



UNITED NATIONS
UNIVERSITY

UNU-MERIT

Working Paper Series

#2020-031

**International student mobility decision-making in a European
context** Talitha Dubow, Katrin Marchand, Melissa Siegel

Published 7 July 2020

Maastricht Economic and social Research institute on Innovation and Technology (UNU-MERIT)

email: info@merit.unu.edu | website: <http://www.merit.unu.edu>

Boschstraat 24, 6211 AX Maastricht, The Netherlands

Tel: (31) (43) 388 44 00

UNU-MERIT Working Papers
ISSN 1871-9872

Maastricht Economic and social Research Institute on Innovation and Technology
UNU-MERIT

UNU-MERIT Working Papers intend to disseminate preliminary results of research carried out at UNU-MERIT to stimulate discussion on the issues raised.

Title:

International Student Mobility Decision-Making in a European Context

Authors / Affiliations / Emails:

1) Talitha Dubow

Affiliation: Researcher, Maastricht University/ UNU-MERIT

Email: dubow@merit.unu.edu

2) Katrin Marchand (PhD)

Affiliation: Researcher, Maastricht University/ UNU-MERIT

Email: marchand@merit.unu.edu

3) Melissa Siegel (PhD)

Affiliation: Professor, Maastricht University/ UNU-MERIT

Email: melissa.siegel@maastrichtuniversity.nl

JEL Classification Codes:

F22; I23; I26; J15; J24; J61; O15.

Keywords:

Higher education; migrant decision-making; student mobility; EU mobility.

Acknowledgement:

This research is supported by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 727072, as part of the REMINDER project (<https://www.reminder-project.eu/>)

Abstract:

This paper contributes to existing theoretical and empirical understandings of international student mobility (ISM) decision-making. Drawing on interview and focus group data from 115 current and former 'student migrants' in the EU (from both EU and non-EU countries of origin), it provides an in-depth, international comparative analysis of ISM decision-making. It addresses three questions: 1) What motivates the decision to study abroad in the EU, and how do these motivations vary across different countries of origin?; 2) How does the decision to study abroad relate to the student's initial aspirations (i.e. formed prior to starting their foreign study programme) regarding their post-study (im)mobility?; and 3) How are post-study (im)mobility aspirations (re)shaped over the course of the student's foreign study programme? The relevance of existing theorisations of ISM decision-making is tested in relation to student inflows from different countries of origin. The results highlight the ways in which individual decisions to study abroad do not necessarily align with a single decision-making model but are rather often determined by multiple and interacting considerations. The findings further existing knowledge on: 1) the ways in which international student decision-making relate to the social, cultural, economic and political environments in which these decisions are made; and 2) how international student decision-making relates to the student's broader and evolving life aspirations.

1. Introduction

International student mobility (ISM) is a growing and evolving phenomenon. Much of the ISM scholarship has focussed on understanding why students choose to study abroad. Studies have commonly framed the decision to study abroad as the product of various push and pull factors which provide the inputs into a cost-benefit calculation, made by a rational actor at a particular moment in time (Carlson, 2013; Mosneaga & Winther, 2013). More recently, theoretical perspectives have sought to contextualise the decision-making process within broader social and economic trends, including, for example, widening access to education, the growth of the middle classes, the neoliberal commodification of higher education, the emergence of global knowledge economies, the individualisation of young people's biographies, and the 'internationalising geography of consumption' (Perkins & Neumayer, 2014, p. 246). A part of this scholarship has explored the decision to study abroad in relation to the student's (and their family's) personal trajectory and broader life aspirations, drawing attention to the need for a better understanding of how the individual decision to study abroad relates to the student's longer-term international mobility (Findlay et al., 2017; King & Findlay, 2012; Murphy-Lejeune, 2002; Waters, 2006). Although some of these models of decision-making have clear implications for likely post-study mobility outcomes, there has been relatively little empirical investigation of the relationship between the decision to study abroad and international students' longer-term mobility behaviour (Findlay et al., 2017).

Moreover, in seeking to understand the processes by which students become internationally mobile, the meanings attached to their mobility, and the implications of this mobility, scholars are increasingly recognising the ways in which the decision to study abroad is embedded within particular social, cultural and economic relations (Carlson, 2013; Findlay et al., 2012, 2017; Mosneaga & Winther, 2013; Van Mol, 2014; Waters, 2006). However, a lack of international comparative research means that the ways in which international student decision-making processes vary across different geographies is only beginning to be understood (Perkins & Neumayer, 2014; Van Mol, 2014). As Perkins and Neumayer (2014) have pointed out, 'the literature leaves unanswered questions about the relative importance of particular attributes in shaping outward and inward ISMs, and how these vary across different countries' (p.249).

Recent mixed-methods empirical investigations by Findlay et al. (2017) and Van Mol (2014) make important contributions to demonstrating how 'the decision to study abroad or to remain at home should be situated within the broader economic, cultural and social environments wherein these decisions are formed' (Van Mol, 2014, p. 40). They furthermore recognise that the *post-study* (im)mobility of international students is shaped not only by the environment of the country of origin, but also that of the country of study. In conclusion to his study of intra-EU credit-mobile students, Van Mol (2014) calls for future studies to 'look into how the characteristics of specific destination countries entwine with the personal biographies and national baggage students take with them when they arrive, and how specific destination countries influence the outcomes of mobility' (p.163). Findlay et al.'s (2017) study responds to this question by exploring how, in the case of international students following degree programmes in the UK, 'the experience of international study results in the renegotiation of the meanings (some inherited from pre-study imaginings) of future post-study mobility' (p.194).

This is the point of departure for the present study, which uses a sub-sample of a broader qualitative dataset on intra-EU mobility¹ to investigate two points: firstly, how the decision to study abroad varies across geographic contexts; and, secondly, how post-study mobility decisions are shaped by the country of origin and the country of study. The paper therefore addresses the following research questions:

1. What motivates the decision to study abroad in the EU, and how do these motivations vary across different countries of origin?
2. How does the decision to study abroad relate to the student's initial aspirations (i.e. formed prior to starting their foreign study programme) regarding their post-study (im)mobility?
3. How are post-study (im)mobility aspirations (re)shaped over the course of the student's foreign study programme?

The data used to answer these questions is drawn from fieldwork conducted in five EU countries: Germany, Italy, Spain, Sweden, and the UK. Interviews and focus groups were conducted with current and former international students from both EU and non-EU countries of origin. For the purposes of the research, international students are defined as individuals who have left their country of prior residence in order to pursue higher education in the country of destination.² According to this definition, international students may have lived in the country of destination previously, or may be a citizen of that country, as long as they were residing in another country before migrating to the destination country in which they are enrolled for higher education.

This study makes a number of empirical and theoretical contributions to current understandings of ISM decision-making. The decision-making of 115 current and former students from 49 countries of origin is analysed, providing a rich comparative perspective. Firstly, the study compares the motivations for studying abroad reported by students from different geographical backgrounds. The analysis tests the applicability of existing theories of ISM decision-making to students from different geographic contexts. The resulting survey of motivations highlights the diversity of objectives subsumed within each of the three theoretical models, as well those that lie outside of these models. The findings highlight the ways in which individual decisions to study abroad do not necessarily align with a single decision-making model but are rather determined by multiple and interacting considerations. Secondly, the relationship between the decision to study abroad and students' initial post-study (im)mobility aspirations is explored. The concept of 'citizenship capital' emerges as an important determinant of initial post-study (im)mobility expectations. Finally, the paper provides substantial evidence for the ways in which post-study (im)mobility aspirations are developed or revised in the country of study. Overall, the paper furthers current understandings of: i) the ways in which international student decision-making is a product of the social, cultural, economic and political environments in which these decisions are made; and ii) how international student decision-making relates to the student's broader and evolving life aspirations (e.g. lifestyle, romantic, career-related).

¹ <https://www.reminder-project.eu/>. See Dubow et al. (2019) for the results of the full study.

² This includes those pursuing a full degree programme as well as those moving as part of a student exchange programme, or for an internship as part of a full degree programme. Further details are provided in the methodology section.

The paper is structured as follows. Section 2 gives an overview of international student mobility and related policy development, globally and within the EU specifically. Section 3 provides an overview of the literature and sets out the paper's theoretical framework and related hypotheses. Section 4 summarises the research methodology. Section 5 provides an analysis of the first research question relating to international student's motivations for studying abroad and how these vary across 'sending' geographies. Section 6 addresses the second research question on how the decision to study abroad relates to the student's initial post-study (im)mobility aspirations. As per the third research question, Section 7 analyses the factors which prompt students to formulate or revise their post-study (im)mobility aspirations during the course of their foreign studies. Section 8 discusses and concludes on the paper's main findings and contributions.

2. Context

The relevance of international student mobility worldwide

Studying abroad has become an increasingly popular choice for people across the globe. In 1975 there were 0.8 million tertiary-level international students worldwide, a number that increased to 2 million by 1988, and to 5.3 million by 2017 (OECD, 2017, p. 295, 2019, p. 232). This rapid expansion has been attributed to a combination of demographic, economic, social and technological factors. Globally, as economic growth has become increasingly dependent on knowledge and innovation, demand for highly skilled workers has increased. In some cases, the limited capacity of local tertiary education systems has prompted prospective students to pursue their education abroad (OECD, 2019). Furthermore, the growing middle classes in emerging economies has contributed to the demand for international tertiary education. Processes of globalisation have internationalised the higher education sector (Findlay et al., 2012; King & Findlay, 2012). Moreover, the falling costs of international travel, our global hyper-connectedness facilitated by ICTs, and the increasing use of English in work and study environments, have reduced the costs of international mobility, including for students (OECD, 2019).

Inflows of international students are of interest to policymakers in receiving countries for a number of reasons. In the short-term, international students support the higher education sector by paying tuition fees, which are often substantially higher than those paid by domestic students (OECD, 2019; Suter & Jandl, 2008). International students who also reside in the country where they are enrolled in Higher Education Institutes (HEI) (as opposed to those who study remotely) support the local economy through their expenses on the costs of living (OECD, 2019). In addition to these direct financial contributions, the presence of international students may also enhance the reputation and the learning environment of the HEIs where they study. It has been argued that the quality of education is increased by international students who contribute new knowledge and help domestic students to widen their perspectives (Suter & Jandl, 2008). In addition, HEIs may have to enhance their educational offering in order to successfully compete for international students (Suter & Jandl, 2008). The ability of HEIs to attract students from abroad has become a "selling point" which enhances institutional prestige (and therefore attracts further international students) and helps to secure funding (Jubb, 2018; Suter & Jandl, 2008).

In the longer-term, international students who stay on in the country in which they study can make important contributions to boosting innovation and economic growth (OECD, 2019). International student "stayers" are highly skilled migrants who can help to enhance the country's competitiveness in the globalised knowledge-based economy, fill skills shortages in the domestic workforce, and

mitigate demographic ageing (OECD, 2019; Suter & Jandl, 2008; Sykes & Chaoimh, 2012). Compared to other types of highly skilled migrants, international student “stayers” may offer particular advantages to their host society because they are often young and highly proficient in the host country language, they have higher education qualifications that are fully recognised in the domestic labour market, and they are also likely to have a good understanding of local cultural and professional norms and practices (Suter & Jandl, 2008; Sykes & Chaoimh, 2012). These advantages are likely to facilitate such individuals’ successful integration into the labour market and boost their productivity. Finally, the more indirect and longer-term benefits for host countries may be an increase in soft power, as flows of international students strengthen the political and economic relationships between sending and receiving countries (Suter & Jandl, 2008; University of Oxford, 2017).

In recognition of these benefits, many countries have introduced policies to attract and retain student migrants, which can include allowing students to work alongside their studies, facilitating their access to student visas and visas for post-study highly skilled work or job-searching, as well as to permanent residence and citizenship (Suter & Jandl, 2008; Sykes & Chaoimh, 2012). HEIs have also adapted to the fierce competition for international students by adopting more consumer-oriented marketing strategies, actively recruiting students in key countries of origin, setting up specific services to assist international students, teaching more courses in English, setting up overseas branch campuses and engaging in collaborations with HEIs in other countries (Sykes & Chaoimh, 2012; University of Oxford, 2017).

The EU approach to international student mobility

In Europe, the current approach to higher education as an international market first took shape in the 1980s, when European countries started to take a more active and systematic approach to receiving international students, and sought to facilitate student and staff mobility for enhanced cooperation and exchange (de Wit et al., 2012). Two major policies have been central to European-level policy in this regard. These are the Erasmus programme and the Bologna process. When it was launched in 1987 the Erasmus scheme was conceived as an instrument to promote a European identity through increased contact between European citizens, and to promote the mobility of graduates within the European labour market (see Van Mol, 2014). The Erasmus programme has evolved and expanded since its inception (Van Mol, 2014). At the time of fieldwork, Erasmus has been superseded by the 2014-2020 Erasmus+ programme. Based on the merger of seven former programmes, Erasmus+ is the EU programme for education, training, youth and sport, in line with the Europe 2020 strategy for growth, jobs, social equity and inclusion (European Commission, 2020d). Erasmus+ opportunities are available not only to students, but also to education staff, youth workers, volunteers, apprentices, recent graduates and other young people. It supports not only formal study but also training, volunteering and other professional development opportunities (European Commission, 2020a). Erasmus+ student exchanges are also available to students from selected non-EU programme and partner countries, although non-EU partner countries are subject to specific restrictions and conditions (European Commission, 2020b, 2020e).

The Bologna Process has been key to facilitating the mobility envisaged by the ERASMUS scheme. The Bologna Process, inaugurated with the Bologna Declaration in 1999, aimed to remove barriers to student and staff mobility across European countries and HEIs and to increase Europe’s competitive advantage as a destination for higher education. Bologna Process reforms were designed to

harmonise higher education systems and structures within the European Higher Education Area, including through the mutual recognition of study periods and qualifications completed at foreign HEIs; convergence around a three-tiered system (of bachelor's, master's and doctoral studies); as well as shared quality assurance (European Commission, 2020c).

More recently, the 2015 European Agenda on Migration reiterated the EU's commitment to ensuring that Europe continues to be an 'attractive destination for the talent and entrepreneurship of students, researchers and workers' (European Commission, 2015). In line with this aim, the Students and Researchers Directive ((EU)2016/801) was introduced in order to better harmonise admission conditions for the entry and residence of non-EU/EEA researchers, students, school pupils, trainees, volunteers and au pairs. In particular, the Directive aims to make the EU a more attractive destination for students by making admission requirements more consistent across the EU, by allowing students to work at least 15 hours per week alongside their studies, and by permitting students to remain in the country of study for at least nine months following the completion of their study programme (European Migration Network, 2019). Most recently, reflecting on progress made under the European Agenda on Migration, the European Commission highlighted the continuing need to provide more opportunities for students and professionals, given their role in building a more competitive EU economy (European Commission, 2018).

International student migration to and within the EU has also been shaped by national-level policy developments. The UK was the first European country to pursue higher education as an export market: in 1979 the decision was taken to charge full fees to foreign degree-seeking students (de Wit et al., 2012). It took around two decades for other European countries – such as Denmark, Sweden, Finland and the Netherlands – to similarly introduce full-cost tuition fees for non-EU/EEA students (de Wit et al., 2012). In the case of these countries, the aim was not necessarily income-generation but rather to compensate for the costs borne by domestic taxpayers and to attract a higher quality of foreign student (de Wit et al., 2012). However, according to Choudaha (2017), the resource constraints facing universities in the wake of the 2008 global financial crisis have created broader interest among HEIs around the world in recruiting full fee-paying international students as a source of revenue.

Indeed, attracting and retaining international students is now a policy priority for many EU Member States, including for four of the five countries in which fieldwork was conducted for this study – Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK. The rationales underlying this policy focus vary somewhat among Member States, but economic considerations – including the economic value of international students to the higher education sector, as well as their contributions to economic growth, filling skilled labour shortages and addressing demographic imbalances – often dominate (European Migration Network, 2019). For some countries, including Germany, Spain and the UK, international students are also valued as an important resource for international relations and collaboration (European Migration Network, 2019). In Sweden, attracting international students is not considered a policy priority in itself, but is considered essential to the broader aim of internationalising Sweden's higher education system and research environment (European Migration Network, 2019).

In pursuit of international student revenues, it is now common practice across the EU for Member States to charge higher tuition fees for non-EU students. Italy and Germany are exceptions. In Italy tuition fees are the same for all students, and in Germany neither EU/EEA nor third-country

nationals are charged tuition fees, except in one of the country's 16 Länder (states), where non-EU/EEA students are charged tuition fees (European Migration Network, 2019). A comparative overview of the fees charged to third country nationals vs. EU/EEA and domestic students across the case countries is provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Range of tuition fees (in euros, per academic year) charged to non-EU/EEA international students enrolled in Bachelor and Master programmes in public HEIs across the case countries

Case Country	Range of tuition fees (per academic year/euros) at public HEI	Same fees for domestic/EU students?
Germany	No tuition fees (except in Baden-Württemberg: 3,000)	No (no fees for domestic/EU students)
Spain	min. 1,081 (BA) min. 1,527 (MA)	No (lower fees for domestic/EU students)
Italy	900 – 4,000 (BA and MA)	Yes
Sweden	approx. 7,700 – 28,900 (BA and MA)	No (no fees for domestic/EU students)
United Kingdom	11,400 – 43,400 (BA) 12,500 – 36,500 (MA)	No (lower fees for domestic/EU students)

Replicated from the European Migration Network (2019).

Many national governments and HEIs in Member States have developed strategies for the active recruitment of students from outside the EU, as well as policies to retain international graduates within the domestic labour market (European Migration Network, 2019). For example, common policies to attract international students include promotional and information-dissemination activities targeted at prospective international students, the creation of scholarship funds and programmes taught in English (European Migration Network, 2019). Table 2 provides an overview of which types of measures are used to attract non-EU/EEA international students to the individual EU case countries.

In order to retain international students, most Member States have created legal channels for international students to stay on as labour migrants post-graduation. For example, in recent years, Spain and Sweden have made it easier for non-EU/EEA international students' family members to join them in the country of study; Spain has created a new residence permit to allow international graduates to stay on and look for employment; and Germany has extended the time given to international graduates to seek employment to 18 months (European Migration Network, 2019). The UK stands as an exception: although the UK prioritises the recruitment of international students, it has a relatively restrictive legal framework as regards retaining international graduates in the UK labour market (European Migration Network, 2019). EU HEIs and private sector agencies often also have their own measures to support their graduates in finding post-study employment opportunities. For example, in Germany some local employment offices offer specialised career counselling to international students, and in the UK, some HEIs provide free legal advice to guide international students regarding their post-study options (European Migration Network, 2019). Table 2 further provides a comparative overview of the incentives used in each of the case countries to retain third country national students following the completion of their studies.

Table 2. Incentives to attract and retain non-EU/EEA international students in place across the case countries

Type of incentive	Germany	Spain	Italy	Sweden	UK
<i>Policies to attract international students</i>					
Promotional activities and dissemination of information	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Scholarships	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Study programmes in English	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Family reunification	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
Other financial incentives	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
Support for spouses and other family members	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
<i>Policies to retain international students</i>					
Exemption from labour market test	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
Exempt from work permit	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗
Exemption or lower salary threshold	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗
Incentives for family reunification	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗
Exemption from immigration quotas	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗

Replicated from the European Migration Network (2019)

However, Member States also report challenges in attracting international students, for example, due to the limited availability of scholarship opportunities and courses taught in other languages (particularly English), lengthy processing times for visas and residence permit applications, as well as limited promotional activities (European Migration Network, 2019). Common barriers to retaining international students in the EU often relate to broader structural factors in the domestic economy, for example, high unemployment, low standards of living and other factors affecting the attractiveness of labour market opportunities (European Migration Network, 2019). Other challenges include bureaucratic difficulties in securing the extension of permits, as well as students' own lack of relevant language competencies and professional and wider support networks (European Migration Network, 2019). It should also be noted that policies to attract international students can undermine efforts to retain graduates. For example, offering courses taught in English helps to encourage international student inflows, but students who are not taught in, or do not otherwise speak, the native language of the destination country may struggle as graduates to

integrate into the domestic labour market and wider society (European Migration Network, 2019). For example, this is a source of debate in Germany, where a large number of courses are taught in English (European Migration Network, 2019). This is not an issue in the UK, where English is both the national language and the language of tuition.

