attitude of openness and a willingness to engage with cultural difference in their everyday lives, not only with Swedish students, but also with a range of international students. This attitude is contrasted against the presence of some structural frameworks which led to some respondents feeling marginalised in the capacity of an international student in Lund, or even prior to their arrival. Many respondents noted a feeling of helplessness when they undertook the migration process at the Swedish Migration Agency. While this respondent reflected positively on the information provided by the university and on the information found on messaging platforms for prospective international students, she noted that undertaking the immigration process for non-European students was an arduous process.

> The hassle began when we had to apply for the visa. It was my first time applying for documents like that. You have to gather so many items, such as a notary… for your passport, then print it all out and fill in all the documents they need.

> *Amisha (F, 20, Student)*

The respondent did not critique the administrative validity of the migration process itself, but did note that undertaking this process made her feel "frustrated and paranoid". This feeling of disempowerment was further articulated by another student who was unsure if he would be granted a residency permit *even though* he was admitted into Lund University for postgraduate studies.

> I didn't know if I would get a Swedish residence permit… I had to go to Uganda with the bus because we have no embassy. It's a two day, forty-eight hour bus ride.

> *Jacob (M, 34, Student)*

This comment reinforces the political and economic reality that barriers regarding international mobility are far more severe for students from developing nations. Challenging periods of frustration or tension reflected upon by the respondents during the migration process are an inevitable reality when undertaking a transnational exchange programme or international degree, not only in Lund, but across the globe. This research acknowledges the complex nature of international migration, and does not seek to critique the Swedish Migration Agency for completing its societal function in any manner. The analysis here simply seeks to acknowledge that the respondents interviewed in this research noted that they felt a degree of trepidation when gaining a residence permit in Sweden, and that this was a particularly challenging state of their journey when it came to negotiating their experience as mobile international students.

Yet not all institutional encounters were reflected upon negatively by the respondents. Some institutions were attributed with a welcoming and even empowering quality. In contrast to the bureaucratic process experienced during the application for a residency permit or when making an application through University Admissions, respondents reflected positively on the welcoming atmosphere created by Lund University staff and International Mentors during arrival day and orientation weeks.

> They really take care of the students [at Lund]. I remember for arrival day they pick you up from the airport and everything. At first I was battling between Lund and a university in Amsterdam, then I saw exchange students [at Amsterdam] and one of the lines said 'go take the train by yourself'. If I'm in a new place I need assistance somehow.

> *Annya (F, 20, Student)*

Respondent's noted an appreciation for the manner in which Lund University staff proactively sought to welcome new arrivals on arrival day and throughout arrival weeks. These coordinated activities helped to foster a sense of belonging and solidarity based on their shared needs and interests (Duru & Trenz, 2016, 158). The affable nature of Lund staff was commented on by a number of students, as it contributed to developing a sense of community and belonging for students who had newly arrived in Lund, providing an entry point into Swedish culture and society.

> The fact that Lund staff flew to the US and met with us was also incredible and so impressive. She [Lund University staff member] came and did a two hour or so little pow-wow with the five of us

going over and you know everything about the residence permit and housing and what we would need to know leading up to, and gave us goodie bags and things.

Sarah (F, 25, Student)

The structure and support offered by university staff during the early weeks and also prior to arrival empowered many students and gave them the confidence to build a social and support network before commencing with studies. For some respondent's, friends made through their study programme also allowed for the development of a sense of community an integration into the international student community in Lund. James (M, 32, Student) noted that his programme had created a "generous and trusting" environment which he enjoyed being a part of both in a social and academic content. While European students are afforded structural support such as the ease of mobility through the framework of the European Union, non-European students reflected positively on the structural assistance provided to them, particularly regarding housing.

Since I was from outside the EU I did have a housing guarantee.

James (M, 32, Student)

Relocating transnationally was noted as a stress-inducing experience, and for many students finding housing was the primary concern. Sarah (F, 25, Student) noted that Lund staff "really care about international students" reflecting how "Swedish people totally pay attention to each detail". Asked about her highlights from arriving in Lund, the respondent noted that the international office "has a lot of activities starting from the introduction week". The respondent noted that all her closest friends are people she "met through my mentor group from the orientation weeks". These activities provide a framework which focuses on socialisation through shared common interests and collective needs, rather than on pre-defined ethnic or cultural qualities (Duru & Trenz, 2016). While this companionable state is not necessarily permanent, it creates the conditions from which intercultural communication can be enacted and provides a foundation from which international students can navigate the culturally diverse environment in which they are situated. This intercultural exchange of knowledge and culture made possible through the framework of international student mobility occurs not only in Lund, but throughout the network of international cooperation in the field of higher education. This

respondent reflects on how she first became interested in Lund University, after meeting with an education consultant.

