

# Eastern European and Student in Denmark

## Navigating Towards International Potential



Aalborg University

Culture, Communication and Globalization

Thesis, spring 2015

**Johanne Buur Bruntse**

Stream: International Migration and Ethnic Relations

Supervisor: **Peter Hervik**

**STANDARD FRONTPAGE  
FOR  
EXAMINATION PAPERS**

To be filled in by the student(s). Please use capital letters.

Subjects: (tick box)	Project	Synopsis	Portfolio	Thesis x	Written Assignment
----------------------	---------	----------	-----------	----------	--------------------

Study programme:	Culture Communication and Globalization, IMER		
Semester:	10		
Exam Title:	Thesis		
Name, Date of birth/ Names, Dates of birth of group members:	Name(s)	Study number	Date of birth (not CPR number – only 6 numbers: dd/mm/yy)
	Johanne Buur Bruntse		170687
Hand in date:	29.5.2015		
Project title /Synopsis Title/Thesis Title	Eastern European and Student in Denmark Navigating Towards International Potential		
According to the study regulations, the maximum number of keystrokes of the paper is:	168.000		
Number of keystrokes (one standard page = 2400 keystrokes, including spaces) (table of contents, bibliography and appendix do not count)*	153.753		
Supervisor (project/synopsis/thesis):	Peter Hervik		

I/we hereby declare that the work submitted is my/our own work. I/we understand that plagiarism is defined as presenting someone else's work as one's own without crediting the original source. I/we are aware that plagiarism is a serious offense, and that anyone committing it is liable to academic sanctions.

Rules regarding Disciplinary Measures towards Students at Aalborg University:

<http://www.plagiarism.aau.dk/Rules+and+Regulations/>

Date and signature(s):

29.5.2015

29.5.2015

Johanne B. Bruntse

## Abstract

Among the international students that arrive at the universities and higher education institutions in Denmark, the number of young people from the Eastern European countries seem to increase (Supule. I. 2015, unpublished data). They are coming to Denmark in order to acquire international skills, which will benefit them in their future search for a job, either in Denmark or in their home countries. The Danish export market and the Danish state, express how the international students are beneficial for Denmark, as they constitute a desired international workforce, with their language skills and knowledge upon foreign cultures (Jensby, A.G. in Eksportmagasinet 2015; <http://viewer.zmags.com/publication/23e8b168#/23e8b168/20>).

In order to assure, that the migrants have the best possible experience in Denmark and succeed to acquiring the international skills, knowledge about their aspirations and how they experience the process of becoming acquainted with the Danish population and culture seems important. As stated by a young Lithuanian woman, who have been doing her MA-studies in Denmark, this process is rather challenging, pointing to an awareness of differences between her and the Danes as a part of the challenge. This challenge of becoming a part of the Danish culture will be in focus within this present thesis.

Through qualitative interviews with six international students in Denmark, from respectively Lithuania and Latvia, the challenges and circumstances of the challenges have thus been explored. Elaborating on their initial interest of going to Denmark and their everyday life experiences of social interactions with people from Denmark, a number of themes shows prevailing, in relation to their challenges. These especially concerns the Danish language, a different behavior and values as well as the migrants' national designation. Here differences between the migrants and the people they meet in Denmark seem challenging in different ways, according to how the differences are perceived between both parts. This observation has within the analysis led to a designation of three overall explanatory narratives that seem prevailing within Denmark about the demands of how to become a part of the Danish society, and which both the migrant and people in Denmark in general seem to draw on. The narratives are presented as the demand of nationalistic belonging as the first, to share cultural values as the second, and acquiring international potential as the third.

What the analysis moreover shows is that the migrants apply different strategies in order to deal with these narratives and find their way towards a sense of belonging in Denmark. Here, four strategies are appointed. Supported by theory on home by Mahmoud and Märtsin (2012), all strategies entail an interest in both exploring the unknown and pertaining some sort of familiarity within the experience of migration, in order to establish a sense of home.

The two first strategies relate to the narrative number one concerning the nationalistic belonging. They are in short to either assimilate as well as possible in Denmark or to counter-balance the nationalistic demands by stressing their own national belonging. Here theory of Billig (1995) about 'Banal nationalism' is used, in order to depict the confirmation of national belonging. Balibar's (2010) theory of 'anthropological difference' and Appadurai's (2006) theory upon 'fear of small numbers' is used in order to offer an explanation to how differences of a national character are stressed within the national state in order to uphold a national coherence and identification with the state.

The third strategy relates to the narrative number two concerning shared cultural values, and entails to build up communities with people in Denmark, around shared values such as work or interest. In relation to the third narrative about required international potential, the fourth strategy is to acquire knowledge about culture in Denmark, such as becoming acquainted with the Danish language and behaviors, juxtaposed to their own culture as equivalent important. How the migrants succeed in obtaining different kinds of connection to people in Denmark, by emphasizing other types of affiliation than the nationalistic belonging, shows how the management of different cultures within one country is dependent on not only the present narratives, but also the interest and choices of people involved. By applying Dominguez (1989) the importance of the construction of differences in relation to the migrants' choices of action, is emphasized. Moreover, this construction and objectification supports Blommaert and Verschueren's (1998) notion about a management culture concerning migration. The present research thus suggests that the migrants, in spite of strong narratives about differences and the meaning of differences within the Danish society, are able to navigate among these narratives by applying different strategies, allowing them to obtain a continuation of both a sense of identity and a sense of home. It suggests an agency, which leaves possibility of both continuation and recreation of the narratives within the society, and thus the society.

## Table of Content

Table of Content .....	0
Introduction.....	2
Problem Formulation.....	3
The Field of Exploration.....	3
The Group of Latvian and Lithuanian Migrants in Denmark .....	3
‘International Potential’ – Towards a Benefit-Oriented Approach to the Eastern European Students.....	4
Methodological Framework .....	6
What to Call the Informants .....	6
Methodological Considerations.....	6
Conducting Narrative Analysis.....	7
The Prediction of Skill Acquisition in Narratives.....	9
The Construction of Difference .....	10
The Interview Questions.....	10
The Interview Situation and Data - Empirical Considerations.....	11
The Informants .....	12
Ethical Considerations .....	13
Theoretical Considerations.....	14
Theory.....	15
The Anthropological Difference .....	15
The Fear of Small Numbers .....	17
A National Division of Land and People .....	17
A Nation State.....	17
The Everyday Nationalism – Banal Nationalism .....	18
Banal Nationalism as an Identification Process.....	19
Banal Nationalism on a Global Scene .....	19
To Manage Migration .....	20
To Establish A Home.....	21
Continuing the Experience of Home through Migration.....	21
Migration as a Continuation of Life Plans.....	22
Analysis.....	24
Motivated Migrants – In Denmark.....	24
The Battlefields of Differences .....	30

<i>The Language</i> .....	30
<i>Culture</i> .....	35
<i>The Rigid National Naming</i> .....	42
Navigating Towards a Sense of Belonging in Denmark .....	46
The Entry to Denmark .....	46
Explanatory Narrative Number One: The Nationalistic Demand .....	47
Explanatory Narrative Number Two – The Demand of Sharing Cultural Values.....	51
Explanatory Narrative Number Three – The Demand of Acquired International Expertise .....	52
Conclusion .....	55
Literature .....	58

## Introduction

At the Danish universities and higher education institutions, a number of international students have arrived during the years. Here they accomplish or complete an education, which they carry with them in their search for a job, either abroad or in Denmark. There seems to be an increasing tendency of international students coming from the Eastern European countries (Supule. I; 2015, unpublished data). As Europeans, they are included in the system of the Schengen Agreement, which means that they can stay and work in Denmark as European citizens. In Denmark there is a growing awareness of the present and especially upcoming need for highly educated citizens, where exactly this group of international students is pointed at, as a potential workforce (Tænketanken DEA, 2015; 13). International study programs and the possibility to acquire governmental funding during studies, support this development.

However, as a quote from a Lithuanian woman suggest, the process of becoming a part of the Danish society seems to be characterized as a challenge often seen in relation to the notion of cultural differences:

“(...) there are many differences, more than similarities. It is all these small things, that makes it really really hard, they constitute so much, even though it is small things. (...) (A)nd we have like a challenge, to become a part of each others culture” (Lotta; 6).

That she relates her difficulties in Denmark to “*differences*” that “*constitute so much*” and a challenge “*to become a part of each other’s cultures*” suggests that to maintain the international students in Denmark depends on the students’ success of overcoming this process. In order to support this process to understand the circumstances of their challenge seems important. Referring to the quote above this implies to have a closer look at what is constituted by which differences and how it relates to the challenge of becoming a part of each other’s culture. Not succeeding in this respect could cause that the migrants will chose to move back again or continue their search in a third country. As already pointed out, this would, from a financial point of view be an unfortunate development for the Danish state. From the migrant’s perspective, this would, on top of financial considerations probably result disappointment and unfulfilled dreams.

With a point of departure in interviews with a small group of Eastern European students, from respectively Lithuania and Latvia, about their everyday life of social interactions in Denmark, I will thus in this thesis look at their challenge of integrating in Denmark. There will be a specific awareness of how the migrants are navigating among opinions and demands concerning their integration as well as their own aspirations for their migration process. To become acquainted with their expectations, experiences and strategies in Denmark is believed to improve the knowledge upon both the migrants and the Danish society and the

circumstances that are being offered the migrants. Although the research is rather limited with regards to the amount of people and interviews, it is my believe, that such contributions of insight can be a useful step further towards a strengthened integration of the migrants.

## Problem Formulation

The goal of this thesis is therefore to explore the challenge as well as circumstances for the challenge that students from Lithuania and Latvia face when striving for a sense of home and belonging in Denmark.

Through qualitative interviews and analysis of these, I will approach this overall aim of the thesis, posing following sub-questions:

- What are the circumstances for the choice of moving to Denmark and what are the goals of the migratory process?
- How are differences between the migrants and Danish citizens experienced to become a challenge within the integration process?
- How do the migrants respond to the challenge and what does that tell about the construction of the challenge?

## The Field of Exploration

### The Group of Latvian and Lithuanian Migrants in Denmark

The three post-Soviet countries Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania became in 2004, together with a number of other countries, a part of the European Union. A status, which did entail not only a new high political identification, but in which a large framework of European legislation existed. Among other new legislative allowances the principle of free labor movement within the European Union, enforced in 1995 through the Schengen Agreement, enabled this new European population to migrate more easily to other European countries in the search for settlement than ever before (Castles and Miller, 2009; 197). In addition to the labor movement, more and more students began to migrate from East to West within the EU, with the initial plan of obtaining an international education and for some followed by work abroad as well. In Denmark where education is free of charge, more and more migrants from among others the Baltic countries have found their way. To cover the costs of living, it is possible to receive the Danish State education grant, also called

'SU', if the student is able to work for 10-12 hours per week on a contract (Styrelsen for videregående uddannelser;

<http://www.su.dk/SU/betingelser/udenlandsk/ligestillingeu/arbejde/arbtagselvst/Sider/default.aspx>).