International student flows to and within the EU

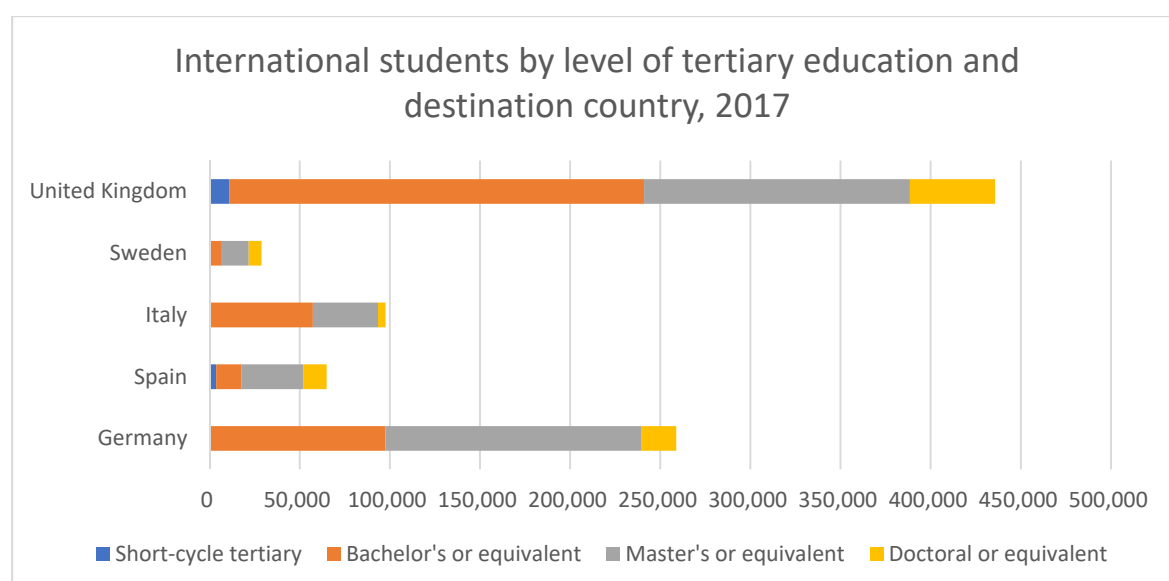
As with student mobility worldwide (OECD, 2019; Perkins & Neumayer, 2014), the patterns which characterise student mobility within the EU are highly uneven: the volume of flows varies substantially according to the subject studied, level of study, countries of origin and destination, and student demographics. The international student market has long been dominated by flows from developing to developed economies, and by a handful of English-speaking destination countries in particular (Institute of International Education, 2018; Perkins & Neumayer, 2014). The United States, United Kingdom, Australia and Canada receive more than 40% of all international students studying in the OECD and partner countries (OECD, 2019, p. 236). Of the 3.7 million international students studying in the OECD in 2017, 985,000 were enrolled in the United States, 436,000 in the United Kingdom, 381,000 in Australia and 210,000 in Canada (OECD, 2019, p. 236).

The EU is also an important region, receiving a large proportion of the world's internationally mobile student population, particularly those from elsewhere in the EU (Eurostat, 2020; OECD, 2019). According to Eurostat's latest analysis, in 2017 there were 1.71 million international students (both EU and non-EU origin) undertaking tertiary education within the EU (Eurostat, 2020). As mentioned above, the UK holds a particularly dominant position in the market, receiving 436,000 – or 25.5% – of all internationally mobile students within the EU-28 in 2017 (Eurostat, 2020). Germany hosted the second largest proportion – 259,000, or 15.1% (Eurostat, 2020). As

Figure 1 shows, much smaller numbers of international students were studying in Italy (98,000), Spain (65,000) and Sweden (29,000). Reflecting trends worldwide (for all students, both foreign and domestic), there are generally larger numbers of international students enrolled in lower levels of tertiary education (

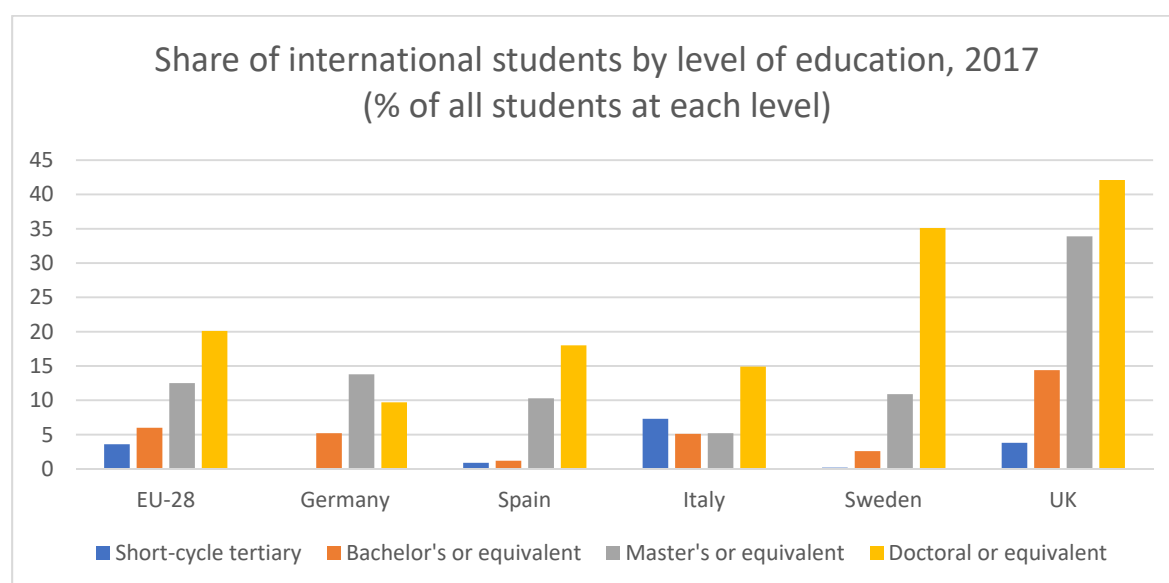
Figure 1). However, also reflecting global patterns (OECD, 2019), international students in the EU typically make up a larger proportion of total student enrolment at higher educational levels – in other words, more advanced educational levels are associated with greater international student mobility (see Figure 2 below).

Figure 1. The distribution of international students across EU case countries and level of education



Source: Eurostat (2020).

Figure 2. The proportion of international students enrolled in each level of tertiary education, across the EU case countries



Source: Eurostat (2020).

Globally, patterns of international student mobility tend to be highly concentrated in dyadic flows, shaped by factors such as language, geographic distance, historical ties and political frameworks, as well as educational and economic opportunities (OECD, 2019; Perkins & Neumayer, 2014). Similarly, EU destination countries typically receive international students from neighbouring EU countries, and from countries and regions outside the EU with which they share a common language, cultural or historical ties (for example, in the case of former colonies) (Eurostat, 2020). The highest number of internationally mobile students in the EU-28 migrate from elsewhere in the EU (37.8% in 2017) (Eurostat, 2020). Asia was the second largest source region for international students in the EU-28 in 2017 (30.1%), followed by Africa (13%), the Caribbean, Central and South America (5.7%), North America (3%) and Oceania (0.3%) (Eurostat, 2020).

Regarding the largest inflows to the present study's case countries, Table 3 shows the top three countries of origin for international student inflows to each country, and to the EU-28 overall, in 2017. Notably, Chinese students (including from Hong Kong) made up by far the largest origin group across the EU-28 as a whole (11.2%) and represent the first or second largest groups in four out of five of the case countries (Spain is the exception). As can be seen in Table 3, country-specific differences often tend to vary along the lines of geographic proximity, cultural and historic (often colonial) ties, and established labour migration corridors.

Table 3. Top three countries of origin for international students studying in the case countries in 2017

	Largest country of origin for students from abroad	Share (%)	Second largest country of origin for students from abroad	Share (%)	Third largest country of origin for students from abroad	Share (%)
EU-28	China (inc. Hong Kong)	11.2	Germany	4.4	Ukraine	3.5
Germany	China (inc. Hong Kong)	11.6	India	5.6	Austria	4.4
Spain	France	10.9	Italy	10.6	Ecuador	9.9
Italy	China (inc. Hong Kong)	14.9	Albania	10.6	Romania	9.0
Sweden	Finland	8.6	China (inc. Hong Kong)	8.3	Germany	6.6
UK	China (inc. Hong Kong)	22.2	India	3.8	Malaysia	3.8

Source: Eurostat (2020).

Also in common with worldwide trends, international students within the EU are disproportionately represented in certain fields of study. Across the EU28 (excluding the Netherlands and Slovenia), business, administration and law (grouped according to the ISCED-F 2013 classification) was the most popular field of study among international students in 2017, 24.8% of whom were enrolled in these subjects (Eurostat, 2020). Engineering, manufacturing and construction attracted the second largest proportion of international students (17.3 %), followed by the arts and humanities (14.0 %) (Eurostat, 2020). In contrast, the smallest shares of international students were enrolled in education (2.6%), services (1.6%) and agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary studies (1.4%) (Eurostat, 2020). Again, the distribution of international students in different fields of study varies substantially across EU destination countries – reflecting, at least in part, those countries' areas of specialisation (Eurostat, 2020). For example, a particularly high number of international students in Italy were enrolled in arts or humanities courses (24.8%), whereas in Germany and Sweden the highest numbers of international students were following courses in engineering, manufacturing or construction (29.6% and 25.2%, respectively). In the UK almost a third (33.1%) of international students were studying business, administration or law, and in Spain the highest proportion of international students were studying health and welfare (25.4%).

3. Literature review and theoretical approach

Theorising international student mobility decision-making

In the last two decades, international student mobility or migration has become the subject of a rich academic literature, albeit mostly from the perspective of higher education studies, sociology and geography rather than mainstream migration or mobilities studies (Beech, 2015; Findlay et al., 2012; King et al., 2016). The determinants of the decision to study abroad and the choice of destination – and how these relate to the international student's post-study mobility behaviour – have been investigated mainly with regard to flows from developing, or 'non-Western', countries to industrialised, or 'Western', countries (van Bouwel & Veugeliers, 2013; Van Mol, 2014). Particular attention has been paid to inflows to the United States (US) and United Kingdom (UK) as the two Anglophone destination countries that have historically dominated the international market for higher education (Levkovich et al., 2016). As regards the other four European case countries included in this research, there has been little or no in-depth analysis of the motivations of internationally mobile students who choose Spain, Italy, Germany or Sweden as destinations for higher education.

There have been some recent efforts to theorise international student migration and mobility decision-making (King et al., 2016), although push-pull models (and relatedly, analyses of barriers and facilitators) are still commonly relied upon as an organising framework for empirical studies (Caruso & de Wit, 2015; Maringe & Carter, 2007; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Rahimi & Akgunduz, 2017; Rodríguez González et al., 2011). Broadly speaking, we identify three main theoretical approaches to understanding decisions to study higher education abroad: the human capital approach; the cultural capital model; and the 'youth mobility cultures' framing.

Firstly, Sjaastad's *human capital theory* (1962) has been used to explain why students invest resources in pursuing higher education abroad (Baláž & Williams, 2004; Perkins & Neumayer, 2014; van Bouwel & Veugeliers, 2013). Higher education programmes in other countries may provide access to valuable knowledge and skills and internationally recognised qualifications that students cannot obtain in their countries of origin. These may help the student to secure better-quality or better-paid employment opportunities upon graduation (whether in the country of origin or internationally) (Perkins & Neumayer, 2014). In considering study abroad, prospective international students therefore weigh the potential human capital benefits offered by different destination countries, higher education providers and courses against the financial and psychological costs associated with these different options (Perkins & Neumayer, 2014). Human capital theory builds on the traditional *neo-classical* theory of migration, but it can also be understood in relation to the *New Economics of Labour Migration (NELM)* (Stark & Bloom, 1985), whereby the household becomes the primary economic actor. Studies of international student flows to the UK provide some evidence that families from countries where economic opportunities are scarce (in these cases, African, Latin American and Eastern European countries) may invest in their children's education in the UK in order to reap future economic benefits from their international qualifications and access to the UK labour market (Findlay et al., 2017; Marcu, 2015; Maringe & Carter, 2007).

Secondly, recognition of the role of the family in determining ISM has produced a variant, but closely related, theoretical strand which explains ISM as a family strategy to reproduce social distinction (the *cultural capital model*) (Findlay et al., 2012; Waters, 2005, 2006). Following Bourdieu, Waters (2005, 2006) explains that, given widening access to higher education in Hong Kong, the scarcity

value of a higher education degree has diminished, whilst competition for entry into domestic universities has increased. The ability of middle-class families to maintain their privileged position in Hong Kong's class structure through educational accomplishment is thereby threatened and, in response, families send their children to university in countries such as Canada as an alternative route to ensuring their academic – and therefore social – success. According to Waters, a 'Western' university degree is acquired for the valuable cultural capital it denotes upon return to the country of origin, where place-specific social relations perpetuate a shared perception of the superiority of qualifications obtained (from particular institutions) abroad (Waters, 2006). Similar evidence is provided in the European context by Pelliccia (2014) in her study of student migration from Greece to Italy, and by Findlay et al. (2012), whose study of UK students emphasises the social construction of the symbolic value associated not only with studying at "world-class" universities (e.g. those at the top of world rankings) but also with 'the very performance of international living' (p.128).

Like the human capital approach, the cultural capital model assumes the conversion of the accumulated capital into an advantaged position in the labour market upon graduation. However, as explained by Findlay et al. (2012), the cultural capital model 'differs from the conventional human capital perspective in suggesting that it is the social benefits of gaining new knowledge, skills and education in another place that matter most' (p.121). It is worth noting that empirical investigations of the cultural capital model focus on the *reproduction*, rather than creation, of social advantage through ISM. This perhaps relates to the consensus in the broader literature that internationally mobile students tend to come from more privileged socio-economic backgrounds (see, for example, Findlay et al., 2012; van Mol, 2014).

This focus on the social construction of the symbolic value accorded to international mobility is central to the third (and overlapping) conceptualisation of ISM decision-making. According to this framing, the decision to study abroad is not necessarily a rational calculation of the (human/cultural, social or economic capital) benefits to be obtained through ISM, made at a discrete moment in time. Rather, it is the processual outcome of contemporary 'youth mobility cultures' which valorise and normalise travelling, living and studying abroad as a rite of passage (Beech, 2015; Carlson, 2013; King et al., 2016; King & Findlay, 2012). King and colleagues associate this conceptual frame with, firstly, the 'mobilities turn' in social science research and, secondly, the 'individualisation' of young people's biographies in contemporary (Western) societies, due to the declining role of traditional social and geographic relations (such as class, family and neighbourhood) in determining life trajectories (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002 in King and Ruiz-Gelices, 2003; King et al., 2016). In the context of expanded opportunities and choices, transnational communications and connectivity, young people's aspirations are shaped by 'shared imaginings' of the international experience (Beech, 2014, 2015) which portray the experience of different places, cultures and languages as an opportunity for personal growth, enrichment and adventure (King & Ruiz-Gelices, 2003).

According to the 'youth mobility cultures' framing, study abroad is therefore less a strategy for capital accumulation than it is an 'act of consumption' (King et al., 2016, p. 19) through which internationally mobile students '[set] in motion their own individualised life-projects' (King & Ruiz-Gelices, 2003, p. 245). However, this framing has been linked to Murphy-Lejeune's theorisation of the 'mobility capital' that accrues to the internationally mobile student and which distinguishes them as part of a 'migratory elite' (2002). Murphy-Lejeune conceptualises mobility capital as a 'sub-component of human capital, enabling individuals to enhance their skills because of the richness of

the international experience gained by living abroad' (2002, p. 51). Subsequent scholarship has suggested that, like the human capital and cultural capital models of ISM, the mobility capital accumulated through study abroad may be converted into social, personal and career advantages (Brooks & Waters, 2010; Findlay et al., 2017; King et al., 2016).

However, the degree to which mobility capital is pursued for its instrumental value (its potential for conversion into other forms of capital) remains unclear (Prazeres et al., 2017). As Carlson argues, following Bourdieu, mobility capital 'should not just be thought of as a resource that people can draw upon as they like. Instead, it is essential to emphasise its incorporated nature [...] and conceptualise it as part of a person's habitus, as an internalised disposition' (2013, p. 172). Indeed, Prazeres et al. (2017) find that international students in the UK, Austria and Latvia relate their mobility as students to an aspiration to remain internationally mobile in the longer term, not necessarily in pursuit of career advantages but rather as part of a lifestyle which prioritises 'the experiential qualities of place' and 'newness within global places' (p.120).

Understanding international student mobility decision-making as 'environmentally embedded'

Studies which have contributed to the theorisation of ISM decision-making have tended to focus on a single theoretical frame, applying it to the case of a particular country of destination or origin, with limited reflection on how the findings relate to other conceptualisations or geographic contexts (Van Mol's 2014 mixed-methods comparative study of intra-EU credit mobility is a notable exception). As Perkins and Neumayer have pointed out, 'the existing literature has had surprisingly little to say about variations across countries or, for that matter, categories of countries, in the influence of particular determinants of ISM' (2014, p. 252). However, as Findlay et al. (2017) and Van Mol (2014) have argued, aspirations for student and post-study (im)mobility should be understood as a product of their environments: shaped firstly by the familial, social and political institutions of the student's country of origin, and subsequently re-negotiated in contact with the new (and perhaps different) economic, social and cultural milieu that the student encounters in the place of study. In other words, these decisions are 'environmentally-embedded' (Van Mol, 2014, p. 32). Following this line of inquiry, we therefore posit that the relevance or applicability of each theoretical model may be determined by the student's (and their family's) existing capital(s) stock, understood in relation to the social and economic context of their country of origin.

Indeed, the empirical evidence suggests that the motivations for international study, destination choice, and post-study (im)mobility intentions differ between countries of origin and between socio-economic groups within these countries. Quantitative studies of "push" and "pull" factors, which do include cross-country comparative analyses, help to illustrate these variations (Abbott & Silles, 2016; Hazen & Alberts, 2006; Perkins & Neumayer, 2014; Zheng, 2014). As regards the decision to study abroad and the choice of study destination, Hazen and Alberts (2006) found that students from low income countries of origin are more commonly motivated to study in the U.S. for the better educational opportunities available there, relative to students from middle or high-income countries. In this study, the perception that obtaining a U.S. higher education qualification would improve job prospects upon return to the country of origin was also of varying relevance to students from different geographic regions (73% of Africans, versus 56% of Latin Americans, 46% of Asians, 31% of Europeans and 8% of North Americans cited this as motivating factor) (p.207). Abbott and Silles (2016) and Wei (2013) conclude from their analyses of international student flows across a wide range of destination and origin countries that higher GDP per capita in the destination country

is a key determinant of higher student inflows from low-income countries, but is less important for students from high-income countries. As Abbott and Silles (2016) suggest, this is likely due to expectations among students from low-income countries that the destination country offers better labour market opportunities post-graduation, and therefore a higher return on the investment in studying abroad, as per the human capital approach.

In the context of intra-EU educational mobility, Van Mol's (2014) review of the literature finds that students from middle- and upper-class backgrounds are more likely to participate in credit (exchange) mobility – but that the differences are most striking among students departing from countries such as Switzerland, Ireland and the Netherlands, where access to higher education is relatively more inclusive. Van Mol suggests that the less marked differences observed in other countries of origin (which include Germany, Bulgaria, Italy, Romania and Spain) are due to the relatively greater social selectivity that characterises enrolment into higher education in these countries, and which therefore conceals the degree of selection into exchange programmes. An alternative, or complementary, explanation – following the cultural capital model – might suggest that students from socially inclusive higher education systems might have greater incentives to seek academic and social distinction through international mobility.

Geographic and demographic differences have also been observed in analyses of international students' post-study (im)mobility intentions (Findlay et al., 2017; Sykes & Chaoimh, 2012). A survey of non-EU master's and doctoral students enrolled in degree programmes in five EU destination countries found that respondents from China, Eastern Europe and Turkey were most likely to want to stay on in their countries of study (at least in the short or medium term) (Sykes & Chaoimh, 2012). Students from high-income, Anglophone countries (the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand) were the least likely to want to stay (Sykes & Chaoimh, 2012). These survey results do not differentiate between intentions to return to the country of origin and intentions to migrate onwards to a third country. Richer mixed-method insights are provided by Findlay et al.'s (2017) study of international students in the UK, which distinguishes between staying in the country of study; returning to the country of origin; migrating onwards to a specific third country; and pursuing continued onwards mobility ('global mobility'). According to the authors' survey results, students from China were the most likely to expect to return to their countries of origin, in contrast to only 24% of EU students who expected to return within five years (Findlay et al., 2017, p. 194). In-depth interviews revealed that, for students from North America and the EU, the desire to be internationally mobile post-study tends to relate to aspirations for a lifestyle characterised by world travel (Findlay et al., 2017). In contrast, for students from African and Latin American countries, the pursuit of work abroad links more pragmatically to the wish (or obligation to their families) to secure better economic opportunities, or, in some other cases, to contribute to the development of their countries of origin (Findlay et al., 2017). The latter aspiration is also observed among Eastern European students in Spain (Marcu, 2015). Maringe and Carter (2007) report similarly that African students pursue higher education in the UK in order to stay on and access better economic opportunities post-study (as well as more stable political conditions).

Decision-making processes in the country of study

In this study we also investigate how international students' post-study (im)mobility intentions may be shaped *in* the country of study (as per our third research question). As suggested by the literature reviewed above, economic and political conditions and familial and social relations can have a

determining influence on the student's longer-term (im)mobility plans from the outset of the move to study abroad. However, a student's future (im)mobility intentions may also be shaped or re-shaped during the period of study abroad, as the student encounters new people, ideas and opportunities (Findlay et al., 2017; King, 2002). Indeed, recent scholarship has emphasised the need to see international student decision-making not as a one-off choice or "event", but as a continual process that lays (im)mobility plans open to regular re-assessment and revision (Findlay et al., 2012, 2017; Hazen & Alberts, 2006; Van Mol, 2014). Because international mobility involves not only spatial mobility but also mobility through different social and economic geographies (Findlay et al., 2017), the relevance of different ISM models may change over the course of a student's studies abroad. In other words, as the international student integrates into a different socio-economic context from that of their country of origin, where their stock of, or access to, different forms of capitals may change (in both absolute and relative terms), so too may their preferences and priorities, thereby (re-)shaping their longer-term (im)mobility intentions. As Findlay et al. report, it is common for students to develop new plans or re-assess old ones in the course of their studies abroad, as this is typically a 'developmental and transitional period characterised by (self)discovery' through which students acquire new cultural and social capital, ideas and aspirations (2017, p.197).