> This was my first time to know about Lund University. I applied for a scholarship from the Indonesian government, the LPDP, but I also got the Lund University Global Scholarship here.

Amisha (F, 25, Student)

International scholarships, provided by government, development and education institutions, including Lund University, also empower students and allow for international and upward social mobility and for the potential for development of multicultural cohesion in diverse populations. In this instance, the funds provided for this student's research and development are provided by the Indonesian and Swedish state, reflecting a codification of cosmopolitan values in institutional and transnational context (Beck, 2005, 175; Held, 2010, 239).

Cosmopolitan limitations

Many respondents also noted practical limitations when seeking to shape their social habitus in the diverse context of Lund University. Difficulty integrating into a cohesive social unit was commented on by Amisha (F, 25, Student), who observed that socialisation can be "a bit of a challenge" as her class, although international and cooperative, often remains "all in groups".

> My expectations were that because we are international students that we can mingle with one another. I'm trying to make a fika or do something to get all of us together, but chemistry is not easy especially when it comes to friendship and relationships here.

Amisha (F, 25, Student)

The respondent's assessment of the difficulties in developing social cohesion in everyday life highlights the practical challenges associated with sharing distinct customs and cultural practices (Kymlicka, 2010, 99). Jacob (M, 34, Student) also commented on the difficulties of social and cultural integration when living as a mobile international student, noting that he experienced "culture shock" after the initial phase of euphoria upon arrival. When in his student accommodation Jacob also noted it can be hard to find "something to do" and that he can "feel nervous". Annya (F, 20, Student) commented that although she was predominantly enjoying

her experience in Sweden with regard to the social and also educational aspects of her life, her friends "have different schedules" and that it can be "hard to get the whole group together". Whilst respondents noted challenges regarding integrating with other international classmates, there were additional challenges for international students when attempting to build relationships with Swedish or Nordic students.

> It's like oil and water right now. They prefer to sit with their friends, the Swedish friends, rather than mingle with us. At the first time I tried hard to mingle with them but after that I prefer not to put a lot of energy into it.

Amisha (F, 25, Student)

Respondent's recognised that these communicative and social challenges were inevitable when studying as an international student in Sweden, but also articulated that the practical process of integration could be frustrating. Masahiro (M, 26, Student) noted although he has made some Swedish friends after 18 months as an international student, he "sometimes has trouble to communicate properly with other [Swedish] people" due to cultural and communicative differences, commenting that he finds Swedish people to be "really shy". Learning Swedish was also noted as a challenge for many international students, who complete their full-time study programmes in English.

> That's the one thing that I very often feel guilty that I don't dedicate more time to…I think it's very hard to sit down and train by yourself, just learning vocab and things. The big difficulty is that it is very hard finding someone to practice Swedish with.

Sarah (F, 25, Student)

The respondent noted that Swedes often "immediately switch to English" in order to be "polite and helpful", which can "inhibit the practicing factor" for international students. This analysis acknowledges that the extremely high level of English fluency in Sweden makes the international study environment possible. Yet many respondents noted that while the high level of English proficiency in Lund afforded them the possibility to study as international students, it also somewhat affected their motivation to integrate in Swedish society outside of the academic environment in Lund.

I think it makes no sense at all to me why exchange students are offered Swedish classes when they will only be here for half a year or a year, versus master's students who are not offered Swedish classes from the university for free but they are the people who are more likely to actually stay and integrate into your country. Crazy to me.

Sarah (F, 25, Student)

This analysis does not wish to comment negatively upon Lund as an essentially bilingual city, as this collective accomplishment demonstrates the quality of Swedish education in teaching students' English. Rather, the analysis wishes to acknowledge that given the ease with which international students can live their daily life speaking English, their motivation to study and become proficient in Swedish decreases. The possibility to live a functional life in Lund without knowing Swedish can be reinforced by engaging with ones own digital media or with Swedish news media which operates in English, such as The Local. When asked about potential remedies to this situation, the respondent noted a desire to study Swedish at Lund University as an international student.