In the case of Latvia extensive research on the emigrant communities of Latvia shows that the number of Latvian migrants in Denmark has raised from 2691 in 2010 to 4239 in 2014, both numbers from the beginning of the year (Supule, 2015; unpublished data). In 2014 the percentage of migrants in the age of 15-24 comprised 26,5% and at the age 25-34 the percentage was 34,3%. A survey has been conducted the same year among 471 Latvians in Denmark, giving different indications to why they had decided to migrate to Denmark. It showed that 43% were looking for new skills through education, 40% wanted to increase life conditions, 37% searched for new horizons, 38% wanted to work and 19% because of family living in Denmark. In general, they stressed the importance of the following conditions of social security, stability and supportive welfares system in Denmark. The equivalent data for earlier years as well as for the other Baltic countries have not been possible to state, but what this quantitative data shows is that a big share of the migrants are young, and education is one of the most popular reasons why to travel to Denmark. It has however been stated, that the tendency of the so-called 'brain drain', which indicate an outflow of educated workforce, is a general problem in all the three Baltic states (Danielsson, A., 2010, February 10; [www.balticworlds.com/brain-drain-or-brian-gain/](http://www.balticworlds.com/brain-drain-or-brian-gain/)). The outline of the situation in Latvia could therefore be assumed to indicate a general picture of the migration pattern for the three countries.

## 'International Potential' – Towards a Benefit-Oriented Approach to the Eastern European Students

Initiatives for supporting the international students' integration within the educational system as well as enlightenment and support in relation to entry of the Danish labor market seem apparent in Denmark. As an example of such initiative is a recent event called 'International Potential Day' arranged by a number of actors job and carrier-consultants from Aarhus University, VIA University College, a Danish unemployment-fund 'CA-A kasse', as well as from the Danish Organisation 'Integrationshjælp – En del af dansk flygtningehjælp'. Presenting cases of Danish enterprises who successfully have employed international students together with speeches and workshops about how to approach and succeed within the Danish labor-market, this event was an attempt from the Danish institutional and organizational side, to strengthen international employment in Denmark. The multi-faceted landscape of the political debate, initiatives and

administrative implementations will not be presented here, as it requires comprehensive analysis that exceeds the present need. What is important to stress here, in relation to the public debate and societal approach towards the Eastern European immigrants, is that there seems to be an awareness of how the group is needed as a part of the Danish workforce and in that sense population (Lind. A., 2015, March 26; [www.dr.dk/Nyheder/Indland/2015/03/26/124332.htm](http://www.dr.dk/Nyheder/Indland/2015/03/26/124332.htm))

In relation to internationalization of Danish companies recent research from Tuborg Research Centre for Globalisation and Firms, Aarhus Universitet, School of Business and Social Sciences with support from 'Tuborgfondet' shows thus that employment of foreign educated workforce in Danish companies strengthens the companies export because of the employee's relevant language skills and cultural understanding of the present countries (Jensby, A.G. in Eksportmagasinet 2015; <http://viewer.zmags.com/publication/23e8b168#/23e8b168/20>).

From a recent report made by DAMVAD, the University of Aarhus Denmark and VIA University College Denmark, not only *potential* of the international students in Denmark, but *dependence* of these students in Denmark:

*"This study shows that there are huge potentials in having international students in Denmark. Once the economy gets going again the need for attracting international talent, will increasing [sic] in importance. A number of Danish companies already depends very much international labour [sic] and everything points to the fact that this will become even more important in the years to come. Thus, we need to keep focusing on the challenges associated with the international students' transition to the Danish labour [sic] market."* (DAMVAD, 2013; 8)

This positive approach towards international students gives the impression that their existence in Denmark is not only welcome but highly valued by the Danish labor-market and in the state as well.

## Methodological Framework

### What to Call the Informants

Altogether, I will name 'people who moves' for 'migrants' in this present thesis. Looking at its original meaning of the word 'migrant' it means to be moving from one place to another (Gyldendal; Den store danske; [http://www.denstoredanske.dk/Sprog,\\_religion\\_og\\_filosofi/Sprog/Fremmedord/mi-mo/migrant](http://www.denstoredanske.dk/Sprog,_religion_og_filosofi/Sprog/Fremmedord/mi-mo/migrant)). In connection to the Latvian and Lithuanian migrants in Denmark, it indicates that they are people who have moved away from one country in the world where they are related to relatives, culture and a societal system to another country in the world with different circumstances. That they are on their move can therefore not only be understood in the physical sense, but as a part of a cultural move where different values, meanings and behaviors will be frequented. To call them by their national belonging like Latvians or Lithuanians has the risk to refer to a pre-understanding of national sense of belonging, which is a notion that to some extent will be questioned within this thesis to see how the use of nationalistic inspired terms in itself plays a role in the challenges of migration and integration movements. In order to refer to legal status, the citizenship will be applied, such as Latvian, Lithuanian or Danish citizenship. Hence, there is called for a more neutral naming within this research of the challenge of becoming a part of the Danish society and migrants seem on this anti-nationalistic approach to be the most appropriate. An implication of using migrants as designation for the present group of people is, that it prepares the ground for an understanding of the people only to be 'on the move' towards the Danish society, and as such not a part of it, consequently regarding them as non-belonging. However, as the focus in this thesis is not on their role in Denmark, but to get insight to exactly this procedural part of their life, which is to become a part of the Danish culture, employing 'migrant' as designating term with its procedural connotation seems justifiable.

### Methodological Considerations

To approach the research question of the constitution of the challenge of the Eastern Europeans in Denmark, six qualitative semi-structured interviews has been conducted. Referring to the methodological approach of Kvale (2007) this design of the interview was in line with the overall purpose of the type of material I was looking for (Kvale, 2007; 33). Conducting the semi-structured interview implies the deductive approach of research in the sense, that I, with point of departure in my problem formulation and pre-understanding of related theoretical focus points, have an idea about which topics my interviews would touch upon. I was thus aware of a concrete difference of national belonging, and some theoretical considerations about the

implications of the constitution of difference between a population and groups of migrants. Furthermore, I was interested in the circumstances for challenge of becoming a part of the Danish culture, which my problem formulation reflected. On the other hand, the semi-structured interview gives the possibility to elaborate on unforeseen themes, which through analysis could reveal an insight on difference, which were not expected. This qualitative approach of following up on topics that my informants are touching concerning the overall topic, gives the possibility of developing an insight to the Baltic migrants' experiences of challenge, stressing the inductive premise of the research as well. Approaching the interviews with a certain focus on narratives through narrative means such as emotions within their answers is a way to reveal themes, which can be used in order to interpret useful knowledge from statements of the informants. This approach of interpreting on the answers with an initial and encouraging pre-understanding but openness towards unforeseen angles and revelations within the interview draws on a hermeneutical approach to the field. It has the dialectic benefit of the possibility to elaborate on the empirical material guided by the answers of the informants as well as the pre-understanding, in order to reach new conclusions on the overall topic. However, the chance of drawing a broad and general picture through the rather few interviews, is limited.

The aim of conducting interviews with migrants from Latvia and Lithuania is to elaborate specifically on the point of view from the immigrants' perspective on the process of becoming a part of the Danish society through the analysis. This is not to say, that the Danish perspective of the integration process is less interesting, but that an important aspect of the integration process is especially how this group experience and react towards, what they meet in Denmark. To get their explanations and elaborations on those is an important knowledge that can be compared with other point of views on the life in general for different groups of minorities and majority. This aspect is thus meant to contribute to a broadening of the understanding of the Danish society, for all its different groups of inhabitants. The interviews is thus my primary data for research as they tell about their acts and experiences. A few quantitative numbers on Latvian migrants have been added in order to give an idea about the development of immigration of the specific group of interest.

### Conducting Narrative Analysis

In order to obtain a better understanding of the circumstances of the challenge that the migrants are facing in Denmark there will be a focus on the narratives within the interviews concerning the challenge of the informants. To use narrative analysis together with the semi-structured interviews gives the possibility to

categorizing the statements of the informants as narratives and reveal their subjective meaning of these narratives through interpretation and theoretical considerations (Bamberg, 2010; 3).

Narratives are stories of experience, that are given a narrative form (ibid.; 3). It is a highly subjective piece of information to do research on as the narrator decides what to be told, and whereby the narrative “(...) *give order to and make sense of what happened – or what is imagined to have happened (...)*” (ibid.; 3). When informants are telling their life-story as they are here, when being asked about their lived life throughout a longer period, with various decisions, explorations and considerations for the future, they are also creating the story about themselves, as they are “(...) *the first interpreters of the stories told (...)*” (Atkinson, 1998; 7). According to Bamberg (2010), the articulation of the self through narratives is today the very source to the question of identity, as created within the narrative (ibid.; 7). To tell self-reflective narratives about the self as the informants do in these interviews, can therefore be what he call a “(...) *devise for the organization of self and (modern) identity(...)*” (Bamberg; 6), which is open for construction in terms of change and personal development (Bamberg; 6). What makes the representation of a person even more subjective within the narrative is the fact that people are representing many narratives, under impact of different contexts for the narrating as well as interpretation of both audience and the narrator. In that sense the plot of the narratives are not always consistent. Moreover, the mere situation of an interview, with interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee must be considered in addition to the interview, interpreting both the methods of the narrator and the perspectives of the interviewer.

There are different interview techniques with different advantages for the elicitation of narratives. In this case, the semi-structured interview is decided on because elicitation of the narratives can be guided by temporal and theoretical points and still it is possible to leave room for elaboration of unforeseen narratives. There are different forms of narratives, from short stories of an episode, to longer life-stories. This means that the statements can be approached as short narratives within themselves, and they can refer to more overall thematic narratives, as it will be of use in the following analysis. There are as well different methodological approaches within the tradition of narrative analysis when revealing and analyzing the narratives. They can be divided into having a focus on texts and practice (Gubrium and Holstein, 2009 in Bamberg 2010). For the first part, the text, focus is especially on textual structures, themes, time and space within the narratives. The second part, the practice, is more concerned about the exact situation of the narration. In this present case, the focus will mostly be upon the text as the themes they express are of main consideration.

Quotes will throughout the paper be highlighted differently in the way that incorporated quotes from literature will be written in continuation of the text unless they extend 3-4 lines, and thus will be separated from the text in italic type. The empirical material of conducted interviews which is used within the paper will always be separated from the text in normal type. The few words that has been emphasized by the interviewees are written in capital letters.