Indeed, the literature on graduate mobility points to a range of factors which may emerge over the course of higher education as important determinants of the student's post-study (im)mobility. For example, the decision to stay, migrate onwards or return to the country of origin may be influenced by the student's employment prospects in each of these places. This may be determined by the relative labour market value of the skills acquired through formal study (Winters, 2012). It may also be impacted by 'location-specific' capital that international students accumulate through living in the place of study, or through work experience during the course of study (Haapanen & Karhunen, 2017). Such location-specific capital may include knowledge of labour local markets; proficiency in the local language and other culturally specific competences; and access to local professional networks. Mobility capital acquired or enhanced as a result of migration for study abroad may also induce the graduate towards further mobility. Studies have found that previous migration experiences increase the likelihood of migration upon graduation (see, for example, Faggian et al., 2007; Hooijen et al., 2017). Access to legal residence, for example to post-study visas, may be relevant to non-citizens, or, in the European context, to non-EU nationals (Hooijen et al., 2020; Mosneaga & Winther, 2013).

The literature on graduate and high-skilled migration has also paid due concern to the 'soft', non-economic locational factors that may retain a graduate in the place of study or motivate them to migrate elsewhere. These may include the attractiveness of the physical landscape, the cultural and social environment, the concentration of amenities, and the quality and availability of housing (see Corcoran & Faggian, 2017; Hooijen et al., 2017; Sleutjes, 2016). Indeed, Winters (2012) finds that 'preferences for the place where they attended college may even incline some recent graduates to accept lower-paying jobs to stay in the area that they have grown to appreciate' (p.3). Integration, or simply becoming used to the place of study, may provide a 'comforting feeling' that could dispose a graduate towards staying rather than 'venturing elsewhere and starting life again from scratch' (Mosneaga & Winther, 2013, p. 188). Unforeseen events, such as the formation or break up of romantic relationships, or unexpected job offers, have also been highlighted as playing a key role in determining the (im)mobility options considered by students, and the preferences and priorities which weigh on their decision-making (Hooijen et al., 2020; Mosneaga & Winther, 2013).

We therefore turn to Carling's aspiration/ability model (2002) as a useful framework through which to understand the varying and dynamic interactions between the capitals that the student (and their family) starts with, pursues, and accumulates through international mobility. As already outlined, the three ISM models elucidate differing migration *aspirations* – the individual student's motivations and intentions regarding their international (study and post-study) (im)mobility. The fulfilment of these aspirations depends on the student's *ability* to do so: whether or not they have the necessary economic, social, cultural and symbolic capitals³ required to successfully navigate the context-specific opportunities and obstacles that may facilitate or hinder their actual movement or stay (Carling, 2002). As suggested above, the ability to realise post-study (im)mobility intentions may depend on factors such as visa and employment opportunities, the cultural and social capital resources required to secure employment and navigate visa regimes, and the financial (and/or social) capital that the graduate may need to rely on during periods of job-seeking. In this way, ability may determine the successful realisation of aspirations, but ability may also determine the formation of aspirations. As Carling and Schewel explain, 'in the face of limited migration ability, individuals could react by subconsciously subduing their migration aspirations' (2018, p. 958). The same 'adaptive preference' (Carling & Schewel, 2018) could also be at work in the case of international student migrants who discount staying on in the country of study, not because it is not a desired outcome, but because it is considered unfeasible, for example, due to visa restrictions. In the other direction, new or enhanced ability may also lead to the emergence of new aspirations. For example, during the course of study the international student may build new social or professional relationships, and acquire new information, skills and competences, that open their eyes to (im)mobility options that they had not previously considered. Thus the international student's decisional 'awareness space' (Brown & Moore, 1970) may expand as a result of their new experiences and capital stocks.

Hypotheses

Despite the empirical insights on geographical variations discussed above, there has so far been very limited attention paid to the ways in which current theories of ISM decision-making fit different geographic contexts. As explained above, we conceptualise each theorisation of ISM decision-making as an ISM aspiration that is the product of place-specific social and economic structures and relations. We therefore expect the different models to have greater or lesser explanatory power in the context of different geographic student flows. In this section we set out our hypotheses in relation to the original research questions. We follow Perkins and Neumayer (2014), who, in addition to finding significant differences between the determinants of ISM from developed and developing countries, call for greater disaggregation of the developed vs. developing country categories into relevant sub-groupings – namely, Newly Industrialising Economies (NIE) and Least Developed Countries (LDC).

As regards individual motivations for student mobility and their variations across geographic contexts (research question 1), we expect that, firstly, in developing country contexts, where higher

³ A note on terminology: In the review of the theoretical literature above, we distinguish between the 'human capital' and 'cultural capital' models of ISM decision-making, in order to reflect the terminological preferences of the main scholars applying these closely-related (and somewhat competing) concepts to analyses of student decision-making (Aksakal & Schmidt, 2019; Lulle et al., 2019). However, for the purpose of our analysis of mobility *abilities*, we prefer to use 'cultural' rather than 'human' capital for the sake of maintaining consistency with the rest of Bourdieu's forms of capital that serve to structure the analysis (Bourdieu, 1986).

education systems are of a lower quality and economic opportunities for graduates are scarcer, students choose to study abroad in order to enhance their human capital and/or secure higher economic returns on their human capital investments. We therefore hypothesise that:

H1: Human capital theory is most relevant to the decision-making of students from developing countries (excluding NIEs).

Secondly, in newly industrialised and developed country contexts, where wider access to higher education may threaten middle-class families' privileged access to social and economic capital, international study may be more frequently used as a means of reproducing social distinction. We therefore hypothesise that:

H2: The cultural capital model is most relevant to the decision-making of students from NIEs and (other) developed countries.

Thirdly, we expect that in developed countries, where access to higher education and graduate employment opportunities are more secure, students are more able to prioritise experiential objectives. We therefore hypothesise that:

H3: The youth mobility cultures framing is most relevant to the decision-making of students from developed countries.

In order to address the second research question (on the relationship between the decision to study abroad and the student's initial aspirations regarding their post-study mobility behaviour), we will examine whether, in practice, the three decision-making models are associated with different post-study (im)mobility aspirations. A second set of hypotheses, based on the theoretical literature reviewed above, will guide this analysis.

We do not have a hypothesis regarding initial post-study (im)mobility aspirations associated with the human capital model. Studies of ISM decision-making which focus on human capital accumulation have tended not to give much attention to post-study (im)mobility outcomes. Where these have been considered, the literature has focussed on the extent to which international students use their study abroad as a bridge into the country of study's labour market, or whether they return to their countries of origin (Baláž & Williams, 2004; Perkins & Neumayer, 2014). Our analysis of the initial post-study (im)mobility intentions of students who choose to study abroad as a strategy for human capital accumulation will therefore not be guided by any particular expectation.

The cultural capital model sets out firmer expectations regarding students' post-study mobility behaviour. According to the original conceptualisation of this model, international students intend to return to their countries of origin where the symbolic capital associated with their international qualification gives them an advantaged position in the labour market (Waters, 2006). More recent evidence from the UK suggests that some students seeking distinction through an international education may instead intend to use their newly accumulated or enhanced symbolic capital to support an international career (Findlay et al., 2012). Our analysis will therefore test the continued relevance of the model's original formulation of the relationship between study and post-study mobility:

H4: Students whose decisions to study abroad align with the cultural capital model aspire to return to their country of origin following the completion of their studies.

Lastly, the youth mobility cultures framing is not clearly associated with any particular *initial* post-study (im)mobility intentions (King et al., 2016; Murphy-Lejeune, 2002). However, there is some evidence that students who pursue an international education for the experience of international living conceive of their mobility as students as part of a longer-term international 'lifestyle' (Findlay et al., 2017; Prazeres et al., 2017). We therefore hypothesise that:

H5: Students whose decisions to study abroad align with the youth mobility cultures framing aspire to prolong their international mobility following the completion of their studies, either by staying in the country of study or migrating onwards to a third country.

Finally, as regards the study's third research question on the ways in which post-study (im)mobility aspirations may be (re)shaped over the course of the student's foreign study programme, two hypotheses emerge from the literature review.

Firstly, if we conceive of international student decision-making as the strategic pursuit of particular forms of capital (as the human capital approach and cultural capital model suggest, and which might be furthermore applicable to the accumulation of mobility capital), it is reasonable to expect that these calculations may change in the country of destination. That is, in the new environment of the place of study, the international student may accumulate new capital (whether economic, cultural, social or symbolic). This capital may provide them with the ability to realise new (im)mobility options that they may not have previously considered, or previously considered viable. Moreover, in the destination country, it may not only be the student's capital stocks which change, but also the 'field' in which they participate. As Nicolini (2013) explains, Bourdieu's 'field' can be understood as 'local markets of capital, specific goals, peculiar distinctions, and norms' (p.60). Contact with, or participation in, a new field may lead to new reflections on the relative exchange value of the student's capital stocks and on their positioning within that local capital market, and the set of opportunities, constraints and possible courses of action that these imply. If such reflections result in new aspirations (for example, social, study, or career-related), new (im)mobility aspirations may be pursued. We therefore hypothesise that:

H6: During the course of study, changes in the student's relative capital stock (and therefore ability) lead to changes in their post-study (im)mobility aspirations.

However, the literature on graduate and high-skilled migration evidences that in some cases it is not (or not only) changes in capital, capital markets and ability which lead to new post-study (im)mobility aspirations. Rather, aspirations may change simply as the result of new desires unrelated to the strategic accumulation of capital. For example, international students may decide to stay in the country of destination due to a new romantic relationship or a newfound pleasure in the culture or physical environment of the place of study. However, following the reasoning discussed above, according to which post-study (im)mobility aspirations are shaped by abilities, it seems logical that students with higher capital stocks are more likely to give priority to desires unrelated to the strategic accumulation of capital in their mobility decision-making. This reasoning recalls our third hypothesis regarding the greater relevance of experiential factors in the decisions to

study abroad by international students from developed countries. Our final hypothesis is therefore the following:

H7: Among students from developed countries, post-study (im)mobility aspirations may change as a result of aspirations unrelated to the strategic accumulation of capital.

4. Methodology

This paper is based on the analysis of data collected for a larger research project on intra-EU mobility (REMINDER, <https://www.reminder-project.eu/>). One component of the project focussed on the ‘determinants’ of intra-EU mobility, and provided a mixed-methods, cross-country comparative exploration of the decision-making processes that underlie individual migrants’ mobility trajectories. The project collected focus group, interview and survey data from a broad range of migrants in the EU, defined as anyone who had migrated to one of the five EU case countries from another country (either EU or non-EU) within the last ten years. As detailed below, the present study draws only on the qualitative data from the ‘student migrants’ included in the sample. The fieldwork was conducted in Germany, Italy, Spain, Sweden, and the UK between 2018 and 2019. The recruitment of research participants was necessarily purposive. It often relied on convenience and snowball methods, mobilising the research team’s own social and professional networks, as well as gatekeepers at NGOs, charities and migrant associations, language schools, companies and organisations with a high proportion of international staff. Some interviewees and focus group participants were also successfully recruited through in-person intercept-point sampling, for example at university campuses, restaurants, cafes and cultural heritage houses, as well as through online communications (the research team posted information about the project on social media platforms such as Facebook). The in-person collection of data (from interviewees and focus group participants) was conducted in a number of cities with large immigrant populations in the five case countries (London, Madrid, Barcelona, Seville, Malaga, Rome, Turin, Stockholm, Uppsala, and Berlin), as well as some rural towns in Northern Italy and Germany⁴. Some interviews were conducted via Skype with research participants living in these and other locations.

This paper draws only on the qualitative (interview and focus group) data from research participants who discussed their migration for higher education to or within the EU, and within the last ten years. These ‘student migrants’ are thus defined as migrants who enrolled in a higher education programme in the country of destination – and who migrated with the firm intention to do so. As such, it excludes respondents who only decided to undertake higher education once they were already living in the country of destination. The dataset includes both respondents who were studying abroad at the time of data collection, and who had already completed their study abroad programmes. In many cases, respondents were simultaneously current and former ‘student migrants’ – having already completed previous study abroad experiences and having undertaken further international study at the time of interview. As a result, the study captures prospective intentions regarding post-study (im)mobility, as well as retrospective accounts of actual post-study mobility behaviour. We take a broad view of mobility for higher education, including both degree and credit mobility,⁵ vocational courses, and internships conducted as part of higher education programmes (regardless of whether these were mandatory or self-organised). Doctoral studies are included alongside other post-graduate courses and undergraduate programmes.

⁴ The fieldwork did not result in interviews or focus groups with ‘student migrants’ in all of these locations – for example, in the rural towns of Northern Italy and Germany it was mostly asylum-seekers, refugees and low-skilled migrants who participated in the data collection.

⁵ Where the student migrates to undertake an entire degree programme abroad, this is referred to as ‘degree mobility’. Where the student moves abroad only for part of their degree programme, typically for a semester or an academic year (either for a study exchange or a work placement), and then returns to their home institute to complete their degree programme, this is referred to as ‘credit mobility’ (for a fuller discussion of these terms, see King et al., 2016; or Van Mol, 2014).

In total, the analysis draws on data from 115 current and former student migrants. 62 research participants were from EU countries of origin (in which we include the additional member countries of the European Economic Area [EEA] and Switzerland), while 53 were from non-EU countries of origin. For the purpose of this study, country of origin was defined as the country of birth. However, in the small number of cases in which the respondents had been born in one country but were taken to another country as infants, the country in which the respondent spent their childhood was considered their country of origin. This was because it was clear from the interview and focus group discussions that these respondents identified these countries more strongly as their “home” referent, and it seemed logical that these country-contexts were more relevant to the formation of their mobility aspirations, compared to their countries of birth.

As regards further country of origin groupings, we follow Perkins and Neumayer (2014) in distinguishing between developed and developing countries based on their income level in accordance with World Bank classifications. Developed countries are high income countries which had a gross national income (GNI) per capita of \$12,375 or more in 2018 (World Bank, 2019). Countries with a 2018 GNI lower than this are considered ‘developing’ (and therefore include low, lower-middle and upper-middle income countries). It should be noted that, according to these classifications, all EU countries except Romania and Bulgaria are considered developed (World Bank, 2019). We also follow Perkins and Neumayer (2014) in defining NIE countries as: Brazil, China, India, Malaysia, Mexico, Philippines, South Africa, Thailand and Turkey (which are also developing countries). To this grouping we also add Hong Kong (a developed country). In the present dataset, a majority of respondents (69) came from developed countries of origin and 46 came from developing countries of origin. 19 respondents came from NIE countries of origin. A full breakdown of research participants’ countries of origin is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Research participants' countries of origin⁶

Total Participants (115)							
EU (62)		54%		Non-EU (53)		46%	
Developed (58)		50%		Developed (11)		Developing (42)	
		3%		10%		36%	
Germany (14)	24%	Bulgaria (2)	50%	Singapore (2)	18%	Argentina (5)	12%
Italy (10)	17%	Romania (2)	50%	United States (2)	18%	Peru (3)	7%
France (8)	14%			Canada (1)	9%	Azerbaijan (2)	5%
Poland (4)	7%			Chile (1)	9%	Colombia (2)	5%
Portugal (3)	5%			Japan (1)	9%	Ecuador (2)	5%
Spain (3)	5%			New Zealand (1)	9%	Ukraine (2)	5%
Switzerland (3)	5%			NIE: Hong Kong (3)	27%	Afghanistan (1)	2%
Hungary (2)	3%					Albania (1)	2%
Ireland (2)	3%					Ethiopia (1)	2%
Netherlands (2)	3%					Ghana (1)	2%
Belgium (1)	2%					Guatemala (1)	2%
Czechia (1)	2%					Indonesia (1)	2%
Denmark (1)	2%					Jordan (1)	2%
Greece (1)	2%					Kazakhstan (1)	2%
Slovakia (1)	2%					Moldova (1)	2%
Sweden (1)	2%					Nigeria (1)	2%
UK (1)	2%					North Macedonia (1)	2%
						NIE: China (3) South Africa (3) Turkey (3) India (2) Mexico (2) Philippines (2)	7% 7% 7% 5% 5% 5%
Total	100%		100%		100%		100%

In terms of the distribution of research participants across case countries, the highest number (51) were recruited in the UK (of whom six were recruited for the purposes of the UK fieldwork, but had already left the UK and were living in other countries at the time of data collection). Smaller numbers of research participants participated in Italy (23), Germany (18), Sweden (12) and Spain (11) (see Table 5).

Because the countries in which the respondents were living at the time of fieldwork were not necessarily – or not only – the countries to which they had migrated for higher education, the dataset includes information on a wider set of student migration experiences in the EU. For example, the account given by a single respondent might pertain to two student migration experiences if they first completed an ERASMUS exchange in one country and then migrated onwards to a third EU country in order to undertake a post-graduate degree. Therefore, the 115 research participants discuss a total of 127 student migration experiences in the EU, including: 52 in the UK, 24 in Italy, 17 in Germany, 12 in Spain, 11 in Sweden, and 11 in other EU countries (mostly the Netherlands, but also Belgium, Czechia, Denmark, Poland and Romania) (see Table 5). Furthermore, these 127 student

⁶ As explained above, countries are categorised based on World Bank classifications.

migration experiences include a higher number of study abroad programmes because some respondents completed more than one credit or degree programme in a single EU destination country. The dataset therefore includes references to a total of 159 study abroad programmes. In terms of the levels and types of programme included, there were 21 instances of credit mobility (at all study levels) and 138 instances of degree mobility, of which 39 were undergraduate programmes, 82 were postgraduate courses (excluding doctorates), 13 PhD programmes, and 4 remained unidentified (see Table 6). It should be noted, however, that respondents did not describe their decision-making regarding each of these student migration experiences and programmes in the same level of detail, as the interview and focus group discussions focussed primarily on the reasons for migration to the current country of residence.

Table 5 Distribution of fieldwork data collection and study abroad experiences.

Case country	Number of research participants	Number of student migration experiences
Germany	18	17
Italy	23	24
Spain	11	12
Sweden	12	11
United Kingdom	51	52
Other	-	11
Total:	115	127

Table 6. Research participants' study abroad programmes

Type of study abroad programme	Number of instances
Credit mobility	21
Degree mobility	138
<i>PhD</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Other postgraduate</i>	<i>82</i>
<i>Undergraduate</i>	<i>39</i>
<i>Unknown</i>	<i>4</i>
Total	159

The sampling strategy aimed for the inclusion of a diverse range of countries of origin which was, to a large extent, achieved: the research participants came from 49 countries of origin, of which 19 were EU (39%) and 30 were non-EU (61%). However, we do not claim that our sample is representative of the total student migrant population in the EU, either in terms of country of origin, country of destination, HEI or level and subject of study. Its value lies rather in providing in-depth, qualitative insights that illustrate the substantial complexity and variation that characterises the decision-making of international students from across the globe. Finally, the analysis focusses on respondents' reasons for studying abroad in general, rather than their reasons for choosing a particular destination country, although we recognise that in some cases, these decisions are one and the same. The interview and focus group transcripts were read multiple times, before they were coded in Atlas.Ti. The coding took both a deductive and inductive approach, based on the theoretical framework previously outlined.

Please note that in the analysis, research participants who are directly cited are referred to in the following format: Interviewee (INT) /Focus Group Participant (FGP) number, country of fieldwork (which largely coincides with the country of study), country of origin. For example: *FGP01, Germany, Spain*.

5. Motivations to study abroad

An analysis of the motivations underlying the decision to study abroad in the EU points firstly to the often multiple, and inter-related, reasons that students have for studying abroad. Although substantial evidence was found for the relevance of the three theoretical models of ISM decision-making (and particularly the human capital and youth mobility cultures framings), it was clear that other factors – unrelated to the three theoretical models – also have a determining influence on the decision to study abroad. This section therefore reviews the relevance of the three theoretical models, before touching on the other factors which were found to motivate study abroad. It should also be noted that, although the structure of this section discusses these motivations separately, the interview and focus group data clearly showed that individual decisions to study abroad are often based on a combination of these motivations, a point which is reflected on further at the end of this section.

Human Capital Approach

In this analysis, the human capital model emerged as highly relevant across all the geographic contexts sampled. Our first hypothesis (H1) that this model of decision-making would be most relevant to students from developing countries (excluding NIEs) is therefore negated. Moreover, the qualitative insights from the many research participants who discussed their human capital-related mobility aspirations provided substantial empirical depth that better explains what exactly is meant by student migration for human-capital reasons. Five main human capital themes were distinguished, although these should be understood as overlapping rather than mutually exclusive – respondents often mentioned more than one in relation to their own decision-making. These were: 1) the availability of the “right” course at a foreign HEI, henceforth referred to as ‘person-course fit’, following the ‘person-job fit’ concept commonly used in the organisational psychology literature; 2) the desire to work in the country of study upon graduation; 3) the higher quality of education available in another country; 4) the prestige associated with an international qualification; and 5) language learning.

Person-course fit

It is this theme that was most frequently discussed by research participants, and which seems to be under-recognised in the existing literature. Person-course fit was discussed mostly by respondents from developed (and particularly EU) countries. These students and former students explained that their chosen courses offered what they wanted in terms of furthering their academic or professional goals (i.e. the right course content, structure or teaching style); aligned well with their existing academic or professional background; was taught in their preferred language; and/or was based at a HEI with particular expertise in the subject of interest. For example, as one German national who

studied in the UK explained: *'the university I went to was one of the best in my field and I had this specific focus on conflict and so they offered a really great programme'* (FGP06, UK, Germany)⁷.