6: Conclusion

Taking the culturally diverse international student community in Lund and the related media environment as a case study for research, this thesis has examined the role of digital media in shaping the life world of the research respondents. Digitally mediated communication has here been investigated as an interwoven element of the social world which is embedded within the everyday communicative practices conducted by international students as they complete academic study, participate in extra-curricular activities at student nations and associations, form social bonds, and communicate with their family and friends, both locally and transnationally. As is the case with a significant proportion of the international students studying at Lund University, the respondents were constantly engaged with their mobile devices throughout their daily life, a practice which facilitated the shaping of their functional and social habitus.

Given the plurality and contingency associated with investigating digitally mediated communication accessed through mobile digital devices, communication in the Lund University student environment has here not been conceptualised simply as a matter of production, representation and usage, but has rather been primarily examined through the lens

of mediated social constructivism. This approach has explored how the creation of social reality occurs through mediated processes of communication in the context of Lund University, an environment which is saturated with literate digital media users. For the international students interviewed for this thesis, the use of digital and social media constitutes an essential part of participating in the communicative tasks of daily life. This applies not only to socialising through social media by forming new social networks and engaging in extra-curricular activities such as student associations and student nations, but also for forming study groups are engaging in the core tasks of their academic life.

The conceptual lens of cultural cosmopolitanism has allowed for an exploration of how international students navigate the diverse context which defines much of their life in Lund. The framework of conviviality have also provided insight into the manner in which international students navigate not only periods of harmony, but also the tensions which arise in their multicultural and transnationally composed lives. The results of the empirical analysis are here examined and reflected upon as they related to each research question, with areas for future research also identified.

To what extent does digital media play a role in shaping the communicative environment of international students at Lund University?

The high frequency of digital media use which was reported indicated that communication occurring through mobile devices constituted an *essential* element of shaping the social, academic and personal habitus of the respondents. Communication through different digital media platforms and applications is required in order to participate in the core tasks of university life such as enrolling and completing courses, finding and maintaining accommodation, completing collaborative research assignments, and building the social networks which allow for personal and professional development. While this applied to the respondent's lives as international students within the sphere of Lund University, digital media also played a similar role in their capacity as prospective students in their country of origin. The process of discovering and researching postgraduate study options was often conducted through the Lund University website, social media and via other digital communication channels such as email. The process of applying to study in Sweden was also conducted through the state-run University Admissions website, with admission results also being communicated to applicants via email.

In the capacity of a student at Lund, many respondents reported constantly engaging with their digital devices throughout the day, a practice which reflects the intersection of the material and the digital. A significant degree of the mediated communication occurred through social media applications such as Facebook; Facebook Messenger; Instagram; WhatsApp; Line; Telegram and Snapchat. When asked about digital media more generally, respondent's often spoke about social media, indicating that the architecture of digitally mediated communication is often provided by social media platforms. The varying functionality and conventions associated with differing social media applications often allowed for the respondents to conduct scalable sociality, allowing them to organise the different spheres of their personal and private lives.

In addition to the frequent use of social media, respondents also noted the use of other digital applications accessed through their mobile media devices such weather applications, voice recorders, traffic applications and web browsers. This media use emphasised the role and the importance of the communication conducted through the respondent's mobile digital *device*, rather than any specific platform or digital channel, a mode of communication referred to by Madianou (2014) as polymedia. By facilitating constant digital communications both transnationally and locally, the life world of the respondent's becomes less fixed to a single geographical location and is instead situated within a transnational communicative network. This media use highlights that the transnationally mobile respondents use their digital devices to develop a mediated sense of community and belonging, which is described in this thesis as phenomenological geography (Christensen & Jansson, 2015, 86).

The media environment in which the respondents are situated also requires them to negotiate their own communicative agency in relation to the institutional structure, mediated and material, provided by Lund University. This includes the university website and the formal social media channels on Facebook and Instagram. Many respondents attributed a high degree of value to message boards on Reddit and Facebook groups, further reinforcing the importance of digital media platforms in their lives. The analysis concluded that although user focused platforms are significant, institutionally derived sources of information also play a significant role is shaping perception and practice, and are regulated and democratically legitimised. The analysis also examined and problematised the broader structure provided by borderless and

largely unaccountable digital platforms which facilitate this digitally mediated socialisation such as Facebook and Google.