### The Prediction of Skill Acquisition in Narratives

In order to reveal the narratives of the informants during the analysis the 'Five stage model of adult skill acquisition' presented by Dreyfus (2004), can be beneficial. Here they differentiate knowledge acquisition, starting with the lowest level of skill acquisition between stage one, as the novice; stage two of the advanced beginner; stage three of competence; stage four of proficiency and finally stage five of expertise. According to Dreyfus (2004), the different levels of skill acquisition have the benefit, that it categorizes people's reactions on knowledge in different ways. Thus, the novice has only acquired knowledge on a level where the utilization is still guided by rules, that has to be calculated in order to entail a reaction. The advanced beginner react on the basis of a bit experience and some maxims. The competent performer are aware of many rules and perspectives dependent on a growing knowledge, but because of limited experience each situation demands a decision of which perspective to apply. The proficient performer has acquired so much experience with his or her acquired knowledge that it has become embodied, and decisions can be made on the basis of less rules and more a feeling of the right choice. The best way to obtain the goal is however not intuitively felt yet because of less experience compared to the last level performer; the expert. On this last level of knowledge acquisition, the expert has acquired the rules to an extend where he or she in a situation of action does not have to think about the most suitable action for obtaining a goal but reacts intuitively because the knowledge about the situation is acquired to a much deeper level. (Dreyfus, S.E., 2004; 180).

Applying Dreyfus' (2004) theory to the interviews, there will therefore be a focus on how the statements are added a personal and emotional reaction. When talking about themes, that they might most possibly have been discussing with others before the present interviews, some comments and explanations could easily become replicated or maybe generalized or elaborated as a default statement by themselves. To depict whether this is the case of their statements or not needs further elaboration and questions. However, the chance that the opinion and thus acquired knowledge that they express, has been internalized and reached an intuitive level seems more convincing, the more emotionally expressed their statements are. The theme

and content of the statement is then believed to have a certain personal importance for the informant. Searching for synchronicity within their statements is another applied method to depict personal opinions and thus sense of believe which can be looked further into through elaborating questions.

## The Construction of Difference

Whenever the informants are stating that their problems seem to be a matter of either the national or ethnic difference, which is between Danes and either Lithuanians or Latvians, there will be a specific concern within the analysis as it refers to the overall concern of the thesis. According to Dominguez (1989) differences such as ethnic differences are a construction of "*Otherness*" (Dominguez, V.R., 1989; 16) which is managed, and not existing per se, or "(...)"*a fact of*" *cultural or social differences among sections of the human population(...)*" (ibid.; 16). Hence, differences between people, such as their difference in language, behaviors and nationality or origin, can consciously be articulated and managed as differences that constitute different 'Others' with certain privileges or lack of such. The differences can in their construction be perceived as narratives when defending a management of some cultural or social differences in a society. Thus, the different Eastern Europeans or International student in Denmark, as "*constructed objectifications*" (ibid.; 16) holds a potential of being managed as a non-national or ethnic group, and it does as well according to Dominguez (1989) entail a possible "*Self-determination*" (ibid; 16). Within the interviews, I will thus, when difference is used as an explanation to the challenge of becoming a part of each other's culture try to see how the difference is constructed and managed.

## The Interview Questions

The aim of the interviews was to obtain an insight of the circumstances of the challenges that the interviewees – a number of Eastern European students – experience in Denmark when trying to 'fit in' or, in other words tries to become a part of the Danish society. The interview guide was therefore designed in a thematic structure concerning an overall framework of 'fitting in', with underlying topics of different social interactions as I assumed that was the place to look for the struggle of negotiating affiliation to the Danish society. This concerned both family, friends, acquaintances in work and study-situations, and other places where they carried out their life. As my puzzlement of the Eastern European integration within the Danish society was initiated by the previous quote from Lotta, where she stresses the importance of difference and similarity within the challenge of becoming a part of each other's cultures, I stayed aware of the informants'

articulation of such differences and similarities during the interviews. I expected elaboration on this topic to reveal more knowledge about them as migrants, the receiving population and the surrounding society as difference and similarity can be subjectively experienced, and therefore not objective explanations to problems. As underlying premises, I expected their choices of migrating to and maybe even settling within Denmark, as influencing how they experienced the challenge of becoming a part of the Danish society. Thus, the interview questions were moreover concentrated around their general background for migrating and their hopes and dreams for the future.

In order to find out, which aspects that had a value for them, I encouraged the informants to talk about how they had felt about different experiences, what puzzled them, how they had responded and why such responds. To search for the feelings, that emphasizes opinions or acts, was, in line with the argument of Dreyfus's (2004) method a way of making sure, that what they told, was encouraged by personal interest and sense of believe.

Furthermore, to conduct the interviews with focus on the temporal perspective gave the opportunity to see whether the informants seemed to go through some kind of process through their time in Denmark and thereby if challenge of becoming a part of the Danish culture was dependent on a time-factor or seemed to be more consistent. The aim was to see what it could tell about the circumstances of the challenge.

### The Interview Situation and Data - Empirical Considerations

Five of the interviews were conducted over skype, and one was conducted in person. The contact to Dicte, Elli, Daina and Lotta was initiated through Aalborg University in Denmark. The fifth informant, Raivo, is married to Daina, and the contact to Ilse was initiated through a volunteer network in Aarhus. The informal character of our contact is believed to support a trustful atmosphere within the situation of the interviews. Being asked about their challenges and experiences of their personal life in Denmark such a comfortable situation seemed important in order to let them speak freely about their lives and allow me to get insight to their experiences. Whether the interviews were conducted over Skype or in a direct contact, the informants were eager to answer my questions about their situation in Denmark and often came back to some answers, elaborating or correcting themselves. My interpretation is that my stated aim with the interviews and research of improving the knowledge on their situation of integration in Denmark was encouraging for them. If they have over-exaggerated some points or left out information in order to present themselves in a specific

way is not possible to state, but in order to validate their answers as much as possible, I continuously encouraged them to give examples to support statements and opinions.

Considering the both inductive and deductive approach through the thesis, a higher number of informants could have been interesting for the search of elaboration on some of the issues/theories. The time-consuming exercise of collecting this sort interview data was however limiting.

The interviewees had originally been migrating from respectively Lithuania and Latvia, which means that Estonia as the last Baltic country has not been covered in the research. If the purpose of the interviews was to compare migrants from the Baltic States in order to see if there were any major variance within the answers of Baltic people whom are often lumped together in different research, it would have been interesting to have statements from representatives of all three countries. However, the number of interviews would even with a few interviewees from the Estonia have been very limited for that purpose. In addition, the main purpose of the present thesis is to elaborate on the experiences that migrants in Denmark from a relatively close part of Europe have and which makes Latvia and Lithuania representable.

## The Informants

A short presentation of the informants follows, with the basic information about their country of origin, age, education and occupation.

### Daina

When Daina was 17 years old, she moved from Latvia to Denmark where she stayed at a Danish 'højskole'. She came back as she was 19 and did an AP-degree from Danish Academy of Business and Technology in Viborg, Denmark. She continued at Aalborg University, where she is now finishing her MA in Culture, Communication and Globalization. Daina is married to Raivo, and together they have a son who is two years old.

### Dicte

She came to Denmark three years ago, to study her BA in Art and Technology at Aalborg University in Denmark. She comes from Lithuania, is 24 years old, but have worked in London for a year before she came to Denmark. Dicte lives with her Lithuanian boyfriend in Aalborg.

### Elli

Elli came to Denmark two years ago, after she had finished her BA in the UK. There she met her boyfriend who is Danish, and they now live together in Aalborg. Elli is 25 years old, originally from Lithuania and is finishing her MA in Development and international relation and Chinese this spring.

Ilse

Seven years ago, Ilse moved from Latvia to Denmark, where her mother lived already. For the two first years, she worked, and afterwards she took a BA-degree at Aalborg University in Tourism. She has been working afterwards and is now applying for her MA in Tourism in Copenhagen. Ilse is 25 years old.

Lotta

Lotta comes from Lithuania, and moved to Denmark three years ago, as she had finished her BA-degree in Literature in Vilnius, Lithuania. She has completed her MA-degree last summer from Aalborg University in Culture, Communication and Globalization. Now she is looking for a job in Denmark.

Raivo

Raivo is 25 years old and moved to Denmark six years ago. He has a BA-degree from the Danish Academy of Business and Technology in Viborg in Entrepreneurship. He has been working in the following years, but is vacant at moment, considering to continue his studies or to work.

## Ethical Considerations

As the present interviews were conducted in relation to the sensitive topic of personal experiences of challenges in Denmark, I, as the interviewer, was aware of the importance of creating a trustful and relaxed atmosphere in order to obtain sincere and elaborated answers. Especially the situation that I as a Dane could be seen as a representative of the community with which they were struggling to understand and become a part of, made it important to stress my position as neutral as possible. Emphasizing our common ground as students, as well as a basic curiosity on their situation in Denmark I attempted to reach a level of confidence, which would encourage the informants to tell their experiences of their life in Denmark. As I explained that the purpose of this thesis is to broaden the knowledge about this group of migrants in Denmark shedding light on possible ignorance or misconceptions of their experiences and expectations in Denmark, and thereby hopefully improve their integration process in Denmark, they were very all very eager to explain and elaborate on their thoughts. Moreover, all informants are anonymous as this ensure an even more safe

ground for elaboration on both personal thoughts and feelings that the informants do not wish to make public. The informants have all given a prior informed consent for using their answers in the present thesis.

## Theoretical Considerations

In the following different theoretical approaches to the topic of 'the challenge of becoming a part of other cultures' will be presented. As the notion of becoming a part of other cultures imply that there are differences among the cultures, the theory of Balibar (2012) about 'Anthropological difference' will first be presented. It gives an elaboration of some of the hierarchal elements of difference as an approach to an understanding of where the challenge of merging cultures could be. In line with Balibar's (2012) explanatory theory on the hierarchal reality of the nation state Appadurai's (2006) notion of the 'Fear of small numbers' (2006) will be presented. The theory points to notions of nationalism as a strategy to coop with difference. To broaden the understanding of how such ideology works on an everyday basis, Billig's (1995) theory of 'Banal nationalism' will be presented. The reinforcement of such an ideology emphasizes an understanding of national difference as something unnatural, which needs to be managed as a problem. These first theoretical points are referring to the challenge within migration, as dependent on the differences among people.

Another approach to the process of becoming a part of each other's cultures through migration is the focus on the migrant's personal agency of creating a home through migration. To migrate and settle abroad through the acquisition of new skills in order to create a home stresses how migrating and settling abroad, encompassing differences is a part of the wanted goal. Creating a home abroad is challenging because of the dialectic meaning of home and migrating away from home. However, it enables the migrant with some personal agency and choices for navigation that seem important when meeting the challenge of becoming a part of another culture. This approach will be presented through points from an article by Mahmoud and Märtsin (2012).