Person-course fit was most frequently discussed in relation to the decision to study a master's degree. This seems to relate to the way in which master's degrees are typically used by students as a bridge into the labour market (or into doctoral studies) through the acquisition of more specialised skills and knowledge which help to distinguish the job-seeking graduate. However, finding the right opportunity on the international higher education market was also highly relevant to doctoral students, whose high degree of specialisation – in combination with the scarcity and geographic distribution of relevant opportunities – often makes it necessary to pursue PhD opportunities in other countries. Some students had simply been unable to find the right degree programme in their country of origin and therefore looked elsewhere:

I wanted to study development and that course wasn't offered in New Zealand at all. So, I had to go overseas (FGP02, UK, New Zealand);

I was thinking of doing a master degree in Argentina...but the subject I chose was not developed yet in Argentina (FGP30, Spain, Argentina).

Sometimes, it was the inherently foreign or international nature of the respondent's chosen subject of study that drew them towards the international market. As the following quote from a Japanese master's student illustrates, students wishing to focus on a foreign or international subject may seek to study in the relevant geographical context for their specialisation, or at an international hub where expertise in their chosen subject is concentrated.

I [was] studying [...] South Asia studies in Japan, and especially I'm focussing on Pakistan. So I was considering going to Pakistan University but actually my parents warned me about it because of the security aspects. So then I searched for other universities that offered my specific degree – for a course suited to my interests, and then I found [name of institute], because [name of institute] is quite famous for area studies especially for Asia, and I found this specific course for South Asian studies. And the course is very suited to my interests – that's why I came here (FGP11, UK, Japan).

Two respondents framed their exposure to a foreign or international study environment as a kind of human capital in itself, which they expected to complement their formal studies of international subjects. For example, as a student from Kazakhstan explained: *'I'm studying diplomacy and international relations. That's why I need work experience to talk with people, new culture. Something new'* (FGP37, Italy, Kazakhstan). A very similar rationale was given by an Italian respondent:

I wanted to study international relations and it generally made more sense to study international relations abroad and where you're in an international context. And to be honest,

⁷ As explained in the methodology, research participants are referred to using the following format: Interviewee (INT) /Focus Group Participant (FGP) number, country of fieldwork (which largely coincides with the country of study), country of origin.

Italian universities, although they give good preparation, they're not really international yet, not as much as British universities (INT12, UK, Italy).

Related to the pursuit of the right person-course fit, a smaller number of respondents had decided to study their undergraduate degrees in another country based on their preferences for another educational system. In light of it being relatively less common to be internationally mobile at undergraduate level, it is perhaps important to note that all of these respondents were EU nationals, and all but one had parents from other EU countries. As suggested by Murphy-Lejeune (2002), it seems that these international family backgrounds had a role to play in expanding the students' awareness space to include the possibility of studying abroad (and in their parent's country of origin, particularly). For example, in the case of a respondent born in France to parents from different EU countries, she was both dissatisfied with the French education system, and inclined to explore the foreign aspects of her identity that she was not yet familiar with:

I guess my main motivation then was that I didn't really want to stay in France to do my studies, I didn't really like the educational system there, and I guess the choice, well, choosing to come to the UK was also to do with.... I'm half British, I'd never actually lived in the UK, so it was kind of a way to come back to my family roots, in a sense (FGP28, UK, France).

In the case of the only one of these respondents who did not have an international family background, her decision to study abroad was motivated by a perhaps stronger aversion to the educational system in her country of origin. This respondent explained that, due to the corruption she experienced within the Bulgarian school system, she decided that she '*didn't want to be part of this system*' and left instead for Germany (INT22, Germany, Bulgaria).

Labour market access in the country of study

Some respondents chose to study abroad not necessarily – or not only – for the human capital that they could accumulate through a foreign course of study. Rather, they identified unique opportunities to develop their human capital in the destination country's labour market, or they perceived that the economic returns on their human capital would be higher in the destination country's labour market.

Respondents who had a clear idea about the specific sector in which they wanted to work after completing their studies often chose to study in a country – or city – which they perceived as offering advantageous career development opportunities. Their reasoning was driven not only by their perception that the country of destination offered greater employment opportunities related to their field of study, but also by their desire to obtain exposure to and experience in a field of work which they considered to be particularly advanced in the place of study. For example, an interviewee from Poland who had always wanted to work in trading explained that: '*London is the European hub for trading, so it's pretty much the best place where you can end up, if you want to be a trader*' (INT06, UK, Poland). For this respondent, gaining access to the UK labour market, and building up experience as a trader in London, was therefore a strategic decision designed to later open doors to working as a trader elsewhere in the world. Similarly, other research participants studying tourism or international relations chose Italy – and Rome, specifically – due to the large tourism industry and exposure to international organisations and NGOs that the city offers. Many of the research participants therefore conceived of their chosen study destinations as a kind of springboard to career success and global opportunities.

Other respondents were less focussed on gaining professional experience in a particular sector, but rather aimed to benefit from the better economic opportunities available outside their country of origin (either in the country of study or in a third country). For these respondents, the poor economic conditions in their countries of origin (Ethiopia, Albania, Portugal and Italy, in these cases) were key to the formation of these aspirations.

Higher quality of education

Another frequently cited motivation relating to human capital accumulation was the higher quality of education available in the country of study, which was discussed by students from developing and NIE, as well as developed countries, and at undergraduate as well as master's level. Although finding the right person-course fit may similarly imply access to a higher quality of education (often associated with the HEI's particular field of specialism), we distinguish the motivation for a higher quality of education separately. This is because the latter seemed to be based on more general perceptions of the overall higher quality of the educational system in the destination country, as opposed to specific information about individual HEIs and courses, as the following quotes suggest:

[...] the tertiary education system in Nigeria is not, I mean... when you compare the standards to what you get here in the UK it is a lower standard. So of course people do want to get a better level of education (INT18, UK, Nigeria);

Sadly, I was not so happy with the quality of the study in the Ukraine. I would say it has become outdated. And you can't really from that far away get a good recognition or qualification, if you only study in the Ukraine. [...] My goal was getting high quality, and in Germany I saw this high quality, which is why I wanted to study here (INT16, Germany, Ukraine).

For some respondents who mentioned the quality of education available in the country of study, value for money was a central consideration. These respondents discussed their perceptions that they would be accessing a higher, or comparable, quality of education at a comparable or lower financial cost, in relation to their country of origin or previous residence. These value for money calculations were discussed both by (developed country) EU-origin respondents moving within the EU, as well as by students from non-EU developing countries (Kazakhstan, Indonesia, Ecuador and Colombia). These third country nationals emphasised how expensive tertiary-level education is in their countries of origin, and why studying in their chosen EU destination countries (Italy and Spain, in these cases) therefore offered much better value for money. Among the EU nationals, these respondents similarly discussed the relatively lower costs of study in the destination country. This was because the students were eligible for lower or no tuition fees, and/or to government support in the country of destination (Sweden, Scotland, Germany and the Netherlands, in these cases). Also significant for these EU-origin respondents – although less commonly discussed – were the lower living costs and potential for higher earnings to support their studies in the country of destination, and the ability to save money by living with family or a romantic partner. It is worth noting that these factors motivated return as well as outwards movements – such as in the case of two respondents from Denmark and Sweden who moved back to these countries for the more affordable higher education opportunities there.

Reputational advantages

Related to the perceived quality of a higher education system or university is its international reputation, and the prestige thereby conferred upon its graduates. This kind of symbolic capital was relevant to a number of students mostly from developing and NIE countries, and mostly from outside of the EU (with the exception of three students from Romania, Czechia and Poland). As the quote below illustrates, respondents were often pursuing both the perceived higher quality of education available at a foreign institute (as discussed above) as well as the career advantages to be derived from the symbolic capital associated with an international qualification – in this case, based on its relative scarcity and perceived distinction:

The driving motive [to study abroad] was because in Mexico it is considered that universities abroad, like in the UK, in America, and Australia – are quite privileged – that almost nobody can achieve. So that will give me a lot of prestige, and that will help me to get like better positions in big companies and also like, just give me a better education, which means it will like make the difference because the situation in Mexico is very competitive, and any extra additional studies in a very prestigious institution would give me the bit extra that I needed at the time (INT09, UK, Mexico).

Language learning

Surprising few of the research participants explicitly mentioned language learning as a reason for their decisions to study abroad, although it should nonetheless be noted as a distinct theme. Around half of the students who did mention language learning had studied in the UK, which likely relates to the importance of English as a ‘ground-floor’ language in the international labour market (van Parijs, 2000). It is possible that some research participants – particularly those who studied in the UK – simply did not think to mention this as a motivating factor, perhaps because it seemed too obvious and was not the *most* important factor for them. This seemed to be the case for two interviewees who only confirmed that part of their aim was to improve their English when directly asked by the interviewer. Some respondents explicitly discussed the labour market advantages to be derived from language-learning – as in the case of an Ecuadorian respondent studying tourism who had gone to Italy for her Erasmus exchange. However, others seemed to prioritise language-learning for the love of the language and culture, thus indicating an overlap between human capital and experiential objectives (as also noted by Van Mol, 2014).

Cultural Capital Model

The quote from the Mexican respondent discussed above under ‘Reputational advantages’ emphasises the place-specific, socially-constructed value associated with higher education in (certain) foreign countries (and at particular HEIs). The explanation given by this interviewee closely echoes the narratives presented by Waters (2006) and Findlay et al. (2012) in their elaborations of the cultural capital model. However, what is largely missing from the interviewee accounts analysed in the present study is the role of family dynamics in choosing international higher education as a strategy for social reproduction, which is central to the cultural capital model (Pelliccia, 2014; Waters, 2006). It is generally difficult to ascertain whether this kind of family decision-making was present in our dataset because the interviews were conducted with the students themselves rather than with their families. As noted by scholars such as Findlay et al. (2017) and Beech (2015), it is not surprising that individual students would downplay the role of their family in influencing their

decisions (including familial expectations and insecurities), preferring instead to frame these decisions in terms of their own individual agency and aspirations.

However, there were a number of respondents from NIE countries who highlighted the importance of obtaining a Western qualification and who intended to then return to their countries of origin, as per the cultural capital model and in accordance with our original hypothesis (H2). Notably, most of these respondents came from Hong Kong and China (the national contexts in which Waters' cultural capital model was originally developed) and it was these interviewees who explicitly mentioned the role of their families, and their broader social networks, in influencing their mobility behaviour. For example, a student from Macau explained that her family had encouraged her to go abroad to get a master's degree in order to improve her employment prospects in mainland China. It was also her parents' preference that she study at the particular HEI where she was enrolled, based on its reputational value in China and the fact that her mother had colleagues who studied at that particular HEI and who held it in high regard. She further explained that many of her classmates had gone to study in the US and Australia. Another Chinese respondent explained similarly that the vast majority of the students who had completed their undergraduate degrees with her at one of the most prestigious universities in China went on to study postgraduate degrees in the US and UK. This respondent explained that families like hers feel a certain pressure to, as it were, "keep up with the Joneses", by sending their children to study abroad, and that, moreover, for a high-achieving student, the 'ladder' of distinction dictates that they pursue their postgraduate studies outside of China:

Culture-wise, China is a very family-based society, and all of your family friends, when their kids are doing studies abroad, you're sort of like automatically influenced and your parents are influenced to think that "maybe we should send our kids abroad as well". And also, yeah, I went to one of the top schools in Beijing – in all of China – and um, yeah, most of them are quite academic, so they want you to go on to pursue a postgraduate degree instead of going straight to work. And yeah, [...] it's an interesting trend but people who do their undergraduate in my school don't go to my school for a postgraduate, which is already the top university in China, but they would go abroad. And then people in secondary universities, or second-tier universities in China, would do a master's or postgraduate in my university. So it's sort of a ladder (INT19, UK, China).

However, there was also some indication that the cultural capital model might also apply to other regional or country contexts – both NIE (in the case of Mexico) and developing (in the case of Indonesia and Kazakhstan). These students did not present their student mobility decisions as a family strategy per se. Neither did the students from Indonesia and Kazakhstan necessarily intend to return to their countries of origin upon graduation (their initial aspirations were not explicitly articulated). However, like the Mexican respondent, these students made reference to the symbolic capital associated with an international qualification that would be valued by employers upon return to their countries of origin: 'Once you come back with your abroad degree you will get paid like foreigner... because they like this' (FGP38, Italy, Indonesia).

Moreover, in addition to underlining the relevance of the cultural capital model for students from particular national contexts – mostly NIE and particularly East Asian – the data also lends weight to Findlay et al.'s (2012) exploration of the cultural capital model as a strategy for further social

differentiation among students from private and independent schools. Interviewees who made reference to their (private) international school backgrounds emphasised that studying abroad (namely in the UK or US) was *'the expected path'* for them (FGP08, UK, Switzerland). According to these respondents' accounts, this was not only because *'everyone else is doing it'* (INT15, UK, Hong Kong) and because the school system actively facilitated their transition to higher education abroad, but it was also, in some cases, at the direct or indirect prompting of the students' parents. For example, as one former international school student explained:

Yeah, I would definitely second what [another respondent] said about parents pushing you in a certain direction. I think that's so true. So in my case my parents are Colombian, they moved to Switzerland, when I was born they moved a little bit around before settling in Switzerland and they've always moved in like international Anglo-Saxon circles in terms of employment, and like social life. So yeah, I think it was quite clear that you know staying in Switzerland.... They wouldn't have sent me to the international school if they had wanted me to stay in Switzerland and go to a Swiss university and get a job there and everything (FGP8, UK, Switzerland).

Similarly, a focus group participant from Italy said that her parents had decided to send her to an international school because it *'would just open up more horizons afterwards'* (FGP9, UK, Italy). In another case, a French student who had gone to an international school in France explained that her parents had sent her to an English boarding school for two terms when she was fourteen years old. At the point of applying for university she was again *'very pushed'* by them to go abroad. While she balked at the much higher tuition fees of UK universities, she cited her parents as advising her *'No, it's a good opportunity, it's different, it's always good to go abroad'* (INT05, UK, France).

The choices made by internationally mobile parents who send their children to international schools, and who strongly encourage their international mobility as tertiary-level students, therefore lend weight to King et al.'s (2016) assertion that the international education market supports the reproduction of a 'transnational capitalist class' (Sklair, 2001). In this 'sending' context, the cultural capital model is socially embedded, but to some extent de-territorialised given the inherent internationalism of international schools. Whereas the 'geographic logic' (Holloway et al., 2012) underpinning the original elaboration of the cultural capital model depends on the 'very specific place-based social relations' (Waters, 2006, p. 189) that have developed in particular national contexts, the accounts given by students from international schools suggest that the cultural capital model may also be sustained by social relations which transcend national structural environments. Study destinations nonetheless remain more geographically specific – all of the interviewees who described their international school backgrounds as relevant to their decisions to study their undergraduate degrees abroad went to the UK.

In respect of the initial hypothesis (H2), the cultural capital model emerged as less widely relevant than the human capital model. Substantially fewer interviewees made reference to cultural capital-type motivations compared to human capital motivations. In terms of geographic scope, the cultural capital model also seems to be more limited than the human capital model, although there is some evidence which challenges the bounds of the original hypothesis. That is, the cultural capital model most clearly applies to NIE – and particularly East Asian – national contexts where the model was originally developed. However, the accounts given by three students from Mexico, Indonesia and Kazakhstan suggest that, as more recent studies on student migration from Greece and Kazakhstan

have explored (Holloway et al., 2012; Pelliccia, 2014), the model's relevance may also extend to other geographic regions and national contexts. The data furthermore supports Findlay et al.'s (2012) analysis of the cultural capital model's relevance to private and international school contexts. However, there are two related points to be made here. Firstly, as regards the initial hypothesis, the international school-type cultural capital model is not necessarily only at work in developed or NIE country contexts. For example, a student who attended a British school in Nigeria reported that at her school it was *'kind of just expected that you were going to go to university not in Nigeria'* – although she also noted that she did not think that her parents consciously meant for her to study abroad when they sent her to that school (INT18, UK, Nigeria). Rather, the second point to be made is that this variant of the cultural capital model seems unlike the original in that it does not depend on embeddedness in the specific 'place-based social relations' of a particular national context, but instead on the more geographically dispersed elite transnational relations which make up the 'transnational capitalist class'.

Youth Mobility Cultures

In contrast to our hypothesis (H3) that the youth mobility cultures framing would be most relevant to students from developed countries, experiential factors were cited by a large number of respondents, from developed, developing and NIE countries of origin (and across all levels of study). In some cases, experiential factors formed the core motivation driving the aspiration to study abroad, while in other cases they provided an additional incentive that reinforced other (for example, human capital-related) motivations.

King et al.'s (2016) description of student mobility as an 'act of consumption' is borne out by the accounts of some student migrants – particularly those undertaking credit mobility – for whom the international study experience was akin to an extended form of tourism. For example, a French student who went to Germany for an Erasmus exchange explained: *'Everyone was saying that Berlin was so great. And I thought, why not, you know? Erasmus is an opportunity to go and live in a new city and meet new people and I heard that it is a nice place'* (INT08, Germany, France).

The accounts of students who had migrated to participate in an Erasmus or other short-term study abroad schemes suggest that, for young people from EU countries, the experiential opportunities of studying in another EU country are reason enough to participate in credit mobility. Whilst recognising that our sample includes 'movers' only (we did not capture the decision-making of anyone who decided against participating in credit mobility), the decision-making of interviewees who undertook Erasmus and related exchange programmes clearly reflects a youth mobility culture. That is, at least for students with the means to participate, credit mobility seems to be an assumed part of the contemporary European student experience. Thus, for students participating in credit mobility, it is enough to *'have always enjoyed travelling and getting to know new places'* (INT23, Germany, Spain). This supports Van Mol's (2014) finding that in the context of intra-EU credit mobility, 'a study period abroad is rather more valued for personal developmental than for an academic or educational added value' (p.59). It should be noted that this exchange student mobility culture also seems to extend to students from outside of the EU, for example as illustrated by a Turkish Erasmus student who *'wanted to travel, to visit'* (INT24, Italy, Turkey).

Among the EU students who enrolled in entire degrees abroad, their decision-making was often recounted with the same lightness that characterises the "why not?" decision-making that emerged

as typical of Erasmus sojourns and which emphasises the experiential value of foreign study. For example, a student from Ireland explained *'there were opportunities here [to do a master's in the UK], but also just in the sense of it being a good time to go away for a few years to get a range of experiences, so that was the main motivation'* (INT36, UK, Ireland). A Slovakian national, who was already internationally mobile having completed his secondary school in Denmark, recalled that, in addition to being attracted by the better reputations of universities outside of Denmark, he did not consider staying in Denmark for his undergraduate because: *'I knew the environment quite well and I wanted a change'* (FGP30, UK, Slovakia). Similarly, for a German national transitioning between undergraduate and post-graduate study, enrolment in a foreign master's programme seemed not to be any weightier a decision than enrolment in a domestic institution: *'I did an internship in London when I was in my undergrad years and I really liked London so I thought, "yay, I can apply here for my master's degree"'* (FGP06, UK, Germany).

As noted above, students from developed, NIE, and developing countries outside the EU also prioritised experiential factors in their accounts of their mobility aspirations, occasionally with the same sense of casualness as EU nationals. However, when third country nationals emphasised the experiential factors that led them to study in the EU, it seemed that these were more often linked to more concrete objectives regarding personal growth and an anticipated transition into adulthood. For example, two students from India and one student from Singapore framed their decisions to migrate for their undergraduate degrees as an important opportunity to spread their wings as young adults, away from their familial homes and wider home environments: *'I wanted to have an independent life because I was very dependent here in India, I was very lazy, for everything I was dependent on my parents and everything'* (INT14, UK, India). Other third country nationals placed the emphasis less on personal autonomy than on personal development. A master's student from Azerbaijan emphasised that it was *'very important'* to him to change perspectives and *'exchange ideas in other countries'* (FGP23, Italy, Azerbaijan).

Within this experiential model of decision-making, there was also a group of respondents whose decisions to study abroad were less about pursuing *new* experiences, and rather about immersing themselves in the particular social, cultural and physical environment of a specific country. For example, a German student had organised an internship in Sweden within her master's degree programme. As she explained:

It started with Astrid Lindgren. It is like I read all her books and I am a really huge fan, I mean, this may sound a bit stupid but it is like this. I also read her books that are not for children, she did more than children books. So I really got into her as a person. And I have travelled to Sweden before, and I really love the country and the culture. And I really got this idea that I wanted to be more than a tourist here. So I wanted to work and come here. [...] [I wanted to be] more than a tourist. Not travelling. I wanted to live here with a flat and work and have something like an everyday life (FGP21, Sweden, Germany).