How do international students from a variety of cultural backgrounds negotiate their everyday lives in the culturally diverse and mediated environment of Lund University?

When examining the manner in which international students negotiate the culturally diversity found in their everyday lives, this research concluded that many of the respondents possess a cosmopolitan identity which is composed of an attitude of openness towards encountering cultural difference. Reflecting upon their cosmopolitan identity, many respondents noted previous lived experience in a society which contained a diverse range of cultures, languages and religions. This experience of living with and appreciating cultural plurality motivated many respondents to travel to Lund and live and study an international degree in a transnational environment. This disposition of openness, referred to in this research as *cosmopolitan subjectivity*, contains an implicit rejection of the methodological nationalist position which defines the nation state as the primary normative referent point when understanding international student mobility and the related digital media use.

While the abstract valuing of openness towards plurality and universalism which is found at the core of cosmopolitan subjectivity contributes to the conditions in which the negotiation of cultural diversity can occur, many respondents noted that they encountered periods of tension when conducting transnational communication. These tensions and challenges were approached by many students with an outlook of conviviality, the pragmatic enactment of cosmopolitanism, which allows for the navigation of not only harmonious interactions, but also tensions and disputes. While these encounters arose in many aspects of student life, such as in a classroom environment and when forming new social bonds, many respondents reported that conducting group work allowed them to practice the negotiation of these differences through a specific task.

The thesis also concludes that the cosmopolitan subject position occupied by many respondents is one which is made possible in many instances due to the privilege afforded to respondents, who often come from a middle or upper middle-class background. The analysis conducted did not seek to reduce or criticise the intercultural exchange taking place in the respondent's lives,

but also concluded that having a financial safety net was a contributing factor which allowed the respondent to navigate their culturally diverse environment.

While many respondents sought to enact their cosmopolitan agency, they were also required to negotiate structural frameworks which in some cases contrasted with their desire for fluid transnational mobility. While they did not criticise the Swedish Migration Agency for completing their administrative role, they did note that they felt a sense of frustration and helplessness when undertaking the migration process. This position contrasted sharply with the receptive attitude received by students from Lund University before arrival, on arrival day and during orientation weeks, indicating that cosmopolitan values can be embedded within institutional frameworks.

This thesis also noted that there are limitations to negotiating the culturally diverse environment which constitutes the international student community at Lund University. Although digital and primarily social media was a primary factor which the respondent's used to shape their social habitus in Lund, some respondent's noted difficulties when developing lasting social bonds with both international students, and also with Swedish and Nordic students. Respondent's also reported that while they did intent to study more Swedish, they often found it difficult to find time to study or speak Swedish, particularly given the high levels of English proficiency found in Lund

Moving forward: Areas for future research

This thesis has examined the role that digital media plays in shaping the transnationally mediated lifeworld of international students studying at Lund, as well as the manner in which they negotiate the cultural diversity found in their daily lives through a disposition of openness to encountering cultural difference. Perhaps the most significant finding of the research was that many international students do not distinguish between the material and the digital regarding the communicative practices which shape their social world. Understanding this communicative intersection and the manner in which it shapes the perceptions and practices of digital media users offers a vast array of conceptual and empirical opportunities for research.

Further research could explore and problematise the reliance and trust that many individuals place in the borderless and largely unregulated digital architecture which facilitates much of this communication. The growing reliance on borderless digital platforms has altered the manner in which communication occurs between individuals, social collectives and other more formal organisations such as political groups. As individuals spend more time on their own, often bias-reinforcing digital devices, the capacity for local and transnational debate occurring based around the concept of shared public knowledge diminishes. Developing a more nuanced understanding of these communicative changes and the manner in which they can be approached is an important research area for mediatization and media and communication scholarship more broadly.

Examining the manner in which digitally mediated communication shapes perceptions and practices surrounding transnational mobility is also an area of research which offers a vast conceptual and empirical terrain to be examined. While this thesis has chosen to focus on international students living in Lund, many of whom occupy a privileged societal position which affords them the luxury of transnational mobility and the enactment of the cosmopolitan vision, investigating the transnational mobility of displaced migrants and asylum seekers and the manner in which they use mobile devices to navigate their journey is an area which could also yield meaningful results. Here a mediatization framework could be examined in conjunction with a mobilities focused approach in order to understand the communication practices in the transient lives of displaced migrants.