## Theory

### The Anthropological Difference

Balibar (2012) engages in the discussion of how differences are being perceived in the society, and what this notion of difference constitutes. He approach the subject in relation to the notion and understanding of universalism. Relating it to times of modernity he calls it "*civic bourgeois universalism*" (Balibar, E., 2012; 207), as he here finds a transformation in the representation of both the universal and the understanding of subjectivity and subject formation, combining the political and metaphysical aspects of these. (ibid; 207). The point of modern nationalism is in this sense a discrimination in between national populations, where populations characterize and define themselves on the basis of what they are not (ibid; 208). A descriptive example of such conviction Balibar (2012) stresses from the "(...) *Declaration of the Rights of the Man and of the Citizen (...)*" (ibid.; 208) that combines the notion of "(...) *capacities of the human (...)*" (ibid.; 208) and the "(...) *powers of the citizen (...)*" (ibid.; 208). In that sense the citizen and the human is understood as someone freed from subjection to internal inequality. There is however still, according to Balibar (2012), a question of becoming the citizen which means relating to institutions in which the citizen learn universal actions and upholds the institutions and its communities as universal realities. There will, according to Balibar (2012), always be some subjection connected to any kind of subjectification, such as becoming a citizen in the civic-bourgeois world (ibid.; 208). Within the universal concept as it appears in the civic-bourgeois world some sort of discrimination has thus been reformulated from earlier forms and thus appears as implications and requisites of the institution of universalism (ibid.; 208). These discriminations and thus differences Balibar (2012) calls the "*anthropological differences*" (ibid.; 208) as they more than being perceived also are "*immediately constitutive of the idea of the human*" (ibid.; 208). Those who are not accepted as citizens in the civic-bourgeois universality, is thus, according to Balibar (2012), also denied from the status of being real humans. Within the civic-bourgeois world, it is then necessary to define these non-humans in a way that ensure the political exclusion and moreover employ terms "(...) *of the very universality of human differences, such as the difference of the masculine and the feminine (...), the ethnic differences, et cetera.*" (ibid.; 208). Defining it as universal, there is thus some paradoxes within its definition that "(...) *affect the reciprocal relationship between the civic-bourgeois institutions and the subject created by these institutions, also called "man" in the modern Euro-American tradition*" (ibid.; 209). This is an interesting observation, as this role of being defined as a citizen or not in the Danish nation state must be based on such constituting differences of the society, that creates and to some extend is dependent on an assumption of difference in rights and abilities among human beings.

One of these differences, which according to Balibar (2012) becomes important for the constitution of the society as the Danish, is what Foucault (Foucault in Balibar, 2012, 210) describes as the definition of *normality*. Foucault elaborate on this concept through an investigation of the emerging industrial society with its institutions in which *individual conducts* are created (ibid.; 210). Here, Foucault suggests, there is a fundamental and deciding premises of normality and abnormality which “(...) *formulate discriminations or judgments which distinguish among individuals, classify them socially but also morally (judging their characters), distinguishing different modalities of “contradicting” the norm (...)*” (ibid.; 210). The judge is, according to Foucault, the “*normal majority*”, (ibid.; 211). To define the normal is then a negation of the normality’s own negation, with the abnormalities inscribed in a continuity, which thus enforce the normal. In relation to the anthropological difference that is constituting the idea of the human being this reflection upon normality means that the normal citizen can be defended when having certain rights to “(...) *property, responsibility, and citizenship (...)*” (ibid.; 212).

So, how is then differences as the ethnic differences to be understood in relation to such anthropological differences in the civic-bourgeois world? Here Balibar (2012) stresses the institution of the nation linked to “*the (...) indigenous” foundations of domestic Western communities (...)*” (ibid.; 214). The nation is according to Balibar (2012) a “(...) *composition of the universal with its own limitations (...)*” (ibid; 214) and thus, the citizen also becomes a national subject. It becomes an identification of a person to be a citizen of a nation, through which the citizen can relate to a community with other citizens of the same nation. To belong in such a community means sharing features of nationality as language and common traditions, but also to share some burdens together as a people.

The problem with anthropological difference is according to Balibar (2012), that people who are different becomes “*minorized*” within the “(...) *Institutions of bourgeois citizenship in the general sense (...)*” (ibid.; 224). This is for example people that live within the nation state as the Danish and which is not excluded, but is however a “(...) *foreign body (...)*” (ibid.; 225) to the society, that defines “*us*” from “*them*” (ibid; 225). Foreigners as migrants could here be an example of such. Through institutionalizations of the civic-bourgeois universalism, these foreign bodies are defined, controlled and made visible and due to this definition included within the civic-bourgeois world (ibid.; 225).

## The Fear of Small Numbers

The awareness of a national sense of belonging within the process of integration in Denmark, suggests that the notion of national and cultural identification are powerful and significant values of an everyday life in Denmark. To elaborate on Lotta's initial statement of the challenge of becoming a part of each other's cultures a short presentation of Appadurai's (2006) notion of the "*fear of small numbers*" (Appadurai, A; 2006; 49) follows, as a way to approach the underlying dynamics between constituted groups in a nation like the Danish. According to Appadurai, the modern liberal nation is related to the idea of the population divided into minorities and majorities (ibid; 50)). His suggestion is in short, that the majority might come to fear minorities within the state, as they through their difference provoke an "*anxiety of incompleteness*" (ibid.; 52) among the majority in relation to its sovereignty and relation to national identity. At the same time the minority is also needed in the society in order to define the majority, or the "*we*" and "*they*" (Galbo; 1, Appadurai 2006; 50). The fear can through what he calls "*predatory identity*" (ibid.; 52) among the majority lead to anger and ultimately the desire to erase the minorities and purify the national ethnic population (Appadurai 2006, 51). Some of the anger, which according to Appadurai (2006) occurs in the complex globalized world, where international financial structures and migration among other factors are destabilizing the national sovereignty, is thus passed on to the social actors as migrants, which are an example of such minority groups (Galbo; 2). When anger occurs in different forms, it should then be understood as an attempt to strengthen identity, such as the cultural and national identity (Appadurai, 2006; 52).

## A National Division of Land and People

### A Nation State

In order to have a context for the terms of belonging related to the concept of the Nation State, a short description of the concept, the 'Nation State' will here be presented, as well as the ideology concerning the Nation State, called nationalism.

Since the establishment of the nation state most land and population of the world, has achieved national designations (Østergård, U.; 2007; 546-547). Hence, when characterizing human beings in present time, national belonging is often stressed, close linked to a pre-understanding of certain connected culture. In that sense national characteristics of a population, correspond with ethnic identity, which stresses cultural and social similarity (ibid.; 547). Whether the state is pre-established before a definition of a nation varies over the world, but in countries as Denmark, the small state with a small society and the nation has correlated for many years (ibid.; 548). Ethnic characteristics of people in Denmark becomes convergent with the national

belonging as well, which suggest that being 'Danish' as a person entails cultural and social similarity to other Danes.

After the collapse of communism in 1989, nationalism seems to be even strengthened (ibid.; 546). To some extent national orientation seems to be accepted as a natural given in the order of both structural and social reality, or as Billig (1995) states: *"In our age, it seems as if an aura attends the very idea of nationhood (...)"* (Billig; 1995; 4). According to Billig (1995), nationhood entails a sort of commonsense shared all over the world and is expressed in themes of *"(... us', 'our homeland', 'nations' ('ours' and 'theirs'), the 'world', as well as the morality of national duty and order (...)"* (ibid; 4). These are words, which are all a part of the everyday vocabulary in many languages.

### The Everyday Nationalism – Banal Nationalism

An important claim, when looking at nationalism as such, is thus to be aware of different conceptions of nationalism. It is often related to right wing political movements, but according to Billig (1995), nationalism, as it occurs in present time, is not only this, but instead a premise for populations in general today. Not only is it occurring through national crises when national security might be threatened from other countries or expressed through radicalized groups in the society and thus working in the periphery of the public agenda. It is, Billig (1995) argues, appearing on an everyday level, being constantly reproduced in order to uphold the national reality. It concerns the reproduction of the everyday practices that constitute the life such as *"(...) a whole complex of beliefs, assumptions, habits, representations and practices"* or *"ideological habits (...)"* (ibid.; 6) as Billig (1995) calls these practices all together. Additionally, as it is exactly occurring as a general condition of the reproduction of the nation state, these habits are *"(...) reproduced in a banally mundane way, for the world of nations is the everyday world, the familiar terrain of contemporary times (...)"* (ibid.; 6). This everyday nationalism, that Billig (1995) sees upholding the national order of contemporary life, he calls *"banal nationalism"* (ibid.; 6). It ensures an *"endemic condition"* (ibid.; 6) of nationalism. It could seem like a harmless form of nationalism, as it does not necessarily invoke conflicts of nations or racist and aggressive actions from radical nationalistic groups. However, as the reproduction of nations is also reproducing the national institutions, of which some of them *"(...) possess vast armaments (...)"* (ibid.; 7) ready and ratified by the populations to engage in potential war, it does as well comprise an immanent power. Specifically important in this context of migrants living within the realm of banal nationalism is that the ideological habits, which all parts of the population exercise, will constantly be a reminder of national sense of belonging. Consequently, everyone will have to respond to and relate oneself to this sense of belonging as a part of social interactions, affecting the challenge of becoming a part of each other's cultures in one way or another.

### Banal Nationalism as an Identification Process

As the reproduction is happening as a part of people's everyday life suggests the notion of people possessing a certain "*national identity*" (ibid.; 7). It ensures that people do not forget to reestablish the nation and, according to Billig (1995), it has been defended by analysts as "(...) based upon '*primordial ties*' (...)" (ibid.; 7). In this sense, the responsibility of the reproduction is moved away from the humans own agency, as assigned to obey the concept of such nature given primordial ties. However, Billig (1995) is placing the source of the reproduction of banal nationalism not within something nature given, through internal identity formation, or on primordial ties, but instead within the execution of the society and through the earlier stated ideological habits. Within this external process, each individual find the inspiration to national orientation. If the unnoticed reminders are effectuated repeatedly, they will, according to Billig (1995), efficiently uphold the recreation of nationhood and nationality identifications among the citizens as a continuous orientation (ibid.; 8). The ideological habits that constitute social life, and which people embody through everyday practices, Billig (1995) therefore calls the identity. Part of the national identity, he argues, is therefore to possess the social habits of thinking and talking about nationhood. How people chose – or learn – to talk about their national belonging will consequently create a national identity, which means that national identity is created discursively and as a result of political choices and actions (Østergård; 549). Furthermore, Billig (1995) stresses that it is highly connected to the way people are situated "(...) *physically, legally, socially as well as emotionally (...)*" (Billig, 1995; 8) like relating to a nation as a "*homeland*" (ibid.; 7). To be able to connect a national identity to a homeland then both constitutes this national identity and upholds the order of nation states as homelands. Referring to the migrants it seems important to see how their national identity formation relates to their challenge of becoming a part of the Danish culture.