Although seemingly quite idiosyncratic, the development of a kind of fascination or strong affinity with a particular foreign country was described by a number of respondents as the primary driver of their decision to undertake higher education in the country of destination. Often, these desires responded to the powerful pull of an "imaginative geography" (Beech, 2014), informed by cultural exports such as literature, television and film, the study of the language, and impressions gleaned

from the stories of others who had been there (Beech, 2015; Waters & Brooks, 2011). Sometimes direct prior experience of the country (for example, through family holidays and other short-term travel or study experiences) kindled the desire to return and stay for longer, or, as in the case of the quote above, reinforced the pull of the initial fantasy. Interviewees who wanted to experience, or re-experience, a particular destination country were mostly EU-origin (both developed and developing, i.e. including Romania and Bulgaria), for whom the greater geographic proximity, intercultural exchange, and enabling mobility regime within the region likely helps to stimulate these desires. However, there were also a few respondents from (mostly developed and NIE) non-EU countries who similarly explained their migration as being motivated primarily by the wish to spend (more) time in a particular EU destination country – the majority of these respondents had already spent time travelling or living in the destination country. For example, a student who migrated from Canada (where she had lived since she was a young teenager) explained that, as part of her art history studies at undergraduate level, she spent a semester travelling around Europe. She returned with such a positive image of life in London that she decided to orient her further studies towards the UK labour market, so as to allow her to return and live in London in the medium term (seven to ten years, in her mind):

[...] so at that time that I did the studies abroad I just fell in love with London, and I thought about coming here to work at some point, but I didn't really know how to make that happen. And then I was interested in pursuing law and I realised that to practice here in England I need to do my law degree here, so that's why. That would be the main reason. I just really like the lifestyle here in London, the proximity to other countries... (INT10, UK, Philippines).

Other motivations for student mobility in the EU

As the analysis above demonstrates, the opportunity to study abroad sometimes facilitates the pursuit of another goal which is not necessarily study- or even work-related. For a number of respondents – mostly from the EU but also from a few non-EU countries – the transition from school to university, between higher education levels, or from work back to study – offered an opportunity to realise other objectives which have generally not been given much attention within the ISM literature. Besides the pursuit of lifestyle or experiential objectives as discussed above, some respondents undertook higher education programmes in a foreign country in order to join a romantic partner or close family members from whom they had been separated. For example, an Argentinian national studying in Italy explained:

I came here to study because my father had some work to do here in Italy and I came when he came. And I wanted to continue my studies that I had already started in Argentina [...] I was following my dad's choice to come here, actually, so I didn't really choose (FGP32, Italy, Argentina).

Others explained their decision as more of an active choice. For example, an Italian national, whose family had been split between Malta and Italy due to the mother's work, chose to return to Italy after completing her secondary education in Malta because she wanted to join her father who had already returned to Italy. As she explained, she did not want to stay in Malta for university because, in her words *'there wasn't really a good choice of programmes'*, and she did not want to migrate onwards to a third country because she did not want to disperse the family any further: *'instead of*

going somewhere else, it's better to go back so that at least we were divided in just two groups, the family' (FGP20, Italy, Italy).

A number of research participants chose to join their romantic partners in their destination countries. However, the extent to which romantic ties proved decisive varied significantly. Only in a couple of cases did the presence of a romantic partner in the destination country seem to determine the decision to study abroad. More often, it seemed that the opportunity to join a romantic partner worked in conjunction with other motivations. For example, as the following quote suggests, the desire to join a romantic partner may determine the choice of specific destination, or may act as the “trigger” for realising pre-existing aspirations for international mobility: *‘When I moved here my partner at the time was doing his PhD here in the UK and so that kind of worked for me because I had always wanted to study abroad’ (FGP04, UK, Hungary).* In contrast, one interviewee reported that having her partner in the destination country had no bearing on her decision to study abroad.

Less common, but nevertheless clearly articulated, was the desire amongst respondents with international family backgrounds to get to know one’s roots. For example, a Guatemalan national studying in Italy explained that a second main reason for coming to study in Italy was that his mother’s side of the family is Italian and therefore, he explained, *‘I wanted to come here to know who I was’ (FGP30, Italy, Guatemala).*

Finally, a couple of third country nationals (from Afghanistan, Argentina, and Chile) indicated their desires for a better, or more secure, quality of life, as offered by a different political and/or economic system. For example, the Argentinian national explained:

I came to study, but it’s a bit of an excuse to be able to live here and see how the city is [...] well, I came more to improve the quality of life than we have in [...] Argentina and other Latin-American countries, to get away from the insecurity, the politics, the unemployment and the violence (INT20, Spain, Argentina).

Multiple and inter-related motivations

Although the preceding analysis of ISM motivations has been presented according to each model of decision-making or ‘type’ of motivation, it is important to note that individual decisions to study abroad were often driven by multiple motivations and the interactions between them.

Frequently, human capital-type motivations sat alongside experiential or personal objectives. For example, the account of a German national studying in the UK provides a particularly rich illustration of the way in which the global market for higher education can be navigated strategically in pursuit of multiple objectives. This respondent was already intending to study a master’s programme following the completion of her bachelor’s degree in Germany, but she also wanted to join her partner in the UK for at least the duration of his PhD programme. She therefore chose to study her master’s in the UK because: i) the course she chose supported her own longer-term career development goals; ii) studying in the UK meant she could join her partner at least in the short-term; and iii) she considered that studying a master’s in the UK would better prepare her for successfully integrating into the UK labour market, which was important if she wanted to live with her partner in the UK in the longer term. The decision to study this particular course in the UK therefore provided a good person-course fit as well as supporting her (and her boyfriend’s) ‘partnership project’ (Carlson, 2013), thus suiting both her shorter and longer-term romantic and career aspirations. As

demonstrated in this and previous cases, enrolment in a foreign higher education programme does not necessarily indicate that the migration is undertaken primarily for study (or even employment) reasons, but can rather obscure other motivations for migration which may be equally or more important.

The case of an Italian national furthermore helps to demonstrate that the decision to study abroad may (in some cases at least) be better understood as multiple decisions – and that different types of motivation can have more or less relevance in determining each of these. This focus group participant wanted to study a master’s degree for ‘classic’ human capital reasons – in order to acquire the skills and knowledge that would improve his employment prospects. However, his choice to study abroad rather than in Italy was driven by experiential considerations – he had participated in a one-year student exchange in Toronto as part of a previous master’s programme, and had so much enjoyed the experience of living in a ‘*intercultural environment*’ that he wanted to do it again – this time in Europe. The decision to study in the UK specifically was however determined by his perceptions of the quality and reputation of the UK higher education system and of the specific university he applied to. Thus, there are three (or even four) decisions enclosed within this decision-making process: the decision to undertake a higher education programme, the decision to undertake it in another country, and the choice of destination country and institute. Although the respondent’s decision to study abroad hinged on experiential motivations, his decision to undertake another master’s degree, and to do it in the UK at the particular HEI he enrolled in, was based on human capital factors. Human capital and experiential motivations are thus inextricably linked in this research participant’s decision to study a master’s programme in the UK.

As regards the study’s first research question, this first part of the analysis explored the range of motivations that underpin the decision to study abroad in the EU, and their relevance to students from different geographical contexts. The analysis found that, in contrast to the paper’s initial hypotheses, the strategic accumulation of human capital, and the influence of youth mobility cultures, are frequently relevant to students from both developed and developing, EU and non-EU countries of origin. The cultural capital model was found to be less commonly evident in respondents’ decision-making. Where the cultural capital model did emerge as relevant to students’ decision-making, this was clearly the case for respondents from the East Asian NIE settings in which the model was first developed. But there was also evidence to suggest that the cultural capital model may have relevance in other countries and regions, and, moreover, that it may also characterise the decision-making processes of students from international schools, regardless of where in the world these might be located. Table 7 presents a summary of the evidence relating to the study’s first three hypotheses:

Table 7. Summary evidence for hypotheses 1-3

H1: <i>Human capital theory is most relevant to the decision-making of students from developing countries (excluding NIEs).</i>	Rejected: Human-capital related motivations are frequently relevant to students from both developed and developing countries of origin.
H2: <i>The cultural capital model is most relevant to the decision-making of students from NIEs and (other) developed countries.</i>	Ambiguous: The cultural capital model is most clearly relevant to respondents from East Asian NIE settings. But it may also be relevant to other national contexts – both NIE and developing. It furthermore seems highly relevant to international-school settings, which transcend national boundaries and structural conditions.

H3: <i>The youth mobility cultures framing is most relevant to the decision-making of students from developed countries.</i>	Rejected: Experiential objectives are commonly relevant to students from both developed and developing, EU and non-EU countries of origin.
---	---

Beyond the study's initial hypotheses, the data clearly showed that, in practice, more than one model may be relevant to an individual student's decision-making. In particular, individual decisions were frequently based on both human capital and experiential motivations. Moreover, the qualitative exploration of individual decision-making demonstrated that the human capital and youth mobility cultures framings should be understood not as two distinct and universal ideal-type decision-making processes, but rather as broad decisional frameworks within which a variety of different motivations may operate. In addition to the motivations subsumed within the three main theoretical models, other motivations not directly related to any of these models – such as joining a romantic partner or other family members, returning to one's family 'roots', or seeking the security of a more stable political and economic system – emerged, in some cases, as highly relevant to the decision to study abroad. Finally, it was shown that multiple motivations may determine the individual decision to study abroad. Assessing which of these motivations has greater or lesser weight within an individual decision-making process is not necessarily straightforward, particularly given the ways in which different factors may interact in relation to an individual's longer-term life aspirations.

6. Initial post-study (im)mobility intentions

Having addressed the first three hypotheses put forward at the outset of this paper, the rest of the analysis focusses on how the decision to study abroad may relate to the student's initial post-study (im)mobility aspirations (Section 6), and how these aspirations may change during the course of the study abroad period (Section 7). We use the term 'aspiration' as a shorthand for a variety of concepts, including desires, plans and intentions, that have related but distinct meanings, as well as different implications for likely (im)mobility outcomes (Carling, 2019). Although we tended to ask about intentions and plans in the focus group and interview settings, the responses that research participants gave varied substantially in terms of the extent of their deliberation and planning, as well as, perhaps, in terms of whether feasibility concerns mediated their actual preferences. The following discussion of aspirations should therefore be understood in this broader sense, although we do try to indicate the degree of 'firmness' and conscious preference underlying the responses, where possible.

This section therefore addresses the paper's second research question, by providing an overview of the respondents' *initial* expectations regarding their post-study (im)mobility (i.e. at the point that they first arrived in the country of study, prior to any changes occurring as a result of their experiences in the destination country). Some of these already started to emerge in Section 5 where they were inherent to the respondents' initial decisions to study abroad (for example, in the case of students who wanted to access the destination country's labour market). This section is structured according to the three theories of ISM decision-making, as per the initial hypotheses (H4-5) regarding the types of initial post-study (im)mobility aspirations associated with the cultural capital model and youth mobility cultures framing. However, this analysis is complicated by the conclusion from Section 5 that, in reality, individual decisions to study abroad may be determined by multiple considerations, which may relate to more than one of the theoretical models of ISM decision-

making, as well as to factors which lie outside of these models. Whilst recognising that individual decisions do not necessarily align with a single theoretical model, the following analysis seeks to identify any broad trends in the relationship between the relevance of the different models and the student's initial post-study (im)mobility aspirations. This is based on a coding of the data according to which of the models seem to apply to the individual decision to study abroad, which means that individual decisions may be analysed under more than one of the following sub-sections, if they align with more than one theoretical model.

Human Capital Approach

Among respondents for whom human capital motivations dominated their decisions to study abroad, initial post-study (im)mobility intentions varied widely. However, respondents from non-EU countries discussed a narrower range of post-study (im)mobility options. The large majority had expected either to return to their countries of origin or to stay in the country of destination. The larger number had expected to return and this was particularly the case among those whose primary motivation to study abroad was the reputational value and prestige of an international qualification. The non-EU origin respondents who had planned to stay on often did so tentatively; they had chosen the country of study with the idea that they might like to stay on in that country (or city, specifically), but planned to see how it went. For example, an Indian law student recalled that, in choosing to come to the UK for his undergraduate degree, he was deliberately keeping his options open with regards to either staying to work in the UK, or returning to work in India: *'I think when I first came, [...] in the first year I definitely was just testing the waters'* (INT11, UK, India). It is important to note that the non-EU origin respondents who more confidently expected to stay in the country of study tended to have more secure legal status in the EU, either because they already had EU nationality, or because they expected to have relatively easier access to visa or residence permits. For example, some non-EU origin respondents expected to take advantage of the special visa categories that enable nationals of Commonwealth countries to stay in the UK. Others perceived that, as graduates in certain subject areas, or from certain universities (e.g. in the case of the UK's pilot Tier 4 visa scheme), they would have a greater likelihood of accessing a work visa.

In contrast, students from EU countries (and with EU nationality) commonly held more hazy or open-ended ideas about their future post-study (im)mobility. Although some expected to return to their countries of origin or to stay in the country of study, they were often open to migrating onwards to other countries. Many had no firm ideas about their likely post-study mobility behaviour. EU nationals often recalled that they had given little thought to what they would do after completing their chosen course. For example, as one German national explained:

No I don't think I thought that far ahead. I mean I kind of knew that it was a one year masters, and I kind of knew that its basically one and a half years or three years crammed into one year, so it's all very - you don't have a lot of time to think in between, really. So you know what, I'll just get through with that year, get my masters and then I'll think about what I really want to do, and if anything happens in between - great, if not, that's fine (INT25, UK, Germany).

The EU nationals who had firmer intentions to stay in the destination country (at least in the short-term) were typically those who had chosen the country of study based on its labour market opportunities. In contrast, those EU nationals for whom finding the right course-fit was a priority in their decision to study abroad often reported more open-ended plans, suggesting that they intended

to similarly navigate the international labour market in search of the right job opportunities for their skillset and preferences.

Cultural Capital Model

As regards the initial post-study (im)mobility intentions associated with the cultural capital model, those respondents whose decision-making most explicitly reflected the original conceptualisation of the cultural capital model – wherein it is the national place-based social relations that influence the decision to study abroad (Waters, 2006) – expected to return to their countries of origin. These findings therefore confirm our fourth hypothesis. It should be noted, however, that return plans were not necessarily conceived of as an immediate post-graduation outcome. This was the case for a Chinese national who hoped to pursue a research career in the US for a number of years in order to further enhance her symbolic capital (and increase her earnings) before returning to China. In contrast, as regards the respondents from international school backgrounds, all but one of these research participants had had entirely open-ended post-study plans. However, this open-endedness often assumed continued international mobility as part of an international, or indeed global, career (Findlay et al., 2017): *'I assumed I would keep moving to different places to do different things'* (FGP08, UK, Switzerland). The lack of any long-term planning likely relates to these respondents' youth (they all studied at undergraduate level), as well as the outwards-looking, international orientation instilled in them through their educational and familial backgrounds. However, it likely also relates, as discussed above, to their privileged legal status (all but one had EU nationality).

Youth Mobility Cultures

As regards students for whom youth mobility cultures emerged as highly relevant to their decision to study abroad, there were no clear patterns identified regarding their post-study (im)mobility intentions. Our fifth hypothesis is therefore rejected. The many credit mobile students, whose decision-making was, as discussed, often dominated by experiential motivations, tended not to relate their credit mobility to any longer-term (im)mobility plans. This was likely because their period of stay was defined from the outset and would end with a return to the home institution. However, this does not mean that these students expected to stay indefinitely in the country of their degree programme upon their return. Indeed, a Portuguese student, whose decision to study the final year of her Bachelors programme in Spain was based entirely on the desire to *'have the experience of living in another country'*, explained that she did not expect her international mobility to end with her exchange year: *'I did not think it would be just for a short time. It was like "I'm leaving, indefinitely," and [then] see what happens'* (FGP29, Spain, Portugal).

Among the respondents for whom experiential objectives motivated the decision to study an entire degree programme abroad, the initial post-study (im)mobility intentions were varied. In some cases, respondents thought of their study abroad as a particular chapter in their life and expected to then return home. For example, a French national who went to the UK for a master's degree explained: *'For me, it was quite clear from the beginning that I would have... it would be a distinct time in my life, that I would be there, then I'd rather come back to my country'* (INT21, UK, France).

In other cases, these students wanted or expected to stay on in the country of study. For example, a German national who had come to Sweden because she was strongly attracted to the culture and environment explained that she had conceived of her student enrolment as the first chapter of a longer-term migration experience:

[...] of course, when you go here for your studies you only have like this two years that you're going to stay anyways [for the two year master's programme], and after that I was kind of clear that I was going to stay here, but it was never like written down in any paper or something, but it was clear in my heart that I was going to stay here and, of course, you have to see if you really fit in there, if it's something for you (FGP17, Sweden, Germany).

Other respondents reported that they had had no firm idea of their likely post-study mobility behaviour. Consistent with the findings above, open-ended plans were more common amongst EU nationals. The large majority of non-EU origin respondents expected to return to their countries of origin upon completion of their studies abroad. As before (and referring to some of the same cases where both human capital and experiential motivations were key to the individual's decision to study abroad), those non-EU origin students who aimed to stay in the country of study, or whose plans were more open-ended, either had EU nationality or seemed to expect easier access to employer sponsorship or other visa categories.

The role of legal status in shaping post-study (im)mobility expectations

The analysis therefore points to the determining role of legal status in the initial formation of post-study (im)mobility intentions. At the outset of their international study experience, students without EU nationality, and without privileged access to long-stay visas or residence permits, tended not to conceive of staying on in the country of study. General perceptions of the difficulty of obtaining a visa to work in the EU upon graduation likely results in an 'adaptive preference' (Carling & Schewel, 2018) (and perhaps in some cases, a narrower awareness space), meaning that non-EU nationals do not necessarily even consider, let alone actively pursue, the possibility of staying on in the EU. As an example, a Japanese national seemed to take for granted her return to Japan, based on her understanding that she would be disadvantaged as a jobseeker in the UK labour market:

I came here just for my study, because I think, when I consider future plans and especially the job opportunities, I think definitely it is more easy for me to get a job in Japan. It's very difficult for me to get a job here, I think. One of the biggest problems is the language barrier, and the other thing is that I don't have any work experience. And this is my opinion but if a Japanese person wants to work here then maybe we have to have more specific skills or something. So I think I will go back to Japan after finishing my degree and then find a job in Japan I think (FGP11, UK, Japan).

As the above quote suggests, upon the expiry of their student or graduate job-seeker visa, third country nationals are unable to legally remain in the EU without a valid visa. International graduates will therefore often need to secure an employment contract which meets specific 'high skilled' requirements in terms of, for example, contract duration and minimum salary. Legal status therefore intersects with cultural capital where employer sponsorship for high skilled work depends on having advanced (and, often, culturally specific) skills and competencies, including language proficiency. This was also suggested by a Chinese respondent who likewise took her return to her country of origin for granted, based on her perception that it would be very difficult to succeed in the UK labour market, due to cultural differences. Neither of these respondents expected to acquire the necessary cultural capital within the course of their studies. In contrast, it is clear that the EU-origin respondents' more open-ended post-study (im)mobility intentions are a product of the EU mobility regime, which to some extent removes the need for long-term planning or strategising because the

barriers to and costs of intra-EU mobility are so much lower. This point is underlined by a Mexican national studying in Germany at the time of her interview, who highlighted the investments she would have to make in securing the right to stay in Germany, and the level of commitment that this would require. As she explained, pursuing secure legal status in Germany would drain not only her financial resources, but might also have implications on her freedom to take opportunities in other areas of her life, for example, her choice of romantic partner, or job:

[...] it isn't set that I want to definitely stay here. But with a visa it really is like this "tick-tock-tick-tock", you have to do something if you want to stay here. [...] For me there are always problems with my visa because you need a lot of money for it, and I don't have that. And, yeah, I also don't want to try to find a partner just for citizenship and I also don't want to put so much pressure on getting this money, so that's why it's staying like this (FGP14, Germany, Mexico).

The analysis therefore highlights legal status as a key determinant of post-study (im)mobility aspirations. The distinction between EU and non-EU citizenship is crucial, given the rights that EU nationals have to freely reside and work across the EU, in contrast to the much higher barriers that non-EU nationals face to obtain the right to live and work in a single EU country. There is, however, further unevenness among non-EU nationals. Privileged access to long-term visas or residence permits can be dependent on nationality – for example in the case of the UK's Youth Mobility Scheme and UK Ancestry visas which facilitate access for citizens of Commonwealth and some other countries. The ways in which citizenship therefore shapes the post-study (im)mobility options considered and pursued by international students adds empirical weight to Kalm's (2020) argument that 'citizenship capital' should be acknowledged as a form of capital alongside the other Bourdieusian capitals. Like the other forms of capital, citizenship capital is 'a resource with which individuals are more or less endowed, and which impacts on people's social positionings and thus on their possible spaces of action' (Kalm, 2020, p. 2). Moreover, although citizenship capital has 'an autonomous force and impact' it also 'shapes transnational positions in combination with other capital forms' (Kalm, 2020, p. 19). This is likewise reflected in the preceding analysis in which the interactions between legal status and cultural capital are observed.

As regards the second research question and related hypotheses, a range of post-study (im)mobility intentions (and including a lack of firm intentions) are associated with each of the models. Table 8 presents a summary of the evidence in relation to hypotheses 4 and 5. There are, perhaps, clearer relationships between specific motivations or particular manifestations of the models and students' initial post-study (im)mobility aspirations. This was the case for respondents who decided to study abroad in order to access the destination country's labour market; respondents who prioritised person-course fit; respondents from international school backgrounds; and respondents whose decision-making more closely aligned with the original conceptualisation of the cultural capital model. However, legal status, better conceptualised as 'citizenship capital', emerges as the perhaps more important determinant of post-study (im)mobility expectations.