Additional research which examined mediatization, cosmopolitanism and transnational mobility could also focus on travellers and backpackers and the manner in which they draw upon their digital devices to navigate their travelling experience. Travellers, particularly millennial travellers, use social media such as Instagram and Facebook to share their experience with friends and family back home, build new social bonds, and research potential experiences. There travellers also use volunteering sites such as Workaway and WWOOF (World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms) to engage more with local communities and make a more meaningful contribution to the community in which they travel. This practice could be examined not only from the perspective of the travellers, but also the local communities which host these travellers, and the related media environment which facilitates this practice.

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Interviews
'Jacob', M, 34, Student. Interviewed by T.J. Parker 18/02/19.
'Sarah'. F, 25, Student. Interviewed by T.J. Parker 18/02/19.
'James', M, 32, Student. Interviewed by T.J. Parker 5/03/19.
'Annya', F, 20, Student. Interviewed by T.J Parker 5/03/19.

'Amisha' F, 25, Student. Interviewed by T.J. Parker 5/03/19.

'Ahmet', M, 34, Student. Interviewed by T.J. Parker 7/03/19.

'Juan', M, 24, Student, Interviewed by T.J. Parker 11/03/19.

'Masahiro', M, 26, Student. Interviewed by T.J. Parker 15/03/19.

'Rebecca', F, 21 Student. Interviewed by T.J. Parker 18/03/19.

8: Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview transcript example.

The sample below is taken from: 'Sarah'. F, 25, Student. Interviewed by T.J. Parker 18/02/19.

T: So you contact people via digital means? Were there other…?

S: We did have physical mailing that we handed out, that was like usually through a different department that like had a staff that did Photoshop and design and all of that and everything – and my boss, so kind of by extension I didn't have authority to approve it but I kind of went along to all those meetings, which was fun, but got to approve the final look of everything. The physical sending out and physical design was handed out through another branch of our office. So we did most of the digital and social media but we had a lot of interns that ran the social media most of the time.

T: I know about that, haha, yip! So what were you guys putting on social media? Instagram, Facebook, anything else? Twitter?

S: Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, I think we played with the idea of Tumblr for a bit, but there's just enough student there really like doing Tumblr. It's such weird platform. Snapchat yeah, Snapchat was still big. It's kind of dying out and moving to Instagram. We did a lot of general things that I guess everyone does like promoting different articles or things that come out like rankings about the university or whatever's happening or you know. I remember this event is happening you can sign up here, that sort of thing. And a lot of doing events we would do a lot of twitter and snapchat contests during actual events when we would have like, you know, five hundred to two thousand students on campus where the first person to answer a question can get a prize from the tent, that kind of thing.

T: Competitions always get people excited.

S: Exactly. So yeah.

T: So it would be fair to say that you use digital media in your day-to-day life? Computer? Phone?

S: I do, yes, absolutely, far too much. Now Iphones have that thing where it tracks how much time you spend on it and I got one on like Sunday morning which said, you're down twenty percent, you've only spent five hours per day on your phone and I was like, that cannot be possible. So yeah, I don't use twitter, and I very much slacked off on snapchat now that I've moved to Instagram.

T: Yeah, I think people have moved from Snapchat to Instagram, I never had Snapchat.

S: I actually only have Snapchat currently because I have a 354 day streak with a friend. So every day I get on and take a picture of like my feet or whatever because I'm walking somewhere, for the streak. That's it and once that streak dies I've accepted that I will delete the app, but I can't let it die.

T: So you're actually doing that now?

S: Yeah yeah so two or three days and we will be at the one year mark. Which is such a ridiculous millennial concept actually, but, you know, I think a lot about you know. I was on the bus this morning and thinking about looking at everyone else on the bus and everyone has their headphones on and the older population why, I was thinking about why, even just having headphones and music when you are out and about has never really kicked on with older populations, I guess because there's no one to teach them really. You know that would be a lot for them to deal with but so yeah, the idea of getting on a streak and sending someone a picture everyday like is such a modern problem.