### Banal Nationalism on a Global Scene

In a time where globalization and an international agenda is a requisite of much economic growth in the world, the need for a simultaneous national agenda, could seem contradictory. However, especially in societal questions about legal and structural systems, which are being challenged by these economic as well as social powers, the national discourse is still prevailing within much public and political discourse (Østergård; 549, 573). According to Billig (1995), nationalism in the form of this often unnoticed or banal nationalism, exists across both global and national agendas because it is constantly reinforced through all-pervasive symbols, and social habits of individual and institutional forms. (Billig, 1995; 9).

Looking at the migrants' experiences of their social interactions in Denmark and their challenge of becoming a part of the Danish culture such everyday form and execution of nationalism seems important to be aware of.

## To Manage Migration

In relation to the articulation and perception of differences within populations, a management approach towards these differences, will shortly be presented. According to Blommaert and Verschueren (1998), there is a basic problem in the public discourse of today in relation to diversity, where diversity within itself is seen as a problem and something that has to be managed (Blommaert and Verschueren, 1998; 15). It means, according to them, that racism is never ending. Looking at the debate of today concerning migration management they claim that:

*“the ‘problem’ consists to a large extent in the way in which it is put into words, or that the language in which these issues are talked about is far more than just a neutral vehicle of meanings and attitudes. The discourse on diversity is an instrument for the reproduction of social problems, forms of inequality and majority power” (ibid; 4).*

Thus, they are advocating for a certain awareness of the mere prerequisite of the discussion about how to deal with the migrants in the societies, and especially that the way the situation of diversity is put into words and distributed around among people, is not of only descriptive sort, but also creating the reality. Additionally, this is often a discourse that implies that the reality of diversity is a situation that needs to be managed (ibid.; 11). According to Blommaert and Verschueren (1998), this approach of diversity management manifests itself through a rhetoric of both a *“tolerant majority”* (ibid.; 11) and a rhetoric of radical racists or other related right wing groups *“(...) advocating the expulsion or repression of minorities (...)”* (ibid.; 2). To develop and implement policies of containment is one of the means how to manage the diversity. Border control is one to do these, ensuring that only wanted individuals, such as migrants with certain professions are allowed to cross borders from one country to another. Legislation is continuously made and remade in order to ensure that the flow of migrants between states is managed in accordance with both sending and receiving countries (ibid; 11). A part of the containment approach to diversity, is the political strategies that are enforced within societies, when migration after all has occurred. These policies, that Blommaert and Verschueren (1998) state have the purpose of *“(...) eliminating differences as much as possible (...)”* are realized through strategies of *“(...) assimilation, integration, multiculturalism, cultural pluralism, and the like (...)”* (ibid.; 14).

In relation to the present answers of migrants, concerning their experienced challenge of becoming a part of the Danish culture, this, according to Blommaert and Verschueren (1998), management culture of differences as an approach towards migration will be considered.

## To Establish A Home

### Continuing the Experience of Home through Migration

The six present migrants have decided to move away from their country of origin in order to get an education and international career. As a part of the strategy, that leads them to this situation, the decision implies the necessity of creating some sort of base or home abroad from which they are building their life. In order to understand their creation of a home as a part of the migration a theory of Mahmoud and Märtsin concerning the dialectic meaning of home and movement away from home will be presented here.

According to Mahmoud and Märtsin, home can only be characterized and experienced (Mahmoud and Märtsin, 2012; 1). Therefore, in order to find out what a home of a migrant is, one needs to see how the migrant's personal, identity-related, experiential meaning of home is related to the experience of migration (ibid; 2).

Moreover, Mahmoud and Märtsin divides home into three different fields, which together constitute home. Firstly, the physical location, which as a physical structure divides private and public space. Secondly, there is a social meaning to home, understood as a "(...) *node in networks of social relations (...)*" (Easthope, 2004 p. 137 in Mahmoud and Märtsin, 2012; 2) where it "(...) *bridge between past, present and future, thus giving the person continuity in time and space*" (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996; Manzo, 2005 in Mahmoud and Märtsin, 2012; 2). Finally, it can be seen as a personal place like "(...) *an extension of the self (...)*" (Mahmoud and Märtsin, 2) connected to the identity of a person and the feeling of who and where a person is (Dovey, 1985 in Mahmoud and Märtsin, 3). Home as a "(...) *subjective, experiential, identity-related phenomenon (...)*" does therefore not only refer to one but rather many physical location in relation to several significant others (ibid.; 3). The experiences constitute altogether the 'sense of being at home'.

Mahmoud and Märtsin stresses how home is both flexible and conservative or in other words enabling and constraining. The flexibility stems from the connection to experiences, behavior and emotions and the constraining quality stems from conservative and all-pervasive qualities of familiarity, comfort, identity, security that are a part of home and easily become taken for granted, holding people back in a more

conservative position. For migrants the sense of home is thus both enabling and constraining, because the experience of travel connected to migration creates the possibility of self-exploration, transformation and re-invention and the more conservative values of home through family connections and security might simultaneously create painful feelings of leaving stability and security (ibid.; 3). Within the experience of migration, there is thus both a possibility of connecting the feeling of home to experiences of exploration abroad as well as the need of destabilizing the secure feeling of home.

In relation to the notion of identity, Mahmoud and Märtsin stresses the *"sense of identity"* which according to them is both connected to experiences of interactions with others and an understanding of oneself guiding actions. The experiences and feeling of who one is creates a continuous feeling of identity and thus *"(...)* refers to a sense of seeing oneself as continuous and more or less the same across various, even contradictory experiences in the world (...)" (ibid.; 4). According to Mahmoud and Märtsin the sense of identity and a sense of home is mutually defining because a person's engagement within a specific location constitutes both the locus for home, and is, through experiences at that place, a continuation and thus constitution of the identity (ibid;4).

#### Migration as a Continuation of Life Plans

To migrate away from one location can thus mean a rupture in way of being. It puts questions to our sense of identity as it was intertwined with the sense of being at home. According to Mahmoud and Märtsin the shock that can arise when finding oneself away from the original location of home is not as much the shock over the new location and culture per se as the shock over the revelation of who one is, which becomes clear in the new context (ibid;5). Such a feeling of rupture of identity may however take various forms according to Mahmoud and Märtsin. People who might feel that their experiences of who they are, or *"life-plans"* as Giddens call it (Giddens 1994 in Mahmoud and Märtsin 2012; 5) are disconnected to a specific place of home can feel as internal exiles. Hence, to leave a location may actually be perceived as an attempt at actualizing one's life project as for example seeking educational career abroad because it is *"believed to enrich one's life"* (Mahmoud and Märtsin; 5). It can be followed by important feelings for the sense of being home and sense of identity as comfort, recognition and self-worth, to fulfill such aspirations (Mahmoud, 2010 in Mahmoud and Märtsin, 2012; 12). To leave home and continue the life somewhere else, can thus be an aspired and meaningful identity formation for the migrant. To some extent it will, according to Mahmoud and Märtsin (2012) justify the ambiguous feeling of being in what they call a *"liminal position"* between two societies for a while. It can also be an identity that is shared with others and which makes sense above the national distinctions. As these new surroundings little by little becomes understandable and function in the

act of making continuity between the old and new world migrants are changing as they incorporate this new view upon not only the two worlds, but also on the self. These changes towards a new sense of identity can however make it difficult to go back and fit in at the original home. In addition, the imagined futures and goals for migration can be seen to not only guide the choice of migrating but also the way migration is experienced as a rupture (Boesch 1991 in Mahmoud and Märtsin, 2012; 6). Boesch stresses that within human functioning as migration there is a humanly “*meaning-making*” of both striving towards a safe place as the original home or “*Heimweh*” as well as striving for the exiting but unknown home, the “*Fernweh*”, that can picture both something threatening and promising (Boesch 1991; 2007b in Mahmoud and Märtsin, 2012; 6). To migrate away from the original home can in this way contribute with the excitement and possibilities of experiencing new features not only about the world, but also about one’s personality. At the same time, the rupture away from what is understood as home and the loss of it, can entail the feeling of losing identity (ibid.; 6).

Mahmoud and Märtsin stress that within this apparent changes of migration, there is also the possibility of maintaining some of the crucial feelings connected to sense of home and identity such as familiarity, comfort and continuity, and thus creating stability in the process. The new context in which these qualities are created means that the premises of the re-establishment are altered and opens up for possible changes of these qualities’ characteristics and thus “(...) *maintenance, just as alteration is active and transformative process [sic] (...)*” (Valsimer, 2007 in Mahmoud and Märtsin). Continuation of identity through the process of adaption to the new environment and social settings does therefore bring alteration of the sense of identity as well. It means that for instance patterns of behavior, though altered, can be brought to the new context continuously building up a personal history that draws on the background within the original home country. This continuity of the self in an altered way will according to Mahmoud and Märtsin create an experiential home abroad (ibid; 10).

## Analysis

According to the initial statement by Lotta, within the introduction, the basic challenge, by being in Denmark, building a life and searching for a job is to *“become a part of each other’s culture”* (Lotta; 6). This is thus the main challenge. In order to understand the connection to *“differences”* experienced in Denmark I will now draw on not only the observations of Lotta but from the migrants in general. First of all, I will now look at the descriptions of such differences as they meet them in social interactions, and what they are constituted by. By looking at the migrant’s responds to the differences and explanations of their responds it might be more clear why it is a challenge to become a part of each other’s culture. Finally, this should give a better understanding of which strategy they apply in order to manage with the challenge and obtain their goal of getting international experience and a sense of home in Denmark. However, before elaborating on the experiences as the informants experience them, their background of migrating will be presented as well, giving an insight to their reasons for going to Denmark.

### Motivated Migrants – In Denmark

As stated previously several new countries were incorporated into the European Union in 2004 enhancing a great migration flow of especially young people from these countries to other EU countries.

The encouragement takes place at different levels among the students – or future students – as both a social and administrative incentives. Several of the informants tell about companies in their home countries that come to high schools and universities with information about universities abroad, and help with practical and administrative issues in this regard for payment. What they are telling about the study life abroad helps to give a positive look upon this possibility. Dicte from Lithuania gives an account of a meeting with such organization at her university:

“Now, I don’t know, but some years ago, it was just about to go and study, they were not talking about, you know, about coming back or something, they were just talking about.. “then you have better possibilities to find a job, if you are finishing any kind of studies, just, if you are finishing studies from abroad, you are gonna be hired.” Almost like that haha..” (Dicte; 10).

The statement from the present company is supporting the idea that international experience is a benefit for a job in the future, even though, as Dicte states, they are not as such encouraging the students to go back again. As others of the interviewees, she supports that it is popular to go abroad:

“I think from my hometown that those I was friends with (...)they are in France, England and Denmark, or somewhere else” (Dicte; 10).

When she stresses that the majority of her friends are abroad, she is not only stating that going abroad is popular, but also that the people whom she identify herself as being friend with are international students in some regard. This decision of moving abroad like her friends, sharing the same experience as them, can be referred to Mahmoud and Märtsin who stresses the importance of the sense of identity in relation to experiences of social interactions and view upon oneself. Hence, her decision can be understood as a way of continuing her sense of identity. Daina who started at a stay on a Danish boarding school does as well stress a support from the European Union, as the reason for going abroad:

“(...) the rest of it was paid by some EU-program I think.. I think they have cut now something of that program, so you have to pay more now if you are going to other EU-countries. But yeah, at that time it was pretty popular” (Daina; 2).