Table 8. Summary evidence for hypotheses 4 and 5

H4: <i>Students whose decisions to study abroad align with the cultural capital model aspire to return to their country of origin following the</i>	Partly confirmed: Students whose decision-making reflected the original cultural capital model largely expected to return to their countries of origin. However, students from international school backgrounds most
--	---

completion of their studies.	commonly had open-ended plans, often assuming continued international mobility.
H5: <i>Students whose decisions to study abroad align with the youth mobility cultures framing aspire to prolong their international mobility following the completion of their studies, either by staying in the country of study or migrating onwards to a third country.</i>	Rejected: No clear patterns identified regarding their post-study (im)mobility intentions.

7. Changing abilities and aspirations

Having reviewed the broad range of post-study (im)mobility intentions that the research participants had upon arrival in the destination country, this section addresses the paper's third research question on the ways in which post-study (im)mobility aspirations may be (re)shaped over the course of the student migration experience. In order to test our sixth hypothesis that: *During the course of study, changes in the student's relative capital stock (and therefore ability) lead to changes in their post-study (im)mobility aspirations*, we first explain the changes in the respondents' aspirations which seem to arise from changes in their (relative) wealth of cultural, social and economic capital. We then explore any other reasons for respondents' changing aspirations, as per our seventh hypothesis that: *Among students from developed countries, post-study (im)mobility aspirations may change as a result of aspirations unrelated to the strategic accumulation of capital.*

Cultural capital

The analysis identified various ways in which cultural capital stocks play a role in shaping post-study (im)mobility aspirations during the course of study abroad.

Firstly, some respondents decided that it would be better for them to stay on in the country of study because they realised that the cultural capital that they had accumulated during their course of study had a relatively higher value in the labour market of the country of study compared to that of their country of origin. For example, one of the Indian students already mentioned above was initially undecided about whether he would stay on in the UK after his undergraduate studies or return to India. Over the course of his degree programme, he did a work experience placement through which he came to realise that he would not be able to take full advantage of his UK law degree if he returned to India. His aspirations therefore re-focussed on staying in the UK:

I did a little bit of work experience back home in India and that was when it sort of clicked that, you know, this knowledge, this legal knowledge and all these skills that I'm assimilating here won't properly be truly valued back at home. Because they're different legal markets, different business markets, and I think it was like mid-second year when I started formulating a plan where I was like, "ok, after I graduate, I'm going to try and get that training contract and, you know, try and work in London if I can" (INT11, UK, India).

Similarly, a Polish national had initially expected to return to Poland at the end of her undergraduate degree, but subsequently decided to seek employment in the UK in part because of the culturally specific workplace competencies that she had accumulated in the UK but lacked in Poland:

[...] my only professional experience and knowledge of the job market that I've ever had is in the UK now, and after three years of studying you're quite detached from what's happening in your home country, so, um... I was going back, and having a look, I even applied for a few things but I just felt so unfamiliar with the whole system, I never used... obviously I'm native in the Polish language but I'd never used it in business situations, so I found myself completely unable to go through interviews in Polish because all the vocabulary related to business situations, role plays, interviews, sort of economic and financial subjects that I was studying in English. So that was an additional barrier to going back (FGP12, UK, Poland).

As the above examples suggest, the cultural capital accumulated during the course of foreign study may be location-specific, valorised within the labour market of the study destination but not (or to a more limited extent) in that of the country of origin. This creates a situation of path-dependency. Firstly because, as described above, the international student may have acquired location-specific cultural capital for which the return on investment is much higher in the country of study. Secondly, once the student has integrated into the national higher education system, the barriers to accessing further educational or post-graduate employment opportunities may be much lower. As the case of a Czech respondent illustrates, this is not necessarily because the newly-acquired skills and competencies are inherently location-specific (i.e. only of value, or of significantly greater value, in the place of study), but rather because, in their *institutionalised* state (represented through educational qualifications) their value is less widely recognised in the country of origin's labour market. This respondent, who had completed two degree programmes in the UK and who had stayed on to work in London, explained:

[...] the system like incentivises you to stay, because it's easier to get a job in the UK if you have a UK degree, because everyone is like "oh, I know this degree". Whereas if you go abroad, for example back in the Czech Republic, I have to always just like validate my education through the ministries and all that stuff, it's complicated. And here it's just much easier (FGP52, UK, Czechia).

Moreover, it seems that being physically present in the country of study reduces the barriers to converting cultural capital into job opportunities, which can prompt, or strengthen, aspirations to stay. A number of respondents had expected to return to their countries of origin or had initially had no firm intentions regarding their post-study (im)mobility, but decided to stay longer in the country of study because they had started working alongside their studies, and/or received job offers at the end of their studies. For example, a South African national had initially expected to return to South Africa, or to migrate onwards after completing her master's degree in the UK. However, having started a job during her course of study, it occurred to her that it might be useful to stay (at least in the short-term) in order to make the most of the work experience opportunity: *'I guess I only thought I would be here for studies, and I think now I'll probably will stay for the job. So I don't know, that's the biggest change. I expected to go to back South Africa after'* (FGP31, UK, South Africa).

Physical presence in the country of study can also help the international student to accumulate knowledge regarding their prospects for converting their cultural capital into further work or study – and therefore (im)mobility – opportunities. In other words, by virtue of their integration into the destination country's higher education system, and/or their proximity to the destination country's

labour market, respondents gained a better sense of their ability to realise certain (im)mobility outcomes. Thus, in these cases, it was not so much the accumulation of new cultural capital per se, but rather a process of learning how their cultural capital was valued in the local capital market, that influenced their aspirations.

For some international students, this process involved the acquisition of information (whether accurate or ill-informed) about their prospects for securing legal status in the country of study compared to other potential destination countries. Two respondents accumulated new information regarding relevant visa regimes, which prompted them to strategically re-orient their post-study (im)mobility aspirations. Both of these respondents – a U.S. national and a Nigerian national – had had open-ended plans at the start of their study programmes, although both were hoping to remain internationally mobile rather than to return to their countries of origin upon graduation. In the case of the American student, by talking to potential employers in his field of interest, he came to understand that his prospects for securing employer sponsorship would be better if he stayed in the UK rather than migrate onwards to another EU country. In contrast, the Nigerian national, who was also studying in the UK, came to perceive that her prospects for remaining internationally mobile would be better if she were a student in another Anglophone destination country. This respondent therefore started to look into post-graduate options in the U.S. and Canada:

I looked at people who had come before me and most of them hadn't been able to stay on after their studies so I was like, "ok, I think what I'm going to do is, after my last year here I should probably start applying for master's in Canada or the U.S., um... where I probably might have a greater chance of staying on (INT18, UK, Nigeria).

In other cases, it was knowledge of the higher education system in the country of study that shaped respondents' decision-making. A couple of EU nationals explained that they had stayed on in (or returned to) the country of study for post-graduate programmes largely because it was simply more straightforward to navigate a higher education system that was already familiar to them, and from which they had already obtained educational qualifications. For example, as one focus group participant explained, *'as soon as you're within one system, it allows you to just be part of like, go to the next level, go to the next level'* (FGP53, UK, Germany). In this way, existing integration into, and increased familiarity with, the destination country's higher education system may influence post-study (im)mobility aspirations through reducing the costs of staying versus leaving.

In other cases, embeddedness in the social and informational environment of the destination country's higher education system provided respondents with information on further study opportunities that they had not necessarily been aware of prior to starting their foreign study programme. For example, an Argentinian national decided to stay on in Germany in order to follow a course that was not available in her country of origin. In other cases, new information regarding further study opportunities interacted with the accumulation of new cultural capital related to the students' subjects of study. A number of master's students decided to pursue doctoral studies – either in the country of their master's studies or in another EU country – because, in the course of accumulating particularly specialised skills, knowledge and research interests through their formal study programmes, they realised that they wanted to pursue these further, and were made aware of opportunities to do so. For example, as a result of having access to particular information flows

within the university environment of his master's studies in Spain, another Argentinian student decided to apply for a PhD opportunity in France:

You know I was not thinking about doing a PhD initially [...]. But when this project... I got an email, learned about the project, I figured it was very interesting from [the perspective of his research interests], which is what I like to study. So that's why, you know, I decided to apply, because my plan was to probably go back to the States and work in the United States (FGP36, Spain, Argentina).

In this way, new information regarding opportunities for further study expands international students' 'awareness space', giving rise to new (im)mobility aspirations.

Thus, the analysis has identified various ways in which cultural capital – newly accumulated or, at least, re-assessed, in the country of study – shapes post-study (im)mobility aspirations. Firstly, aspirations can change because the returns on the educational investment are higher in the country of study, where the student's cultural capital has a higher value in the local labour market. Secondly, through their physical presence in the place of study international students may develop knowledge or familiarity (habitus) and social networks (social capital) that lower the barriers to converting their cultural capital into further study or work opportunities – usually in the country of study, thus motivating a decision to stay. Thirdly, newly-accumulated cultural capital may combine with new information on opportunities to further build on this cultural capital through further study, therefore expanding the international student's decisional awareness space. Finally, non-EU nationals may obtain new information on how their cultural capital interacts with local visa regimes, thus prompting the recalibration of their (im)mobility aspirations in accordance with their prospects for realising these.

It is clear from this analysis that the impact of cultural capital on decision-making processes in the country of study is often mediated by new social capital. It is also interesting to note that symbolic capital – wherein cultural capital bestows prestige on the holder by virtue of a logic of scarcity and distinction – did not emerge from the data as playing a role in shaping decision-making processes during the course of study. It is possible that symbolic capital was at work in the cases of those respondents who explained that their initial study programmes had turned into further study or job opportunities in the country of study – particularly given that many of these research participants had graduated from prestigious HEIs. If this was the case, it is nonetheless not surprising that research participants did not allude to their symbolic capital. Particularly in the context of a focus group setting, respondents may have felt that discussing the distinction associated with their qualifications would have been perceived as arrogant by the other focus group participants or researcher.

Social capital

An analysis of the role of social capital helps to identify the specific ways in which social networks mediate the decision-making outcomes discussed above. Firstly, as suggested above, social networks can play a large role in creating the international student's sense of familiarity with the place of study, thereby smoothing the path to a longer-term stay. Secondly, social networks can provide informational inputs into the decision-making process. Both of these effects are illustrated in the case of a Macedonian student whose aspirations to return to the country of study were formed as a

result of the social networks she built during her master's programme in Germany. This student initially followed her Argentinian boyfriend to Argentina upon graduation. She then returned to Germany for a PhD programme largely because the academic and social contacts she had made in Germany had, firstly, prompted her to consider doctoral studies and, secondly, inclined her to pursue doctoral studies in an educational and social environment with which she was already familiar:

And while I was finishing up my master's thesis it was actually my supervisor who encouraged me of thinking of pursuing a PhD. And I did a lot of thinking about that, and when I was thinking about where to do the PhD I was thinking that it would actually be nice to do it in a familiar setting. Because I had already switched so many educational environments, like Macedonia, the US, Germany, and then to do it in Argentina was, you know, it would have been too stressful. In Germany I already had people that I knew, I had my network (INT11, Germany, Macedonia).

Moreover, it was not only professional or academic contacts that had a role in shaping the (im)mobility options considered by international students. In the following case, a French Erasmus student's 'awareness space' was expanded by the decision-making of a friend:

At the beginning I was thinking that I would just stay for one year, it was for two semesters. And then in the end, one of my good friends decided to stay. And actually I had never thought about it and I thought, yes, why not? Actually I could stay. And I was thinking if I stay for a masters it is just two more years and my German would be really good, and I will have really gotten to know the city, because you know, I think I am a very slow person and I take the time to really get to know a place (INT08, Germany, France).

Thirdly, social capital can not only inform or prompt consideration of post-study (im)mobility options but can also directly provide post-study opportunities. This was the case for a Polish national whose professional networks, and clients in particular, exert a strong retaining influence on her decision-making. This student extended her post-graduate study programme as a result of taking up a consultancy opportunity which she received via LinkedIn during the course of her studies. Having successfully established her consultancy business (whilst still a student), she remained open to onwards mobility for the sake of her partner's preferences, but preferred to stay in the UK because of the professional network she had developed: '[...] for me with my current job situation, well, it would be much better for me to stay here, because the clients are here, physically' (FGP10, UK, Poland).

The social capital afforded to international students as a result of the social networks developed during the course of studies can therefore influence post-study (im)mobility aspirations in various ways. Firstly, social contacts can open up the international student's 'awareness space' to prompt consideration of new (im)mobility options. Secondly, the presence of social networks in the place of study can reduce the barriers to staying on in the country of study, thereby inclining the student towards an aspiration to stay. Thirdly, social networks can directly provide post-study opportunities, with consequences for the student's preferred mobility outcomes. In this analysis, the social capital accumulated over the course of study tended to be geographically emplaced in the location of study, inclining the student to stay on in the country of study upon graduation, rather than return or migrate onwards. It is easily conceivable that social networks developed in the course of study may

motivate other mobility aspirations – for example, for onward migration – but this was not reported by any of the research participants, and so remains an interesting question for future research to explore.

Economic capital

As regards economic capital, there was limited evidence that purely economic factors – for example wage differentials or employment rates – had, on their own, a determining influence on (re-)shaping respondents' post-study (im)mobility aspirations. The only case in which wage differentials did work – in conjunction with other factors – to incline a respondent to stay on after her undergraduate studies was described by a Polish national who explained that, at the end of her undergraduate degree, it no longer made sense to return to the Polish labour market and economy: *'So I came originally just for university, I didn't really consider staying longer. But then when you've racked up 30 grand in debt, in Pounds, it doesn't really make sense to go back to Poland'* (FGP12, UK, Poland). In contrast, a German PhD candidate studying in the UK realised that the ratio between his likely salary and the cost of living in the UK compared unfavourably to other EU destination countries he was considering for post-study employment. He explained that this information provided a new input into his decision-making that might incline him towards migrating onwards. However, his post-study (im)mobility aspirations remained open-ended (he had not yet completed his PhD), and he acknowledged that his future decision-making would likely be based on a range of other factors, including romantic and family ties and the destination country's social environment. As another example, for another German respondent who had just completed her undergraduate degree in the UK, staying in the UK offered a financial advantage. The offer of a paid PhD position in the UK (and which did not require the prior completion of a master's degree) led her to abandon her plans to return to Germany, where she would have had to pay to continue her studies: *'it's stupid to pay for your masters, so I stayed'* (INT29, UK, Germany).

Others made reference to their realisations that their employment prospects would be much better in the country of study than in their country of origin. For example, as a Ukrainian national who was studying a master's programme at the time of the interview explained, she had initially intended to return to the Ukraine at the end of her studies, but was now hoping to find employment in Germany:

I am not certain that I could find a fitting job in the Ukraine. It is always about this situation, this economic situation. I mean in the Ukraine it is not so easy at the moment, of course it is not that easy in Germany either, but still. I would definitely try to get a good job here (INT16, Germany, Ukraine).

In contrast, two other respondents realised that their employment prospects in the country of study (in these cases, Italy and Spain) were not what they had hoped, and therefore re-focussed their attention on opportunities for onwards migration:

For me, Italy was an option. After I realised how living in Rome, unless if I would have a good opportunity, I don't think I would stay in Rome. Italy could be an option, but I'm quite sceptical about if there are opportunities here anymore. So now I'm more open to everything. I just know I don't want to go home until I did try to work abroad or tried to work in another environment (FGP43, Italy, Hungary).

These references to a ‘good’ job or opportunity also suggest that, as discussed by other respondents, students who revised their post-study (im)mobility intentions based on new perceptions of their employment prospects were not necessarily – or not only – referring to their potential earning power (economic capital) in the country of study (in terms of employment rates and wage differentials). Rather, the ability to find work that suited their qualifications and career aspirations, as well as the broader social and cultural work environment, were important factors for respondents. An Irish national had planned to return to Ireland upon completion of his master’s studies in the UK, but then stayed on for another six years because he realised that *‘career wise it was a good decision to stay and get, it was better experience available in London then it would have been at home’* (INT36, UK, Ireland). Another Irish national explained that his decision to stay in the UK rather than to return to Ireland was shaped by the recent economic crisis, not because it had a direct impact on his own employment prospects in Ireland, but rather because it had created a dismal social environment to return to:

[...] actually I had a job [in Ireland], but it just felt that at the time with the economic crash, even if you did have a job it just didn’t feel like a great place to be, because obviously everything was so terrible with employment and people were just devastated by the crash, so I’d rather stay in London which at the time recovered quite quickly (INT35, UK, Ireland).

During the course of study, international students do therefore make assessments regarding the economic conditions of the country of study compared to that of the country of origin or third countries, and these assessments do, in some cases, lead students to revise their post-study (im)mobility aspirations. However, there was little evidence that post-study mobility decision-making is a function of rational economic cost-benefit analyses. Labour market considerations included factors such as wage differentials, the relative costs of further study opportunities, and the likelihood of finding employment, as well as ‘softer’ factors such as the students’ career development aspirations and the affective atmosphere emanating from broader socio-economic conditions.

Other factors (re-shaping) post-study (im)mobility aspirations

The analysis identified a range of other factors which are unrelated to the strategic accumulation of capital but which were discussed as having a determining impact on re(shaping) respondents’ post-study (im)mobility aspirations.

Mobility capital and location-specific capital as an unexpected by-product of the study abroad period

Some respondents discussed how the experience of study abroad developed in them the kind of personal characteristics and competencies that successful adaptation to a foreign environment requires (Murphy Lejeune’s ‘mobility capital’). In some cases, this mobility capital contributed to the formation of aspirations for further international mobility. As a German national explained, his initial Erasmus experience in Romania prompted him to return to Romania for a master’s programme, and then to remain internationally mobile over the course of his career:

[...] if someone had told me 10 years ago that I would work here and there, travel to these places, when I was 23 and went abroad for the first time. Because before that I had never travelled by myself, without family, when I was 23. With 23 I went to Romania by myself, and this experience, which is what I meant at the start, was an accelerator for personal

development. It has changed me and moulded me so much that it has driven me to constantly go abroad and work on my English language, to talk to people, these kinds of things (INT13, Germany, Germany).

Similarly, another participant emphasised that the 'safe framework' of the Erasmus scheme was important because:

[...] especially when you're really young, you know, you have the support of the university, you have all the structures, so you know there won't be any trouble really, it's fine, you won't be on your own. And so, having a helping hand for the first time you move abroad was really, really helpful. And then, as [the other focus group participants] said, it made me realise it's actually easy – and it becomes an addiction (FGP29, UK, Italy).

Although these accounts indicate the clear accumulation of capital that (re)shapes (im)mobility aspirations, we discuss them in relation to our seventh hypothesis because these decision-making processes do not seem to be shaped by the *strategic* accumulation of capital. Although it is possible that respondents had initially chosen to study abroad at least in part because they were attracted to the kind of symbolic capital that international mobility confers, these respondents described the changes to their 'dispositions of the mind and body' (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 243) with some degree of surprise, as if they had not been anticipated. Or, even if these respondents had wanted for themselves the kind of allure associated with international travel, the more fundamental changes to their personality, tastes and aspirations that they observed in themselves seemed to be an unexpected by-product of their study abroad experience, rather than a determinant of the decision to study abroad. As regards the study's seventh hypothesis, it is worth noting that all three of the research participants who explicitly discussed the ways in which their first experiences of studying abroad gave them the confidence and aspirations to undertake further international mobility were from EU, developed countries.

Similar discoveries were observed by students who explained that their successful adaptation to the foreign study environment explained their decisions to stay on in the country of study. For these respondents, it often seemed to be a combination of location-specific cultural and social capital that inclined them – often in conjunction with further study or work opportunities – to stay on in the country of study. For example, a Bulgarian national whose initial plans were open-ended but included the possibility of returning to Bulgaria had subsequently decided that she wanted to stay in Germany for a master's programme:

[...] now I am looking towards the future here, and the city just feels like home, and the people that I have here and the contacts that I have established. So if that can be considered a change, maybe I just feel more settled here now (INT17, Germany, Bulgaria).

As an Argentinian national explained, the accumulation of such location-specific capital is not necessarily an intended outcome of the study experience, but rather emerges as an important decision-making factor over the course of time spent in the destination country:

I don't know, when you plan you of course do not have all elements for thinking really how it is meant to be, and there are so many factors that you can't consider [...] before coming here.

And that's mostly personal factors which is like knowing people and integrating and making friends (FGP32, Italy, Argentina).

The Bulgarian student mentioned above further emphasised that the accumulation of such location-specific capital represents an investment that makes it easier to stay and increases the costs of leaving:

'[...] at this point I just think that, since [...] I am aware of how the tax system works and how the health insurance system works, etcetera, I am a bit unwilling to go somewhere else where I'd have to start from the beginning. So the safety that I have of knowing my way around things, of how the country, the state system functions. That is something that is sort of helping my decision to stay here and preventing me from a decision to move somewhere else' (INT17, Germany, Bulgaria).

In this sense, the development of location-specific capital might be better understood in terms of Bourdieu's 'habitus', in that it provides the international student or graduate with an ease of being and sense of self-efficacy in the place of study. Respondents who described their feelings of being 'settled' or 'rooted' in the place of study as an important factor in (re)shaping their post-study mobility decision-making were mostly – but not only – from developed countries of origin. The students from Bulgaria and Argentina cited above clearly contradict our initial hypothesis (H7) that only students from developed countries would be able to prioritise experiential preferences, as does a similar account given by a student from Azerbaijan.