T: It's kind of a way to get you hooked. Ok cool, well that sounds you've done a lot of work in the university environment. I'm glad that you are at External Relations, but I mean you've worked a lot with admissions and marketing and stuff, so, I'm interested in how you discovered Lund. If you were, probably were, researching a bunch of other options. How do you come to a decision, maybe not even a decision. I mean, why did you come to Lund? Take me through the process.

S: So I just really wanted to come back to Sweden was problem a. So I started by coming to Study in Sweden and putting up programmes taught in English, 2018, when did I arrive? And I looked at every single programme in the entire country one by one and picked out on a list every single thing that I would not hate to study and could get into. So that was process one, so I had a big list of potential questionable programmes.

T: So you weren't looking at other Nordic countries or?

S: Yes, so, I mean Sweden was the priority, but mostly Scandinavian welfare, is also the priority.

T: A little different to US welfare.

S: So I also looked, did a similar process with Denmark and with Norway. Norway actually had a higher education programme so that was my top choice of top choices. Specifically an education master's degree like for administrators or whatever, which exists very often in the US but was the only one I could find in the Nordic region. However they wanted you to have an undergraduate degree in Education, so that was fine. So I actually took a masters class while I worked on higher education in the digital age, which actually if I can think about it I will try and find the reading list because a lot of it will be very relevant for you. Specifically to be more qualified for that programme, in my letter to them, I said that I'm taking this just for you so that I will have education experience, but still, that's ok.

T: Norway its harder to get in, but its free to study right?

S: Yeah the university of Oslo, but Oslo is kind of crappy so. It's ok, that would have been very expensive, so expensive

T: Norwegian people are very nice.

S: They are very down to earth. I did a weekend trip to Stockholm and it was absurdly expensive and not as nice as Stockholm, but I am very biased to Stockholm. Anyway, I applied to Norway, to the University of

Oslo, that programme. I contemplated a programme that was a joint degree from the University of Rekyavik and the University of Oslo, which would have been a year in both schools, which would have been pretty cool, but it was in Viking and Medieval Norse studies, which would have been the coolest and most useless master's degree of all time, but I literally only considered it so I could be like "I study ancient ruins like Hermione". But my priority was always Sweden. So I had already started learning Swedish, I knew something about Swedish culture, it was kind of the idea of you would like Norway or Denmark as well. I mean you never know, so.

T: But nowhere else in Europe or the world?

S: No. I looked very briefly at Germany just because it's like cheaper tuition or free tuition depending on the school. I think I potentially looked at Matricht in the Netherlands, because the Netherlands is also like almost Scandinavia.

T: Yeah. It's popular like Sweden.

S: So I looked at that but their programmes you didn't apply for until after the programmes here, so it was kind of like, I don't need to apply unless I didn't get anywhere. So actually at Lund the programme that I originally had as my top choice was the one year management programme, which I was a little bit sceptical of because I didn't think that one year would be enough to solidify connections or learn the language. Yeah, so, well actually somehow I missed MACA through this long list, so I guess I was looking at 500 programmes and if the name didn't jump out as something with potential I didn't look into it and nobody knows what applied cultural analysis is so actually I think I applied in Sweden, the management programme in Lund, there was like Sustainable Cultural Heritage or something like that at Gotlands campus in Uppsala, and Managing People, Knowledge and Change I kind of looked at, that was a new one right. That needed more business than I have because I have a year of business and mine was like half a year technically when it comes down to it, so I was like questionable about that. And then Megan emailed me and was like "hey I can see that you have an open spot" because I had applied to three programmes, I had four spots. You know obviously in the Swedish system. "I took a look over your transcript, I can see you've taken some anthropology and sociology and things. I think you would be really interested in the MACA programme. Here's some information about it, you should look into it. I was like, this looks so cool. And so I immediately moved that into my top spot and stared looking much more in depth about Lund and learning about Lund specifically. So coming from a background in administration and considering both schools, I mean Lund and Mason have similar populations. I would never in a million years have had time to look up someone's transcript, look through and think what programme would specifically be of relevance to you? You would *never* do that in the US, there's never time for that. That was super impressive to me that she had taken the time do that, which I mean they don't read application here and they don't process the documents which is so nice because it opens up the time to have those personal interactions with students, but yeah that really struck to me. From then on I started paying much more attention to everything that came through about Lund, and I also noticed that all of the digital communications that I got from Lund were much more detailed and much more international student focused than everything I was getting from any other school. Oh, Denmark, Arhus University for European Studies was the other one I was looking at. And the Copenhagen version of MACA, because you can apply – a lot of MACA students apply to Copenhagen and to Lund and then get into one or the other or both and then decide from there. But the Copenhagen programme MACA mostly only admits students who studied anthropology before, whereas we admit a lot of variety intentionally, apparently. Anyway, so, then I started looking more into Lund. Also considering, because for a long time I didn't really allow myself to rank or hope too much because it was more like I will take whatever I get into, that gets me to Sweden and gets me to this visa at the end. End goals here.