In relation to this supportive system of both the companies and the specific European Union programs, Daina refers to, all the interviewee stresses both economical and job-related advantages of going abroad. Daina compares the system of financial support within Denmark and Latvia as a reason to choose to study in Denmark:

“(...)there was a financial issue. Because, when I had to take the decision I was also accepted at a university in Latvia. But I knew that there was a new system in Latvia, so even though if I had a first year for free, it wouldn't mean that I could have all three years I had to study there for free” (Daina; 2).

As explained above, the Danish SU-system creates the possibility of receiving support in Denmark as an international student from EU, as long as a working week on 10-12 hours is accomplished. Daina's statement here refers to an overall level of difference within the two societies, and her choice of moving in order to achieve an education, might therefore be shared by other international students. Furthermore, when comparing with other EU-countries the Danish SU-system is emphasized as being a great incitement of going to Denmark, as Daina is comparing with the UK:

“With Denmark the opinion is that it is free education so quite a lot of people come here.. but then in UK, there are quite a lot of Latvians, but they find work there, and then they try to study there as well, but its quite expensive there, so more people then decides to study in Denmark” (Daina; 3).

Again, this overall institutional difference, which has importance for Daina, might as well be of importance for other internationals, supporting the general value of the statement.

This international and institutional support can be seen as a part of a reasonable explanation to a general understanding of ‘going abroad’ as reasonable for a future career. As both Lotta and Daina state:

“I had good grades, so Lithuania would be accepted, but I wanted to do something else, and try something.. The problem-based learning was appealing to me, as it is good to write on my motivation letter, that I could work with communication and culture” (Lotta; 4)

“(..) but also for a career. And not only international career, but also if you go to a small company in Latvia and you say that you have finished an international education let’s say in Denmark. I think that they might find it valuable(...)We are more open-minded to new ideas” (Daina; 4).

Important for both of the women seems to be the fact, that they by going through the process of acquiring international experiences abroad such as problem-based learning methods in Denmark will have some skills that are attractive at the job market. As Daina states, she believes that she as a part of the *we* – the internationals - is more “*open-minded*” (ibid.), which seems to draw on the assumption that to be open-minded comes through experiences and is a positive result of being abroad.

However, in addition to this more general acknowledgement of international experience, all the informants do as well stress, that they had a specific personal motivation for going abroad, as a step of becoming an adult:

“First time I was 19 and I was freshly graduated from my high school. Looking back it is difficult to say why I wanted to move away, but I think first of all to get away from my parents” (Elli; 1)

And Daina, emphasizing the potential of personal growth by choosing to move:

“For experience! It was kind of self-development you know, just to see the world around me” (Daina; 2).

All the informants are in the beginning of their twenties when they decide to move abroad. Even though they could have made this decision at other points in their life, this moment coincides with an age where most young people in Europe, are finishing their secondary school and have to make the decision of either studying, starting to work, and maybe moving in accordance with this. Personal interest in gaining new experiences and challenging oneself seems thus – as a reason for moving – again to coincide with the popularity in these Eastern European countries, of moving abroad. Mahmoud and Märtsin's theory on the exiting and unknown part of home – the *Fernweh* – and a continuation of personal interests which is followed by striving towards other locations as a part of the process of creating a sense of home, can explain this tendency (Mahmoud and Märtsin 2012; 6).

Another aspect of the informants' personal reason for moving to Denmark is the theme of personal relationships. Three of the six interviewees explains their choice of migration to Denmark as being significantly influenced by the fact that their boyfriend or girlfriend was already living there, working or studying. Two of them in a relationship with one from their own country, and one girl, Elli, is in a relationship with a Dane. As Dicte explains how both her interest in obtaining an education in Denmark coincides with her possibility of following her Lithuanian boyfriend:

"(...) also my boyfriend was there in Denmark, so it was you know like, a win-win situation. Not only because of study (...)" (Dicte; 2).

This is, in line with Mahmoud and Märtsin's (2012) description of home, an example of how they continue a feeling of home through familiarity abroad.

Most of the informants do also emphasize that however popular it might be among some students their personal choice of migrating is not understood and supported by all peers and family:

"Sometimes they think it is sad that we are not coming back, or maybe not coming. It doesn't mean that we are not actually. And sometimes they think: 'oh ok, you are just searching for an easy life, you are not giving back to your own country anything'. Sometimes they just think that, yes you are actually smart that you went away, and you have an opportunity to run away from the country. But that again depends on people and education level as well probably" (Daina; 9).

What this quote of Daina emphasizes here is among different things, that a choice of going abroad, does not only encompass the decision to engage in a new country, but also a personal choice to leave the country, you were born in. The opinion of the people Daina refers to, shows two different approaches to responsibility for the country; either to betray the country as a non-solidary citizen who chooses the “*easy life*” (ibid.) or to leave the country as an individual, who is clever to choose the responsibility for his/her own life, rather than for the less promising country. Both responds to the migrants choice of leaving implies that the migrant does it only for its own sake, and can bring some sort of distance between the migrant and home-population, as Dicte experience it:

“You can hear that there is some kind of wall between you.. it’s like.. yeah.. I don’t know.. they are alienating you, that you are out ‘oh.. now you live in Denmark!?” (Dicte; 12).

The reaction for her as a migrant is that she feels excluded. How she describes her feelings of being alienated in, a narrative with a “*wall*” built up between her and her fellow citizens gives the emotional and convincing character of the narrative that Dreyfus (2004) is referring to as a strong acquisition of knowledge. It emphasizes how she really feels being excluded as she made the decision of migrating. If not included in Denmark she is by this wall being pushed to what Mahmoud and Märtsin refers to as a “*liminal position*” (Mahmoud and Märtsin 2012) between the two societies. She constitutes herself through this narrative, and uses it as an “*organization of self and identity*” (Bamberg 2010) as Bamberg states and her own believe in herself as different in relation to the mentioned Lithuanians seems therefore confirmed by this narrative. However, through her continuation of her dreams of education abroad together with her boyfriend, she is continuing her life and identity creating her experiential home abroad, as Mahmoud and Märtsin (2012) refers to. That her decision of moving makes sense for Dicte’s personal aspiration of education and continued relationship is one thing, but she furthermore attach the decision to a more overall historical narrative about her as a Lithuanian citizen and historical responsibility. As stated in the following quote, her act of migration does not only encompass the possibility for her to develop, but for the country as such:

“Probably one more reason why we moved out you know from our country, it’s like.. thank God now you know we are like out of this Russia thing for some years and for example our parents they didn’t have such a possibility to travel, to live somewhere abroad, and I think it’s like a very good breakthrough for our country, that a lot of people now, they are traveling and moving out and.. coming back also. I think that at some point, its gonna make some change because, you

know you're learning about different cultures and we are coming back later down, with a completely different view (...)things can be done in different ways and be lived in better ways than it was (...)” (Dicte; 7)

Talking about the history of Lithuania with the Russian occupation, she actually stresses the responsibility for her to be the generation, that goes abroad and gain knowledge in order to support the development of the country. Another important point is how Dicte stresses how she as a part of the Lithuanian populations, the *we* distinguishes herself from the Russian occupation, the “*Russian thing*” (ibid.) and thereby indicates her affiliation to Europe, or her European identity. She construct this narrative as a matter of course within the interview, stressing her personal and emotional opinion with her emphasizing, “*thank God now you know we are like out*” (ibid.). According to the theory of Dreyfus (2004) her personal conviction of this narrative is strong due to an emotional articulation. It shows that she really believes that relating to non-Russian populations and migrating abroad, like it became possible after the fall of the Soviet Union, is not only reasonable but almost required, and thus the decision of migrating is in line with her view upon herself and her sense of identity.

Thus, there are different reasons for going abroad at different levels. Within an overall institutional level with support from the European Union the international experience is supported financially and on an organizational level where advertisement from different international universities are disseminated, the conviction of international potential for future work gets emphasized. Finally, on the personal level, the students, in the process of becoming mature, finds the possibility of going as an interesting and promising challenge, with the benefit for themselves and future career as well as for the home country through cultural remittances, however disapproved by certain people in the home country. Moreover, for those who are having a relationship, it also have an impact on the decisions of migration to Denmark. As Lotta states, when I ask about her priorities within Denmark, as an explanation of why she has decided to migrate to Denmark:

“Yes, good job, to support yourself, and maybe your family home, I think to most of us that is number one” (Lotta; 5).

Moving to Denmark is a step on the way to these goals. The following chapter will focus on the next step, which is the road to obtain the goals, meeting, responding and going through the inevitable challenges on the way.

## The Battlefields of Differences

As described above, all the migrants are coming to Denmark in the search for not only an education, a continuation of relationship or ending up with a job, but with an underlying premises of becoming internationally experienced. However, as stated by Lotta in the initial quote to become a part of each other's cultures, which is assumed to be the meaning of the phrase 'international experience' is a difficult. Something unknown in the new country, something different, has to become familiar and incorporated within the migrant to some extent, and even though it is aspired as an exploration, the challenge seems to be very demanding as well.

In the following, the answers of the interviews will be analyzed in order to explore where the challenge of becoming a part of each other's cultures appears. It will be in focus what it involves and how the migrants chose to respond to the challenge in order to create a strategy which will lead them to what they came for; a sense of home and job in Denmark. What can easily be excused with a national or cultural difference to a problem as a matter of course will hopefully be elaborated by this.

### *The Language*

To enter the Danish education-system has been possible for the migrants because it is made available in English in various institutions and levels. Out of the six interviewees, five went to the university in Aalborg and one went to an academy in a smaller Danish town called Viborg, and everywhere they experienced an international environment, in which they were both welcomed and were able to find other acquaintances. At the academy of Viborg Raivo even experienced, that he as an international was given special attention:

"They were very happy, that I am here, so I could start the program. (...) of course, the academy helped as much as they could. To start to live and study here.. with residence permit and cpr and everything(...)you could always go to the secretary and ask (...) legal position and legal issues in Denmark and so (...)" (Raivo; 10).

What Raivo experiences here, is clearly that the Danish institution helps him to start his educational life in Denmark, but also to be settled at an institutional level within a Danish administrative system. In line with the administrative support of SU this institutional support corresponds with his and the other interviewees' expectations about being welcomed as foreigners in the Danish society, ready to explore and develop international potential. With such support as well as the possibility to use English within the academic life, the question arises, if it is necessary for them also to learn the Danish language.

According to all of the informants, this seems however to be of great importance to learn the Danish language themselves, due to different reasons. One explanation to which they all agree, is that not knowing the Danish language is preventing them from getting a job in Denmark. As Ilse states:

“(…) and I think that’s what stop me getting to the Danish labor market. I mean, I can get a job in cleaning, but that’s not the job I want to have (…)” (Ilse; 2).