In a smaller number of cases, respondents came to perceive through their study abroad experiences that they did not have – and were unlikely to accumulate – the location-specific capital necessary for them to feel satisfied with their positioning and opportunities in the place of study. For these respondents, a lack of integration or sense of belonging underpinned the formation of an aspiration to leave the country of study, whether that implied a return to the country of origin or onwards migration. This was based on their perceptions of discrimination, or of their perpetual status as an outsider that would prevent them from ever feeling like they truly belonged. For example, another Bulgarian national studying in Germany initially had entirely open-ended plans regarding her post-study (im)mobility, but had since decided that she did not want to stay in Germany, for the following reasons:

Well the thing that bothers me most is the fact that, culturally and socially, people here, Germans, are very different than Bulgarians. Like, for example, I have been here for like four or five years already but I could not build a strong friendship with any German. Of course, there are people that I can go to get drinks with and stuff like that, but it is never something deeper and I kind of do need that thing, so think that the factor that really stops me from staying here is that. Factor number two is that I am kind of a perfectionist and I don't feel good enough neither with my German or English [...] I need to be able to communicate, to have deep conversations. [...] it is still easier for me to have these kind of discussions in English than in German. This difficulty is one of the reasons why I do not want to stay forever in Germany and that I cannot imagine staying abroad, that is why I want to go back (INT22, Germany, Bulgaria).

In these cases, respondents' post-study (im)mobility aspirations were therefore changed by their perceptions that they lacked the cultural and social capital necessary for achieving their wider aspirations in the country of study. It is perhaps interesting to note that, in contrast to the respondents whose aspirations were influenced by the successful accumulation of location-specific capital, most of these respondents came from developing countries. This may suggest that it is more difficult for international students from developing countries to acquire the social and cultural capital necessary for them to feel optimistic about their longer-term prospects in the developed country contexts analysed in this study.

Enjoyment

Closely related to integration and belonging was the sense of enjoyment that respondents described as an important input into their post-study mobility decision-making. Enjoyment is in some cases difficult to distinguish from the accumulation of location-specific capital and the development of habitus – for example, where it was related specifically to a rich and fulfilling social life in the place of study. However, we draw attention to it as a separate factor because it is clear that, in some cases, enjoyment is not so much about the ability to thrive in the place of study but rather about the respondent's preference for the 'field' encountered in the place of study. These preferences were based on the discovery of cultural norms and practices, societal values, a political system or even a physical environment and climate in the place of study that respondents preferred to those that they had previously experienced.

For example, a Swiss national who had come to Germany with open-ended post-study mobility plans explained that, in addition to her successful social and economic integration, the socio-cultural environment she had discovered in Berlin motivated her to stay longer:

I find that the diversity and the access I have to many distant worlds in one place is something that I appreciate a lot about Berlin. And I think that there are several other things that I... that are quite unique, which I still want to sort of explore. I think there are things in the city that are unique that have nothing to do with, "oh, will I find work or not?", etcetera (INT21, Germany, Switzerland).

In some cases respondents' preferences for the place of study related to more tangible benefits, for example as described by an US national who had stayed on to pursue a PhD in Spain:

[...] I think after living here and seeing the differences in culture... I suppose mine were mainly cultural reasons. In the United States I was working, you know, 12 hours a day. It's really competitive. There's some great things about the United States, but after coming here I saw and I was like "oh, well, if I was going to have a family I think I'd rather have them grow up in that environment". Especially with the States it can be pretty violent, for young men especially. [...] That was a big factor. And so just being able to kind of... I'm so relaxed here compared to how I was there (FGP35, Spain, United States).

Two Argentinian nationals similarly reflected on the better quality of life they enjoyed in their EU countries of destination (Germany and Spain, respectively), compared to Argentina, and which had influenced their decisions to stay in their countries of study. One of these research participants referred to both the direct economic benefits available on the German labour market, as well as the broader psychological benefits that stem from the country's greater economic and political security:

For me there are factors that influence why I'd stay here, and like the certain stability that I feel here, that I don't have in Argentina. In Argentina there are constantly political crises, and economic crises, and inflation and... Here, there are a lot of job benefits as well (FGP16, Germany, Argentina)

For these and an Afghan respondent, who had decided to stay on in the UK because the security situation in Afghanistan had further deteriorated whilst he had been abroad, it is perhaps inaccurate to speak of their 'enjoyment' in the country of destination. Rather, their preferences for the country of destination should be understood in relation to the more basic human needs for physical and ontological security. Nonetheless, these cases similarly illustrate how international students may experience the place of study as offering them a better living environment and life opportunities, in ways which go beyond the strategic accumulation of or ability to deploy of capital. Overall, respondents who discussed their enjoyment as an important decision-making factor came from a range of geographic backgrounds. Most were from developed and EU countries but, as illustrated above, others came from developing countries outside the EU. Moreover, although it is clear that the importance of physical and ontological security is a more pertinent decision-making factor for students from certain less developed and more insecure countries outside the EU, 'lighter' experiential or lifestyle considerations were also relevant to other respondents from non-EU, developing countries. For example, an Indian national emphasised that his enjoyment of '*student life*' in the UK was an important factor alongside his realisation that his career prospects would be better in the UK, as discussed at the beginning of this section (INT11, UK, India).

It should furthermore be noted that, in a smaller number of cases, research participants explained that their *lack* of enjoyment of the place of study motivated their aspirations to leave following the completion of their studies. For example, following the completion of his PhD in the UK, an Italian national searched for work opportunities elsewhere in the EU because he was ready for something different and he missed the Mediterranean lifestyle. He explained that his decision-making was '*driven a bit by, you know, the usual things like the weather, food, social relationships. So I decided to move and find something a bit closer to Italian culture*' (INT20, UK, Italy). Lifestyle factors were also important for a Canadian national who preferred to move on elsewhere in the EU rather than stay in Rome because he wanted to be able to spend more time on outdoors activities such as cycling, running and hiking, which he found that he was not able to easily do in Rome.

Although this analysis focuses on instances in which post-study (im)mobility aspirations actually changed, it is worth noting that sometimes, the experience of life in the destination country did not change the international student's immediate post-study plans, but provided inputs into their longer-term mobility decision-making. This was particularly the case for respondents interviewed in the UK, who had stayed on as initially intended, or whose post-study (im)mobility plans remained open-ended, but whose newly gained insights into life in the UK inclined them to leave the country in the longer-term. These respondents had concerns that the UK's social, cultural and political environment (and the weather) did not offer an attractive place in which to settle. The UK's decision to leave the EU featured in some of these explanations, but broader consideration was also given to, for example, social stratification and inequality, and the UK's response to the so-called "refugee crisis". Most of these respondents were from developed, EU countries. The exceptions were three South Africans, two of whom nonetheless had EU nationality and could therefore more easily stay in the UK, if they wanted to.

Romantic ties

Romantic relationships often had a determining role in shaping post-study (im)mobility aspirations. Sometimes the break-up of a relationship allowed the international student to consider other (im)mobility options. For example, a Polish national explained that, having broken up with the boyfriend who she had left in Poland, she was able to pursue a new aspiration to stay in the UK:

So I had quite a lot of pressure from my partner at the time – we’ve been together for five years and he stayed in Poland when I came here. He said yeah, go back, he wants to have a family. So we broke up. But yeah, so that was like the only thing for me holding me back (FGP12, UK, Poland).

In other cases, respondents formed a new romantic relationship in the country of study, which motivated them to stay on. However, as described in Section 5 regarding the role of romantic ties on the decision to study abroad, the presence of a romantic partner in the country of study was not necessarily the only or primary reason to stay longer. For example, in the case of a Swiss national who, as mentioned earlier in this section had decided to pursue opportunities to stay in Berlin in order to further improve her German and enrich her experience of Berlin, being able to stay with her new partner was an advantage but not a critical determinant of her decision:

[...] and I think also that one of the factors that I stayed was when I was doing Erasmus I met someone and I fell in love. And this also kind of motivated, like I think that it wasn't the main factor because [...] at first I was just like “it was just for the time while I am in Erasmus and when I go back we'll see what happens. And if it is important or serious for both of us we can make it happen”. And then I saw the opportunity to stay longer and to try and challenge myself, so I stayed. But I think it is definitely also part of my decision (INT08, Germany, France).

In the case of a couple of EU nationals who formed new relationships, their (im)mobility aspirations were shaped by the interaction between their romantic ties and the cultural capital requirements (namely, language proficiency) and citizenship capital that constituted their partner's migration abilities. For example, regarding language, an Italian respondent in the UK explained:

In my case I got my life more complicated during the study, because I fell in love with one of my coursemates and we married here in the UK. And we both use English as our language we have in common, but my first language is obviously Italian and her first language is Indonesian, so the UK becomes somehow a neutral country, in between the other two (FGP32, UK, Italy).

He further explained that he and his partner were attracted to other countries but were reluctant to leave the UK because of the constraints associated with his partner's citizenship capital. This respondent considered that they had already invested so much in the processes for obtaining visas and permanent residency in the UK for his non-EU national wife that they did not want to start from scratch in another country. Meeting the requirements for his wife's visa had been ‘a real nightmare’ but it would be ‘even worse to go back to Italy and start from zero’, particularly because he felt that the UK visa requirements and regulations were at least clearer than in Italy.

It is worth noting that, as was found regarding enjoyment of the place of study, some respondents had formed relationships in the country of study which had not yet necessarily changed their post-

study (im)mobility aspirations, but which they explained would be important factors in their future decision-making. For example, as a Polish national explained:

[...] my plan is still to move from London after a couple of years, so that hasn't changed. However, the destination is likely to be in Europe now, as opposed to Asia, given that I met a girlfriend on the way who is not that keen to live in Asia. Who is more keen to be based in Europe (INT06, UK, Poland).

With regard to the initial hypothesis (H7), romantic ties were described as having an important role in (re)shaping post-study (im)mobility decision-making processes by respondents from mostly – but not only – developed, EU countries. However, it should be noted in relation to the EU/non-EU national distinction that the development of romantic relationships can blur any distinction between the decision-making processes of international students who do and do not have secure legal status. This is because, as the account given by the Italian national described above illustrates, students with ‘high’ citizenship capital (i.e. EU nationality) may nonetheless find themselves beholden to visa regimes that pose constraints on their partners’ (im)mobility choices.

Table 9 summarises the conclusions to the study’s sixth and seventh hypotheses regarding the factors that (re)shape post-study (im)mobility aspirations over the course of study. Our sixth hypothesis is clearly confirmed. As overviewed above, there are various ways in which cultural and social capital influence post-study mobility decision-making over the course of the study abroad period. These are moreover often highly interlinked, such as in cases where social connections facilitate the conversion of cultural capital into further study or job opportunities. Access to economic capital can also play a determining role in post-study mobility decisions, although rational cost-benefit analyses regarding income differentials and employment rates did not emerge as a common feature of international students’ decision-making in the place of study. Indeed, broader employment and economic conditions – including the quality of career opportunities and the general socio-economic climate – were highlighted as important decision-making factors.

As regards other factors unrelated to the strategic accumulation of capital, respondents described the ways in which their post-study (im)mobility aspirations were shaped by the unanticipated accumulation of mobility capital; the development – or lack of – place-specific social ties, familiarity and belongingness; enjoyment of and preferences for certain social, cultural, political and physical environments; and the break-up and formation of romantic relationships. These accounts were given by research participants from developing and developed countries, as well as from both EU and non-EU countries, thus rejecting the initial hypothesis (H7). Although these decision-making factors are not *unrelated* to capital (for example, the choice of romantic partner or pursuit of leisure activities are clearly often correlated with the individual’s stock of cultural and economic capital), these findings reiterate the importance of understanding international student decision-making in relation to the student’s broader life aspirations, and of conceptualising the student experience not only as the strategic accumulation of capital. Indeed, as was found in Section 5, decision-making processes were often shaped by multiple considerations – for example, where work opportunities, lifestyle preferences and romantic ties cumulatively inclined an international student to stay in the longer term. Or, as one German national put it *‘It just so happened that everything kind of worked out for me to stay here’* (INT33, UK, Germany).

Table 9. Evidence in relation to Hypothesis 6 and 7

H6: <i>During the course of study, changes in the student's relative capital stock (and therefore ability) lead to changes in their post-study (im)mobility aspirations.</i>	Confirmed: Substantial evidence for the ways in which newly accumulated cultural and social capital, and access to economic capital, influence post-study mobility decisions.
H7: <i>Among students from developed countries, post-study (im)mobility aspirations may change as a result of aspirations unrelated to the strategic accumulation of capital.</i>	Rejected: Students from developing countries also described the influence of their integration, enjoyment, and romantic relationships on (re)shaping their post-study (im)mobility aspirations.

8. Discussion and Conclusions

This paper contributes to a recent and growing body of literature which seeks to investigate the ways in which international student decision-making is shaped by the structural contexts in which these aspirations are formed. To this end, it offers a valuable international comparative analysis, the lack of which has limited existing understandings of ISM decision-making. Moreover, by drawing on a set of 115 interview and focus group accounts, the study responds to the need for qualitative explorations of international student decision-making, which are required for 'the detailed analysis of student experiences, behaviours, and attitudes [...] [giving] depth and complexity to student subjectivities' (King & Raghuram, 2013, p. 132).

The study has firstly tested the applicability of existing theorisations of ISM decision-making to the decisions made by students from different countries of origin. The first part of the analysis sought to answer the question 'What motivates the decision to study abroad in the EU, and how do these motivations vary across different countries of origin?' Regarding the initial hypotheses (1-3), the study found rich evidence for the wide applicability of both the human capital approach and the youth mobility cultures framing to international students from across both developed and developing countries. As regards the cultural capital model, it was more difficult to assess the extent to which ISM was a *family* strategy to reproduce social distinction given that family members were not included as research participants. Nonetheless, there was clear evidence to reiterate the relevance of the cultural capital model in the East Asian NIE settings in which the model was first developed. There was also evidence to suggest that the cultural capital model may be similarly relevant to other geographic regions and national contexts where the symbolic capital associated with a foreign qualification holds particular value amongst employers. Moreover, the analysis provides further empirical support for Findlay et al.'s (2012) analysis of international student mobility as a strategy for social differentiation among UK students from more privileged private/independent school backgrounds. More specifically, the data demonstrates that it is not only particular national contexts which produce ISM aspirations as a result of location-specific social relations which help to convert international qualifications into career and social success. Rather, it is evident that students from international schools (wherever these may be located) belong to a mobility culture wherein the elite, de-territorialised social networks which characterise the 'transnational capitalist class' reproduce distinction through international mobility. Table 10 (below) presents a summary of the evidence in relation to all seven of the hypotheses explored in this paper.

Table 10. Summary table for all hypotheses examined.

H1: <i>Human capital theory is most relevant to the decision-making of students from developing countries (excluding NIEs).</i>	Rejected: Human-capital related motivations are frequently relevant to students from both developed and developing countries of origin.
H2: <i>The cultural capital model is most relevant to the decision-making of students from NIEs and (other) developed countries.</i>	Ambiguous: The cultural capital model is most clearly relevant to respondents from East Asian NIE settings. But it may also be relevant to other national contexts – both NIE and developing. It furthermore seems highly relevant to international-school settings, which transcend national boundaries and structural conditions.
H3: <i>The youth mobility cultures framing is most relevant to the decision-making of students from developed countries.</i>	Rejected: Experiential objectives are commonly relevant to students from both developed and developing, EU and non-EU countries of origin.
H4: <i>Students whose decisions to study abroad align with the cultural capital model aspire to return to their country of origin following the completion of their studies.</i>	Partly confirmed: Students whose decision-making reflected the original cultural capital model largely expected to return to their countries of origin. However, students from international school backgrounds most commonly had open-ended plans, often assuming continued international mobility.
H5: <i>Students whose decisions to study abroad align with the youth mobility cultures framing aspire to prolong their international mobility following the completion of their studies, either by staying in the country of study or migrating onwards to a third country.</i>	Rejected: No clear patterns identified regarding their post-study (im)mobility intentions.
H6: <i>During the course of study, changes in the student's relative capital stock (and therefore ability) lead to changes in their post-study (im)mobility aspirations.</i>	Confirmed: Substantial evidence for the ways in which newly accumulated cultural and social capital, and access to economic capital, influence post-study mobility decisions.
H7: <i>Among students from developed countries, post-study (im)mobility aspirations may change as a result of aspirations unrelated to the strategic accumulation of capital.</i>	Rejected: Students from developing countries also described the influence of their integration, enjoyment, and romantic relationships on (re)shaping their post-study (im)mobility aspirations.

The differing manifestations of the cultural capital model identified in this analysis moreover point to the paper's value as a survey of the specific motivations or strategies encompassed by the three theoretical models. Some of these – for example, language-acquisition, access to a higher-quality or more prestigious HEI, and the allure of new experiences and broadened horizons, are well-established in the literature. However, other motivations have received much less attention and yet emerge as highly relevant to the international students who participated in this study. These include the pursuit of the right person-course fit; exposure to particular professional fields and career development opportunities; and the distinction between the desire for 'new' experiences versus the desire for immersion in a specific foreign environment. Furthermore, although the comparative analysis points to the broad geographic relevance of the three ISM models at a high level, the evidence suggests that specific decision-making factors may be more or less relevant to different

student-origin groups. For example, the prioritisation of person-course fit may be most relevant to students from developed – and particularly EU countries – who perhaps assume relatively easier access to international labour markets and whose pursuit of educational specialisation may relate to the broader trend towards the individualisation of personal biographies. In contrast, a different strategy is observed among students from non-EU developing countries for whom the international higher education market offers a bridge to more secure political and/or economic systems.

The results of this first analysis also suggests broader points regarding the conceptualisation of the decision to study abroad. Firstly, it is clear that different theoretical models can apply simultaneously to an individual decision-making process – most commonly, strategic human capital motivations were accompanied by experiential objectives. Further, the data supports recent arguments that the decision to study abroad should not be framed as categorically distinct from other types of migration decision-making (King, 2002; King & Raghuram, 2013; Raghuram, 2013). Rather, students' decisions to become internationally mobile are often based on multiple and interacting factors, some of which relate to their other identities and aspirations – for example, as family members or romantic partners. In this way, the internationalised higher education market allows prospective students (who are typically young, and relatively free from the care-giving or other commitments that may constrain mobility later in life) to simultaneously pursue the multiple aspirations – work, study, lifestyle, psychological, or partnership-related – which characterise their processes of identity-formation as young adults.

The study's second research question asked: 'How does the decision to study abroad relate to the student's initial aspirations (i.e. formed prior to starting their foreign study programme) regarding their post-study (im)mobility?'. In contrast to the initial hypotheses (4-5), a range of post-study (im)mobility intentions (and including a lack of firm intentions) were associated with each of the models. Among respondents for whom human capital motivations and experiential objectives dominated the decision to study abroad, initial post-study (im)mobility intentions varied widely. As regards the cultural capital model, return plans were common among the respondents whose decisions to study abroad were motivated by the symbolic capital that would be attributed to their international qualifications by employers in their countries of origin. On the other hand, students from international school backgrounds, for whom the symbolic capital associated with international mobility depends less on national structural contexts, tended to have entirely open-ended post-study plans, which often assumed continued international mobility as a likely outcome.

Some clearer trends associated with specific motivations or particular manifestations of the models can therefore be observed. Open-ended plans were also typically reported by respondents who had prioritised finding the right person-course fit in their decision to study abroad, suggesting that these students were intending to similarly navigate the international labour market in pursuit of the right job opportunity for their skills and interests. In contrast, respondents who chose to study in the country of destination based on the particular labour market opportunities available there more often had firmer intentions to stay in the country of study. Nonetheless, legal rights to live and work in the EU, often based on 'citizenship capital' (Kalm, 2020), emerge as the perhaps more important determinant of post-study (im)mobility expectations. Students without EU nationality – and without expectations that it would be relatively straightforward for them to secure a long-stay visa or residence permit – tended to have firmer expectations regarding their post-study (im)mobility, which was usually to return to their countries of origin. In contrast, EU nationals less commonly

engaged in longer-term planning. Instead, EU nationals commonly held very vague or open-ended ideas regarding their post-study (im)mobility, often considering onwards mobility to other destination countries alongside the prospect of returning to their country of origin or staying in the country of study. These findings therefore support other studies on student and graduate decision-making which have noted that the ‘most privileged young adults are also largely immune from the pressure to engage in strategic life planning’ (Brooks & Everett, 2008, p. 335; Findlay et al., 2017). ‘Citizenship capital’ should therefore be considered an important component of international students’ mobility ‘ability’, allowing EU nationals the freedom to improvise, whilst narrowing the (im)mobility options considered by non-EU nationals from the outset of their study abroad experiences.

The final part of the analysis addresses the study’s third research question: ‘How are post-study (im)mobility aspirations (re)shaped over the course of the student’s foreign study programme?’ As regards the initial hypotheses (6-7), substantial evidence was found for the role of changing capital stocks as a key factor in the formation or revision of longer-term (im)mobility aspirations. In some cases, the shift in decision-making was not only prompted by the accumulation (or enhancement) of cultural or social capital, but came about through the realisation of how the student’s existing capital could be best deployed in order to secure, for example, economic, further study or career development opportunities. Cultural and social capital often worked in combination to incline international students to stay in the place of study. It will be interesting to observe whether, in future research, social networks developed in the course of study (perhaps online rather than in the place of study) also motivate other mobility aspirations such as onwards migration. However, it should also be noted that, in accordance with existing studies on high skilled and graduate migration, factors unrelated to the strategic accumulation of capital – including the development of mobility capital or location-specific cultural and social capital, enjoyment of the place of study, and the formation or end of romantic relationships – can also have a determining role in shaping post-study mobility outcomes.