Appendix 2: Consent form

International Students at Lund University: Interview Consent Form

Researcher: Timothy Parker

Programme: Master's in Media and Communication

This research seeks to develop knowledge surrounding the media production and consumption of international students at Lund University.

I will ask questions to better understand your life as an international student. Each interview will last around 30 - 45 minutes This data will only be used in the course MKVM13, Media and Communication Thesis

I would like to record the interview and use the dialogue to present the findings. I will record the interview only with your written consent. Please feel free to say as much or as little as you want. You can decide not to answer any question, or to stop the interview any time you want.

I ensure that your identity will remain anonymous. If you agree to join this study, please sign your name below.

_____

Full name

_____

Signature of Interviewee

_____

Age and Gender

_____

Email Address

_____

Date

Appendix 3: Interview Guide

1) Background before Lund:
   -Country, bachelor subject, high school.

-Previous travel, exchanges, international experience. Can you tell me your geographical journey from place of birth to here?
-Work experience. Can you tell me your professional journey from your first job to here?
-Interests, hobbies, sports, cultural experience civic and community engagement or other.
-Media consumption and production habits. How often are you connected to the internet via phone or laptop? How do you use it?
-Media literacy, daily media use.

2) Discovering Lund:
-How did you first find out about Lund? What was important to you when you were searching for post-graduate options?
-Where did the initial idea come from?
-Research habits, both online and offline: web, social media, printed material, events.
-Official Lund material or external information.
-Thought process: worries, anticipation, expectations, reservations.

3) The application process, moving and arrival:
-Application process.
-Considerations surrounding family and friends.
-Expectations versus reality upon arrival.
-Financial and logistical considerations.
-Swedish Migration Agency.
-Cultural and linguistic considerations.
-Experience of arrival.
-Settling into Lund.

4) Living in Lund:
-Daily media use: digital media, social media.
-Everyday life: accommodation, routine.
-Social life: communities, networks, nations, sports, accommodation.
-Study experience: communicative and cultural differences.
-Social experience: living in an international environment and dealing with intercultural communication.
-Challenges: bureaucratic, cultural, academic, logistical, psychological, emotional, linguistic.
-Highlights: social life, cultural, academic, logistical, psychological, emotional,

5) Identity:
-Relationship to Sweden, Nordic countries, Europe.
-Changes, evolution in worldview since coming to Lund.
-Thoughts and plans for the future

Appendix 4: Example of coding process

First level open codes	Analytical categories	Themes for analysis
Constantly checking phone; always online; constant notifications; enrolling to university online; using GIS; frustrated at LU website; reading LU website; listening to podcasts and music; "too much" digital media use; group chats; connecting old friends; different social media for different friends; emailing programme director; all friends on social media.	Not making a distinction between the online and offline; always having a digital device; digital media as a building bock of the social.	*The intersection of the material and the digital.*
Organise spheres of life through social media; local and transnational communication; organising social events and joining social groups; meeting new people; hard to meet Swedes; taking and sharing photos; smartphone assisting in daily life.	Scalable sociability; developing a mediated sense of belonging; polymedia; public and private communication.	*Phenomenological geography.*
Difficulty making friends; difficulty learning Swedish; culture shock; different schedules; cultural differences; Swedes switch to English; international chemistry not easy; different schedules.	Transient sociality; cultural differences; integration issues.	*Cosmopolitan limitations* .
Growing up in a multicultural society; travelling during youth; different religions in family; attending international school; bilingual; social status; recruiting diverse students; inevitability of tension and conflict; working towards a common goal;	Openness to difference; enacting attitude of conviviality; cosmopolitan privilege.	*Negotiating cultural plurality.*

socialising outside the diaspora; desire to encounter new points of view.	75	