What Ilse is expressing here, is that she as a foreigner in Denmark with English skills have the possibility to get job that requires no skills, but that she in order to get a job where she can apply her education needs to be speaking the Danish language. As student jobs, three of the six informants have had cleaning jobs, but in this situation the job is not a goal within itself, but a mean to support oneself as well as obtaining the right to SU.

To learn the Danish language seems however not only to be a question about pure comprehensive issues. Within social and cultural settings, the Danish language is also stressed as important in different ways. As for example in social gatherings, where the language is an access to Danish company as Ilse says:

“(…) when I go to parties as the only foreigner, I feel excluded. When they speak Danish, I have to focus more to understand what they are saying (… it doesn’t make me feel good (…)” (Ilse; 3).

Moreover, to explore cultural events, as a part of living in the society, not knowing Danish language again becomes a barrier for participating:

“(…) In Lithuania we were constantly going and seeing, talking and discussing, so I really miss it a lot (….) Here I once went to Nordkraft for students with orchestra. The conductor is from the United States and explained the whole piece, it was so amazing (….)I think it could be improved (….) Of course we are in Denmark so we should talk Danish, and go to Danish, but now it is really hard to do that (….)” (Lotta; 2).

To learn Danish is thus inevitable when searching for access to general participation in the cultural life in Aalborg, where Lotta lives. What this quote moreover suggests, and which many of the interviewees have confirmed, practicing Danish within Danish schools next to the initial education and the obligatory 10-12 hours of work per week can be difficult to obtain. Here the challenge of becoming a part of the Danish culture in the sense of learning the Danish language seems like a challenge, which can only be solved through extensive language courses. English can get them the first step towards integration within the educational system, but taking the next step into the field of job-searching, social gatherings in the leisure time and cultural events, Danish is essential.

As the following two quotes suggest there is as well a great deal of importance within learning the Danish language as a signal send to the Danish population:

“ (...) You get far with English in Denmark, but it is at a completely different level, because, first of all people feel that you want to stay, if you speak the language. Second, people will be accepting, when you speak about your future plans, if you say, I'm planning to find a job in Denmark knowing you have achieved some level, and that you are trying. Or you have taken a class, and you say 'oh but I'm just gonna take it'. And I understand, I would be the same in my country, if somebody was coming to stay and work there, without trying to learn the language.” (Elli; 5)

What Elli refers to by a “*different level*” of communication through learning the Danish language, seems to refer to an involved recognition from the Danish side, which is given because of the ‘sacrifice’ that a foreigner gives, by actively spending time and energy on engaging in the Danish language. It is not because it is needed for the mean of communication, but to speak the everyday language of many Danes is experienced as a welcomed gesture, from a Danish perspective. Raivo formulates it in another fashion, but again with a focus on how the Danes are expected to perceive his decision to learn Danish:

“(…) I am coming from Eastern Europe and there is an impression of people who are coming from Eastern Europe. This is what I have heard from Danes.. eh.. you have to earn them.. you have to earn your seat in a Danes eyes when you are coming from Eastern Europe.. so if I can do that, and if I can the language in a level, and of course where I would have some accent, then I would be more accepted in the society, as a foreigner, then I would be happy and I would feel more free. And maybe more willing to stay here” (Raivo; 8).

When Raivo talks about “*earn*” the Danes, it seems again to suggest a sort of sacrifice, that needs to be given in order to be accepted. Here, it does not say anything about if it is only important when it comes to the question of getting a job; rather it could seem like the acceptance and recognition Elli and Raivo are looking for here, is more of a general matter. The way that the lack of language acquisition is followed by a lack of recognition of them as a group of citizens – and, according to Raivo, with a special challenge for the Eastern European group – could be enlightened by the way Appadurai (2006) finds the mechanism of his concept about the ‘fear of small numbers’. In a modern nation as the Danish, with many different groups of migrants entering the country, the majority will, according to Appadurai (2006) be striving for maintaining the power by strengthening their own culture in the sacrifice of the culture of minorities. That the migrants experience both from what they have heard and within their everyday life, that giving up the culture of English or native language for the benefit of speaking the Danish language as a key to earn the respect of the Danes could therefore support Appadurai’s (2006) assumption.

In addition to the fact, that they experience Danish classes hard to measure into their busy lives, another personal factor seems important for several of the informants' language acquisition, which is the tendency of holding back. As Ilse says:

"(...) But there are some that are not shy and just speak, and then its fast and they somehow integrate (...)" (Ilse; 3)

And Raivo, who expresses a wish to start in a football team:

"(...) But maybe it's also my problem that I am a bit shy to go to a Danish team and do something there." (Raivo; 9).

These two quotes show that they rather not say anything or not even go into the social interaction with Danes, because they are a bit too shy. Lotta is generalizing more among the Baltic people as a group:

"Also many people talk about that Danes are more closed as Baltic people. We wait till people come. I didn't realize that before I came here. Now it is ok" (Lotta; 1).

Lotta as the third, stating that "*now it is ok*" seems to imply, that she has found a way to manage within this pattern of being "*reserved*" or "*shy*" as Ilse and Raivo say. Where Ilse and Raivo seem to protect themselves from the interactions where they need to show their non-perfect Danish language, Lotta does not seem to let the obstacle of the Danish language holding her back, or as she states later about the language:

"It is hard in the beginning, where you can't improve your Danish outside the classes. After two years it is much easier. There is a certain barrier you have to pass (...)" (Lotta; 1).

What Lotta states here, is in addition to her approach to Danish as something possible to learn, that the acquisition of Danish is a matter of time. This approach to Danish as a mean towards getting a job is very differently approach by Raivo and Ilse in the following statements. When Raivo is asked about his ultimate goal within Denmark, he answers:

"The end would be to speak fluent Danish and.. that I don't have to mention my background where I am coming from, and that I don't feel it right away, where I am coming from. Because as soon as I start to talk, my accent gives the place where I come from. That I am from Eastern Europe" (Raivo; 10)

And later he says:

"yeah.. I don't know, can you speak fluent Danish as a foreigner?" (Raivo; 10).

That he wants to hide his accent and where he comes from, could be a reaction that stems from the knowledge about, that first of all, being viewed upon as Eastern European is a bad thing in Denmark, and

secondly that he accepts the premises that he, in order to be welcomed in Denmark, needs to be similar to Danes. That does not imply an accent to his language, and the goal of “*fluent Danish*” (ibid.) as the highest level of becoming a part of the Danish culture seems to suggest an impossibility of his goal. Ilse gives it even more basic significant for her identity by saying:

“(…) I would speak Danish if I was a Dane. Because for now I see this as the biggest problem.. speaking Danish and it doesn’t matter.. in 20 years, I would still have an accent” (Ilse; 10).

When considering the grammar and the ability to speak the language all the migrants stress that Danish is a difficult language to learn. However, as it has rules and structure to follow, Danish language can be seen as a skill to obtain, if learning these rules and structures. The synchronicity within Ilse’s questions about the possibility of speaking Danish without being born in Denmark shows that she as Raivo expects something more about the demand of learning the Danish language than pure grammar. She looks twenty years ahead and still feels the problem of an accent, which shows that her understanding and narrative about the meaning of perfect Danish has nothing to do with grammar or time of adjustment as for Lotta, but about the importance of a national identity through birth and heritage. What Raivo seems to suggest is as well that fluently implies something more, and maybe something that can only be carried out by a Dane. An explanation of the form of nationalism that they meet here, could be suggested by Balibar’s (2012) notion of the anthropological and human constituting differences within a nation. The citizens, constituting the normal, as Foucault (Foucault in Balibar, 2012) would suggests, will need someone to be not normal in order to exist. A way to distinguish who are the citizens and who are not could be this notion of accent of a foreign language, which would in most cases be consistent within the language of a foreigner. Always to be met by a notion of having an accent becomes a way to exercise what Billig (1995) calls banal nationalism, because the small signs of national belonging such as accent in the language like an ‘ideological habit’ can manifest a shared conviction of superiority among the national population (Billig, 1995; 6).

It could thus be that the reason for being shy within the process of learning Danish is that they accept the premises, that to learn a language is the same thing as trying to become a national citizen. The accent will constantly remind the foreigner that he or she will always be different and within the framework of Balibar (2012), thus to be looked down upon from the national citizen. As Raivo states the greatest hindrance for getting a job in Denmark:

“The greatest obstacle I think is the language and the foreign thing being. That you are a foreigner in a country. This is the obstacle” (Raivo; 11).

The accent will always reveal the difference in contrast to clothing or other physical appearance.

Whether the reason for the informants to learn the Danish language is to improve their access to social and cultural settings or to gain a job in Denmark, becoming familiar with the language within the country to which one is migrated could be argued to constitute exactly the 'international experience' they are striving for. When they stress, that they believe companies want international employees, knowledge about a language is one important aspect. Here the international expertise is not about being both national Danish and national Latvian, but about to have personal experience with both cultures, internalizing both cultures in the 5<sup>th</sup> sense of Dreyfus (2004), because then it is a skill. The next level of acquiring the nationality, by totally erasing an accent for example, is, according to Balibar's (2012) theory of the significance of difference, for the idea about the human being in the modern civil world, impossible. The difference is needed in order to constitute the concept of 'the national Danes', so people from another nation will always be non-Danish.

#### *Culture*

Another problem that many of the informants stress is the challenges that arises when they meet the 'different and Danish culture' that they have to consider how to adapt to. They are moving away from the country and family that they know, and for most of them, they have not known much about Denmark before they decided to move. Dicte stresses her initial meeting with Denmark like this:

"(...) I think in common at that point that you move out to another country you know.. and then you ARE living in your country, and it's still like any other country look alienated I think so.. Maybe you have some idea how it should be, but it's totally different when you come. For example, you are looking for a flat, you are looking for a job or.. It's a different relationship between people and different communication way probably" (Dicte; 2)

Here she describes a challenge, that comes in Denmark when looking for settling with a job and accommodation, and which arises because she has another *idea* about what Denmark is. She explains it as being a matter of expectations that even though she expects it to be alien compared to Lithuania, it still surprised her how Denmark was when she came. According to Dicte it manifests itself by difference in relationships and communication in Denmark, compared to what she was used to. The challenge for Dicte is thus, that her expectations did not match the reality to which she came.

#### *Authorities and equality*

One thing that all the migrants are approaching several times is the way that they experience many apparently new behaviors in Denmark in different settings and interactions. When talking about their meeting with the Danish education system, the topic of a certain different but inspiring equality is brought

up. Daina stresses the difficulties in relation to Latvia, because she has adapted to a different way of approaching authorities.

“Well it’s a different culture, and I understand that now.. it’s fine. But I believe, if I would go back to Latvia and start working, in a company, I would have difficulties, because of the hierarchy that we have there.. because here.. everybody are, not exactly equal, but still kind of equal.. you can say to your teacher.. talk to them in their name (...) And it’s the same at work” (Daina; 4).