Overall, this paper makes several theoretical and empirical contributions to the literature on international student decision-making. It provides a much needed in-depth comparative analysis of the decision-making of students from 49 countries of origin who had studied across five different EU destination countries. Secondly, it compares post-study (im)mobility aspirations and outcomes to initial expectations and aspirations. However, the strength of the conclusions is limited by the following methodological realities. Firstly, as Murphy-Lejeune (2002) has pointed out:

[...] if trying to disentangle the maze of a person’s motivations is at the very heart of therapeutic interviewing, it is not the point of a research interview. The account of the motivations the students expressed must be considered as a likely sample of reasons which draw their value from the more or less rationalised meaning actors assign to this aspect of their life story (p.76).

This is true of our interviews and perhaps truer of our focus groups, in which the group discussions were guided by the direction of shared conversational threads, and it is therefore not clear whether individual participants would have offered more detail, or mentioned other aspects of their decision-making, if they had had the “floor” to themselves. Secondly, although the study makes use of respondents’ retrospective accounts to help fill a gap on international students’ migration

‘imaginings and aspirations’ prior to the study abroad period (Van Mol, 2014, p. 121), retroactive data-collection may of course be affected by recall bias. Respondents may have introduced slight inaccuracies into their accounts of their past decision-making, due to gaps in their memories, or because their auto-biographical narrative accounts may be coloured by their post-decision experiences or by the desire to present their decision-making processes as more coherent than they necessarily were. Future studies would therefore ideally employ a longitudinal design in order to more reliably capture the evolution of international students’ decision-making and identify the critical events and junctures within these. Secondly, although the present research offers a rich cross-section of insights from a relatively large (qualitative) dataset, due to the sampling strategy employed for the wider project’s data-collection, there was limited attention given to ensuring representativeness in terms of the research participants’ gender, class, ethnicity and countries of origin, as well as the fields and levels of studies that they pursued abroad. The findings should therefore be interpreted as illustrative of the variations in international student decision-making, and future research should seek to more systematically assess the role of these other variables in shaping decision-making processes.

Lastly, the study has particular relevance in light of the sudden and unprecedented halt to ‘normal’ international mobility practices. At the time of writing, international travel restrictions imposed as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic have begun to be lifted within the EU, but restrictions are still largely in place for travel between EU and non-EU countries. Moreover, even if usual transport links and border controls resume, if the heightened health risk remains, individuals may not be as willing as they used to be to travel internationally, given the risks of relying on public transport, implications regarding health insurance and access to healthcare, and the fear of being ‘stranded’ away from loved ones and support networks in the case of illness. Higher education providers have adapted to these constraints by innovating in the delivery of online or virtual education. However, this study clearly demonstrates that the prospect of an ‘online’ higher education programme will have varied impacts on student enrolment, given the diverse range of motivations for studying abroad. For example, students for whom human capital motivations are most important may not mind – or may even find it easier to participate in – an online degree programme, if they can be confident that they will still acquire the skills, knowledge and/or internationally-recognised qualification that they value in an international study programme. However, if the student also conceives of an international study programme as an opportunity to access the destination country’s labour market, they may well be less interested in ‘distance learning’ programmes. Although the cultural capital model of decision-making emphasises the prestige of an international qualification that could, in theory, be acquired virtually, the model’s emphasis on the *embodied* nature of the desired cultural capital – including, for example, language proficiency, inter-cultural competencies and a cosmopolitan mindset – may be less easy to transfer virtually. As regards students for whom youth mobility cultures-type experiential motivations are most important, it is difficult to imagine that participation in an online course (from one’s country of current residence) would incentivise enrolment. Similarly, as regards the ‘other’ motivations for international student mobility, students who would otherwise enrol in foreign study programmes in order to join a romantic partner or other family members, or in order to return to their family ‘roots’ or access a different political and/or economic system may make alternative decisions if they are unable to physically re-locate to the country of study. As policymakers within governments and HEIs make their contingency plans for the continued delivery of higher education, an understanding of the varied motivations that international students have for

studying abroad may help to explain – and perhaps even predict – enrolment rates. Moreover, specific measures – for example, to facilitate access to employer networks, or offer jobseeker visas to international graduates even if they have not physically re-located to the country in which they are enrolled as students – may help to incentivise international student ‘inflows’ even if participation remains virtual.

Bibliography

- Abbott, A., & Silles, M. (2016). Determinants of international student migration. *The World Economy*, 39(5), 621–635. <https://doi.org/10.1111/twec.12319>
- Aksakal, M., & Schmidt, K. (2019). The role of cultural capital in life transitions among young intra-EU movers in Germany. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2019.1679416>
- Baláž, V., & Williams, A. M. (2004). 'Been There, Done That': International Student Migration and Human Capital Transfers from the UK to Slovakia. *Population, Space and Place*, 10(3), 217–237. <https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.316>
- Beck, U., & Beck-Gernsheim, E. (2002). *Individualization*. Sage.
- Beech, S. E. (2014). Why place matters: Imaginative geography and international student mobility: Why place matters. *Area*, 46(2), 170–177. <https://doi.org/10.1111/area.12096>
- Beech, S. E. (2015). International student mobility: The role of social networks. *Social and Cultural Geography*, 16(3), 332–350. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649365.2014.983961>
- Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (pp. 241–258). Greenwood Press.
- Brooks, R., & Everett, G. (2008). The prevalence of 'life planning': Evidence from UK graduates. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 29(3), 325–337. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01425690801966410>
- Brooks, R., & Waters, J. (2010). Social networks and education mobility: The experiences of UK students. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 8(1), 143–157. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14767720903574132>
- Brown, L. A., & Moore, E. G. (1970). The Intra-Urban Migration Process: A Perspective. *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography*, 52(1), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.2307/490436>
- Carling, J. (2002). Migration in the age of involuntary immobility: Theoretical reflections and Cape Verdean experiences. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 28(1), 5–42. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691830120103912>
- Carling, J. (2019). *Measuring migration aspirations and related concepts (MIGNEX Background Paper)*. Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO).
- Carling, J., & Schewel, K. (2018). Revisiting aspiration and ability in international migration. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 44(6), 945–963. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2017.1384146>
- Carlson, S. (2013). Becoming a Mobile Student—A Processual Perspective on German Degree Student Mobility. *Population, Space and Place*, 19(2), 168–180. <https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.1749>
- Caruso, R., & de Wit, H. (2015). Determinants of Mobility of Students in Europe: Empirical Evidence for the Period 1998-2009. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 19(3), 265–282. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315314563079>
- Choudaha, R. (2017). Three waves of international student mobility (1999–2020). *Studies in Higher Education*, 42(5), 825–832. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2017.1293872>
- Corcoran, J., & Faggian. (2017). Graduate migration and regional development: An international perspective. In J. Corcoran & A. Faggian (Eds.), *Graduate Migration and Regional Development*. Elgar.

- de Wit, H., Ferencz, I., & Rumbley, L. E. (2012). International student mobility: European and US perspectives. *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education*, 1–7. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603108.2012.679752>
- Dubow, T., Roeder, S., Marchand, K., & Siegel, M. (2019). *Evidence of the Determinants of Migration in the EU [REMINDER Working Paper]*. Maastricht University. <https://www.reminder-project.eu/publications/working-papers/evidence-of-the-determinants-of-migration-in-the-eu/>
- European Commission. (2015). *European Agenda on Migration*. https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration_en
- European Commission. (2018). *Managing migration in all its aspects: Progress under the European Agenda on Migration*. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/eu-communication-migration-euco-04122018_en_1.pdf
- European Commission. (2020a). *Erasmus+ factsheet*. https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/about/factsheets_en
- European Commission. (2020b). *Students*. https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/opportunities/students_en
- European Commission. (2020c). *The Bologna Process and the European Higher Education Area*. https://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/higher-education/bologna-process-and-european-higher-education-area_en
- European Commission. (2020d). *What is Erasmus+?* https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/about_en
- European Commission. (2020e). *Who can take part?* https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/about/who-can-take-part_en
- European Migration Network. (2019). *Attracting and Retaining International Students in the EU*. Migration Network.
- Eurostat. (2020, March 11). *Learning Mobility Statistics: Tables and Figures [data file]*. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Learning_mobility_statistics#Origin_of_students_from_abroad
- Faggian, A., McCann, P., & Sheppard, S. (2007). Some evidence that women are more mobile than men: Gender differences in UK graduate migration behavior. *Journal of Regional Science*, 47(3), 517–539. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9787.2007.00518.x>
- Findlay, A., King, R., Smith, F., Geddes, A., & Skeldon, R. (2012). World class? An investigation of globalisation, difference and international student mobility. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 37(1), 118–131. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-5661.2011.00454.x>
- Findlay, A., Prazeres, L., McCollum, D., & Packwood, H. (2017). ‘It was always the plan’: International study as ‘learning to migrate’. *Area*, 49(2), 192–199. <https://doi.org/10.1111/area.12315>
- Haapanen, M., & Karhunen, H. (2017). Working while studying: Does it lead to greater attachment to the regional labour market? In J. Corcoran & A. Faggian (Eds.), *Graduate Migration and Regional Development: An International Perspective* (pp. 114–138). Edward Elgar.
- Hazen, H. D., & Alberts, H., C. (2006). Visitors or Immigrants? International Students in the United States. *Population, Space and Place*, 12(3), 201–216. <https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.409>
- Holloway, S. L., O’Hara, S. L., & Pimlott-Wilson, H. (2012). Educational Mobility and the Gendered Geography of Cultural Capital: The Case of International Student Flows between Central Asia and the UK: *Environment and Planning A*. <https://doi.org/10.1068/a44655>

- Hooijen, I., Meng, C., & Reinold, J. (2020). Be prepared for the unexpected: The gap between (im)mobility intentions and subsequent behaviour of recent higher education graduates. *Population, Space and Place*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.2313>
- Hooijen, I., Meng, C., Reinold, J., & Siegel, M. (2017). Competition for talent: Retaining graduates in the Euregio Meuse-Rhine. *European Planning Studies*, 25(12), 2212–2231. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09654313.2017.1354976>
- Jubb, E. (2018, January 11). *You say stability, I say stagnation [Blog]*. <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/blog/Pages/You-say-stability-I-say-stagnation.aspx>
- Kalm, S. (2020). Citizenship Capital. *Global Society*, 0(0), 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13600826.2020.1758637>
- King, R. (2002). Towards a New Map of European Migration. *International Journal of Population Geography*, 8, 89–106. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ijpg.246>
- King, R., & Findlay, A. (2012). Student Migration. In M. Martinello & J. Rath (Eds.), *An Introduction to International Migration Studies: European Perspectives* (pp. 257–278). Amsterdam University Press.
- King, R., Lulle, A., Moroşanu, L., & Williams, A. (2016). *International Youth Mobility and Life Transitions in Europe: Questions, Definitions, Typologies and Theoretical Approaches [Working Paper No. 86]*. <https://www.sussex.ac.uk/webteam/gateway/file.php?name=mwp86.pdf&site=252>
- King, R., & Raghuram, P. (2013). International Student Migration: Mapping the Field and New Research Agendas. *Population, Space and Place*, 19(2), 127–137. <https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.1746>
- King, R., & Ruiz-Gelices, E. (2003). International Student Migration and the European ‘Year Abroad’: Effects on European Identity and Subsequent Migration Behaviour. *International Journal of Population Geography*, 9, 229–252. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ijpg.280>
- Levkovich, O., Rouwendal, J., & Sá, C. (2016). International students and the Netherlands. In S. Musterd, M. Bontje, & J. Rouwendal (Eds.), *Skills and Cities* (pp. 170–207). Routledge.
- Lulle, A., Janta, H., & Emilsson, H. (2019). Introduction to the Special Issue: European youth migration: human capital outcomes, skills and competences. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2019.1679407>
- Marcu, S. (2015). Uneven mobility experiences: Life-strategy expectations among Eastern European undergraduate students in the UK and Spain. *Geoforum*, 58, 68–75. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2014.10.017>
- Maringe, F., & Carter, S. (2007). International students’ motivations for studying in UK HE: Insights into the choice and decision making of African students. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 21(6), 459–475. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09513540710780000>
- Mazzarol, T., & Soutar, G. (2002). Push-pull factors influencing international student destination choice. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 16(2), 82–90. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09513540210418403>
- Mosneaga, A., & Winther, L. (2013). Emerging Talents? International Students Before and After Their Career Start in Denmark: International Students in Denmark. *Population, Space and Place*, 19(2), 181–195. <https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.1750>
- Murphy-Lejeune, E. (2002). *Student mobility and narrative in Europe: The new strangers*. Routledge.
- Nicolini, D. (2013). Praxeology and the Work of Giddens and Bourdieu. In *Practice Theory, Work, and Organization: An Introduction*. Oxford University Press.

- OECD. (2017). *Education at a Glance 2017: OECD Indicators*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2017-en>
- OECD. (2019). *Education at a Glance 2019: OECD Indicators*. <https://doi.org/10.1787/19991487>
- Pelliccia, A. (2014). Modern Greek student mobility in Italy: Between inaccessibility and social reproduction. *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 14(4), 530–547. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14683857.2014.967963>
- Perkins, R., & Neumayer, E. (2014). Geographies of educational mobilities: Exploring the uneven flows of international students. *The Geographic Journal*, 180(3), 246–259. <https://doi.org/10.1111/geoj.12045>
- Prazeres, L., Findlay, A., McCollum, D., Sander, N., Musil, E., Krisjane, Z., & Apsite-Berina, E. (2017). Distinctive and comparative places: Alternative narratives of distinction within international student mobility. *Geoforum*, 80, 114–122. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2017.02.003>
- Raghuram, P. (2013). Theorising the Spaces of Student Migration. *Population, Space and Place*, 19, 138–154. <https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.1747>
- Rahimi, R., & Akgunduz, Y. (2017). Driving force analysis of East European students to study tourism and hospitality in the U.K. *Anatolia*, 28(2), 224–238. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13032917.2017.1311273>
- Rodríguez Gonzáles, C., Bustillo Mesanza, R., & Mariel, P. (2011). The determinants of international student mobility flows: An empirical study on the Erasmus programme. *Higher Education*, 62, 413–430. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-010-9396-5>
- Sjaastad, L. A. (1962). The Costs and Returns of Human Migration. *Journal of Political Economy*, 70(5), 80–93. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1829105>
- Sklair, L. (2001). *The transnational capitalist class*. Blackwell.
- Sleutjes, B. (2016). Housing and amenities as attracting factors for cities and their regions; a literature review. In S. Musterd, M. Bontje, & J. Rouwendal, *Skills and Cities*. Routledge.
- Stark, O., & Bloom, D. (1985). The new economics of labor migration. *The American Economic Review*, 75(2), 173–178. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1805591>
- Suter, B., & Jandl, M. (2008). Train and Retain: National and Regional Policies to Promote the Settlement of Foreign Graduates in Knowledge Economies. *International Migration and Integration*, 9(4), 401–418. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-008-0072-x>
- Sykes, B., & Chaoimh, E. N. (2012). *Mobile Talent? The Staying Intentions of International Students in Five EU Countries*. The Expert Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration. <https://www.svr-migration.de/en/publications/mobile-talent-the-staying-intentions-of-international-students-in-five-eu-countries/>
- University of Oxford. (2017). *International Trends in Higher Education 2016-2017*. http://www.ox.ac.uk/sites/files/oxford/trends%20in%20globalisation_WEB.pdf
- van Bouwel, L., & Veugelers, R. (2013). The determinants of student mobility in Europe: The quality dimension. *European Journal of Higher Education*, 3(2), 172–190. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21568235.2013.772345>
- Van Mol, C. (2014). *Intra-European Student Mobility in International Higher Education Circuits: Europe on the Move*. Palgrave MacMillan.
- van Parijs, P. (2000). The ground floor of the world: On the socio-economic consequences of linguistic globalization. *International Political Science Review*, 21(2), 217–233. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192512100212006>

- Waters, J. (2005). Transnational family strategies and education in the contemporary Chinese diaspora. *Global Networks*, 5(4), 359–377. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-0374.2005.00124.x>
- Waters, J. (2006). Geographies of cultural capital: Education, international migration and family strategies between Hong Kong and Canada. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 31(2), 179–192. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-5661.2006.00202.x>
- Waters, J., & Brooks, R. (2011). ‘Vive la différence?’: The ‘international’ experiences of UK students overseas: The ‘International’ Experiences of UK Students Overseas. *Population, Space and Place*, 17(5), 567–578. <https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.613>
- Wei, H. (2013). An empirical study on the determinants of international student mobility: A global perspective. *Higher Education*, 66(1), 105–122. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-012-9593-5>
- Winters, J. V. (2012). Differences in employment outcomes for college town stayers and leavers. *IZA Journal of Migration*, 1(1), 11. <https://doi.org/10.1186/2193-9039-1-11>
- Zheng, P. (2014). Antecedents to international student inflows to UK higher education: A comparative analysis. *Journal of Business Research*, 67(2), 136–143. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2012.11.003>

The UNU-MERIT WORKING Paper Series

- 2020-01 *Debating the assumptions of the Thirlwall Model: A VECM analysis of the Balance of Payments for Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, and Mexico* by Danilo Spinola
- 2020-02 *The La Marca Model revisited: Structuralist Goodwin cycles with evolutionary supply side and balance of payments constraints* by Danilo Spinola
- 2020-03 *Uneven development and the balance of payments constrained model: Terms of trade, economic cycles, and productivity catching-up* by Danilo Spinola
- 2020-04 *Time-space dynamics of return and circular migration: Theories and evidence* by Amelie F. Constant
- 2020-05 *Mapping industrial patterns and structural change in exports* by Charlotte Guillard
- 2020-06 *For real? Income and non-income effects of cash transfers on the demand for food* by Stephan Dietrich and Georg Schmerzeck
- 2020-07 *Robots and the origin of their labour-saving impact* by Fabio Montobbio, Jacopo Staccioli, Maria Enrica Virgillito and Marco Vivarelli
- 2020-08 *STI-DUI innovation modes and firm performance in the Indian capital goods industry: Do small firms differ from large ones?* By Nanditha Mathew and George Paily
- 2020-09 *The impact of automation on inequality across Europe* by Mary Kaltenberg and Neil Foster-McGregor
- 2020-10 *What matters in funding: The value of research coherence and alignment in evaluators' decisions* by Charles Ayoubi, Sandra Barbosu, Michele Pezzoni and Fabiana Visentin
- 2020-11 *The productivity impact of business visits across industries* by Mariacristina Piva, Massimiliano Tani and Marco Vivarelli
- 2020-12 *Technological revolutions, structural change & catching-up* by Jan Fagerberg and Bart Verspagen
- 2020-13 *Semi-endogenous growth models with domestic and foreign private and public R&D linked to VECMs with evidence for five countries* by Thomas Ziesemer
- 2020-14 *The economic impact of public R&D: an international perspective* by Luc Soete, Bart Verspagen and Thomas H.W. Ziesemer
- 2020-15 *Taking the challenge: A joint European policy response to the corona crisis to strengthen the public sector and restart a more sustainable and social Europe* by Jo Ritzen, Javi Lopez, André Knottnerus, Salvador Perez Moreno, George Papandreou and Klaus F. Zimmermann
- 2020-16 *Migration of higher education students from the North Africa Region to the United Kingdom* by Samia Satti Osman Mohamed Nour
- 2020-17 *Overview of the Sudan Uprising* by Samia Satti Osman Mohamed Nour
- 2020-18 *Inter-country Distancing, Globalisation and the Coronavirus Pandemic* by Klaus F. Zimmermann, Gokhan Karabulut, Mehmet Huseyin Bilgin and Asli Cansin Doker
- 2020-19 *How does innovation take place in the mining industry? Understanding the logic behind innovation in a changing context* by Beatriz Calzada Olvera & Michiko Iizuka
- 2020-20 *Public universities, in search of enhanced funding* by Jo Ritzen
- 2020-21 *Ph.D. research output in STEM: the role of gender and race in supervision* by Giulia Rossello, Robin Cowan and Jacques Mairesse
- 2020-22 *Labour market effects of COVID-19 in sub-Saharan Africa: An informality lens from Burkina Faso, Mali and Senegal* by Racky Balde, Mohamed Boly, and Elvis Avenyo

- 2020-23 *Occupational sorting and wage gaps of refugees* by Christopher F Baum, Hans Lööf, Andreas Stephan and Klaus F. Zimmermann
- 2020-24 *Policy opportunities and challenges from the Covid-19 pandemic for economies with large informal sectors* by Rajneesh Narula
- 2020-25 *Economic gender gap in the Global South: how institutional quality matters* by Elena Bárcena-Martin, Samuel Medina-Claros and Salvador Pérez-Moreno
- 2020-26 *How important is GVC participation to export upgrading* by Gideon Ndubuisi and Solomon Owusu
- 2020-27 *Patterns of growth in structuralist models: The role of the real exchange rate and industrial policy* by Gabriel Porcile, Danilo Spinola and Giuliano Yajima
- 2020-28 *COVID-19, Lockdowns, and Africa's Informal Sector: Lessons from Ghana* by Elvis K. Avenyo, John Nana Francois and Tatenda P. Zinyemba
- 2020-29 *The political economy of public research, or why some governments commit to research more than others* by Andrea Filippetti and Antonio Vezzani
- 2020-30 *Economic preferences across generations and family clusters: A large-scale experiment* by Shyamal Chowdhury, Matthias Sutter and Klaus F. Zimmermann
- 2020-31 *International student mobility decision-making in a European context* by Talitha Dubow, Katrin Marchand, Melissa Siegel