The same goes for Lotta, however not only when it comes to the situation of her professional and student life, but within her private life:

“And another thing that is good: people are more equal. In work.. even in public spaces. In Lithuania a boy holds back for a girl. And now when somebody does that to me I feel so strange because it doesn’t matter if you are a boy or a girl, as long as you have a good time together, it is ok if a boy goes in front of you.” (Lotta; 3).

From both these quotes, a very basic structure of human hierarchies is emphasized as being different between the life in Denmark and the life from home. However, none of them are stressing any exact problems of huge challenges about it at the moment. Instead, they express their adaptation and predilection to this different behavior in Denmark, which they experience as creating the biggest problems for them in the meeting with their old environment with its set of behavior. The reason that they have chosen to accept this different behavior seems to stem from their personal experience and conviction about that this different way of being is beneficial, not only for themselves, but as Raivo states, also for the positive development of a company structure:

“The equal’ness between employees and employers (...) And I think that this would be good to bring back.(...) I would try to explain to all the people that are working with me, that this is how it is easier to work.” (Raivo; 7)

What the quotes also express is however, that the conviction of equality as beneficial is a transformation that has happened over time. It might not have been understandable as they arrived to Denmark in the first place, but now, as Daina states: “*I understand that now.. it’s fine*” (Daina; 4). To be a part of the Danish society has in this respect only been of value of the informants it seems, and their satisfaction with their situation in Denmark can be related to their feeling of creating a home in continuation of their personality, referring to Mahmoud and Märtsin (2012). There is no sign that they have experienced that their original way of behaving with faith in authority, is something that they see their new Danish environment adapting to.

*The Changing Character of Personal Responsibility*

Concerning the school system Ilse is stressing a different approach to responsibility and criticism of her work, which does both appeal to her, but at the same time confuses and in that sense challenges her:

“(In Latvia) (w)e just learn what to say, and that’s it. That’s how it is. That’s how the book is. We don’t ask, we don’t question it.. we are not critical towards our sources and main theories, that’s just how it is. Sometimes people say something different, and that’s just how that is. So we somehow look from the side.. we don’t try to analyze. That’s how it was in high school. And in university it is a different story, because you have to be critical, and I have problems with that because I wasn’t used to that and being critical to what I read you know. And in Denmark it is way more stronger” (Ilse; 8)

What she touches upon here is how she as a student has been challenged because, she feels that she needs to defend what she is stating, and not only referring from a book. It concerns the basic understanding of what to obtain from going to university, and this new demand of being critical challenges her, because she is trying to adapt:

“(...) And it affects a lot you know.. It affects the way you think. Actually at first it was a bit difficult for me because I had to back up my statement. And I didn’t know why.. and how? (...)Why should I think about why? Because I was not used to that way of thinking” (Ilse; 8)

The way that she expresses it, shows that she has been reflecting upon why she found the new teaching system challenging, and that she analyzes her own way of reacting. She understands that she has been met with new demands, which she has to live up to, if she wants to stay in Denmark. It seems that she finds a personal reason for adapting to this different approach, which is the original explanation of why she migrated, as this style of learning by rote from her experience in Latvia, has made her doubt in her own choices and made her less satisfied in general:

“I think one of the reasons why I was not happy in Latvia, was that I was studying and I was mostly very depressed, and it was not because I didn’t have any ideas. I did have ideas, but I didn’t have support (...) that’s how felt. And then I came here its different. I do feel support.” (Ilse; 12)

From Ilse’s statements it gives the impression that the challenge she faces in Denmark, entering the Danish education system is a challenge, that stems from a different style of teaching, which to her personally is very different, but which is not the same as unwanted. Moving to Denmark with different demands, she has the experience of fitting in better, even though she has to get other behaviors in school.

The theme of responsibility of own statements in school leads up to another aspect of responsibility, which several of the informants stress as a difference and which at the first sight can seem incomprehensible and unwanted. Lotta gives in the following quote an example of such a social situation, 'the pub crawl' that is a part of the unofficial opening week at the university:

"The challenges was most in the beginning. The first year. Mentality. There are not so many today. I didn't get out. When we went to pub crawls and everybody got drunk. I was told, and I don't know if it is true, that everybody in Denmark is allowed to do what they want. It was not difficult to accept, but it took time to accept that you are allowed to do what you feeling, as long as you are responsible for that. There is a huge amount of responsibility on yourself (...)In Lithuania, there are not rules that are written, but we know them. You cannot get drunk in public, not this, not that" (Lotta; 2)

The behavior of students getting drunk in public is something not only Lotta but also others of the informants find very different from what they are used to. If this is just a question of local differences or more overall differences between people in Denmark versus Lithuania and Latvia is hard to say. What is interesting is however, that Lotta interpret this behavior not as a lack of proper behavior, but as a freedom of choice, that she has not experienced before. Lotta explains that this feeling of freedom to make her own decisions has had an impact on her own behavior. She explains how what seemed to be an insurmountable challenge in the beginning made her change her attitude:

"(...) So I had to push myself a little bit. That it's ok, if you want to do something, that you like doing it is ok, as long as you are responsible for yourself and your life, and whatever. And that is a good thing. Now I'm more eager to take action, if I want to do or I want to go somewhere, I will go and take action" (Lotta; 3)

Lotta's own explanation of how she needed to "*push*" herself in order to become more adapted in Denmark, gives the impression that the process of surmounting the challenge of becoming a part of the Danish culture, as she expressed in the beginning, takes some time. However, her way of expressing her own way of behavior, as something she is very aware of, might imply that it is not yet an intuitive behavior but something that she has learned and engage consciously. Applying Dreyfus (2004) it suggests that such a change of behavior happens gradually, where she might not be on the expert level yet, but still at the level of proficiency. Here the person has learned and embodied rules of the field – which is here the rules of behavior in Denmark - but still have not had so much experience, so that the reaction comes without any considerations about why and how (Dreyfus, 2004; 179).

Lotta's respond to the different sort of personal behavior that she experiences in Denmark, is to adapt to it. One reason could be, that she from the beginning was interested in moving to Denmark because she 'wanted to try something new', as quoted earlier. Referring to Mahmoud it gives the impression, that by pushing herself to adapt different behavior is what she was longing for in order to continue her life. Her migration process thus - in spite of personal changes - include a personal continuation and the process of creating a home. On the other hand, when Lotta states, that a challenging aspect of the migration process is becoming (...) *a part of each other's culture*" (Lotta; 6) she actually refers to the process of Lithuanians becoming a part of the Danish culture, and the people in Denmark becoming a part of her Lithuanian culture. However, it seems more like Lotta is becoming a part of her surrounding society rather that conversely, which might be a part of the explanation to why it can seem to be such a challenge with the difference. Lotta emphasizes her personal transformation by stating:

"(...) Now I'm more easy going and relaxed. My friends tell me that" (Lotta; 5)

By stating how others also find her adapting through the challenge of becoming a part of, she seems to stress her argument in relation to me as the interviewer, which supports the argument, that Lotta, really engage in this transformation. Again here, that she expresses her argument with emotions, gives according to Dreyfus (2004), the impression that it is a matter of concern for her. Lotta is repeatedly expressing herself in a manner that gives the impression that she willingly participates in this process of becoming a part of the Danish society, by stating how I as the interviewer is the one, who calls attention to her transformation:

"(...) You reminded me actually how much I miss it.. haha (...)" (Lotta; 2)

"(...) You remind me of what we have in Lithuania (...)" (Lotta;2)

" (...) this is also something, that you reminds me haha (...)" (Lotta;4)

#### *Responsibility for 'Me' and 'Us'*

In another aspect of respect, both Lotta and other of the interviewees utter a not as clear affiliation to what they meet in Denmark. Even though most of them are trying their best to adapt to an idea of personal responsibility and independence, they still seem to be concerned about a more overall level of responsibility:

Maybe that one thing could be the, well but I haven't experienced it that much.. the relationship within the family. How children are taken care of by parents and grandparents.. well... I haven't experienced a lot about that, but the feeling what it is right now is that.. in Latvia we are taking care more about our parents and grandparents (...). (Raivo; 7)

The way Raivo is not stating anything with assurance, gives the impression, that he is not convinced whether his interpretation is correct or not. However, here he is talking about people in Latvia as “we”, which shows, that there is a part of the question about responsibility, where he prefers to see himself as a Latvian rather than a Danish citizen. To choose side in this respect, could thus show, that he has experienced a difference here in his everyday life, which he does not immediately find as something he wants to be a part of. Here there is a challenge of society, where he does not choose to give in and strive against being ‘us Danes’, but sticks to being Latvian. As I ask Lotta, who seems to be very keen on the individual responsibility, if there are any negative aspects about it from her point of view, and if there is anything ‘we’, or ‘Danes’ could learn in Denmark, she does as well express some objection against the ‘Danish behavior’:

“Of course. Human relationships and divorce. In social relationship, there are different types of responsibility, not only responsible for your own life. In Lithuania we have a very strong feeling, once you commit to something you commit. You can’t just.. Maybe this is something that could be good to have in Denmark a little bit more.. haha.. In Denmark, it is like: go for what you want, it might also mean that if you want something else then skip the first. You deserve the best. That’s my interpretation.” (Lotta; 3)

In relation to the interview setting and question, which, referring to Bamberg (2010) affects her answer, it should here be stressed, that the way of approaching her as an representative of the Lithuanian community and not as a part of the ‘we’ group, implies that she as a migrant does still have a position as an observer of the Danish reality. This approach bears the risk that she feels kept in the position of being the outsider of a specific Danish population, referring to Balibar’s (2012) notion of distinction and preservation of national differences. However, the intention by asking her as a representation of the ‘we’ group is not to emphasize the distinction, but to open up for her elaboration on the topic of ‘becoming a part of each other’s culture’ and see if the earlier stated challenge of this process is linked to earlier experiences and their implementation in Denmark. Here, she stresses, what she sees as an obvious problem in the Danish society concerning a lack of interpersonal responsibility, that she sees ultimately leads to divorces. Lotta talks about herself as a part of the Lithuanian society in this regard, sympathizing with this high degree of responsibility, as something she does not want to give up. That she suggests with a ‘maybe’, that it could be a bit more prevalent in Denmark gives the impression, that it is not something she has seen becoming a part of the Danish culture in spite of her conviction. In line with the earlier stated example of Lotta adapting to the culture she meets, this present example shows that there are certain values that she does not see becoming a part of a shared Danish-Lithuanian culture, and that she therefore keep on seeing herself as a part of the Lithuanian culture. The initial challenge of overcoming differences between her original home environment in Lithuania and her

present home in Denmark seems to be a challenge with only one solution; that she takes part in the Danish culture, and assimilate. Her strategy, in order to be in Denmark, is then first of all to engage in the Danish culture where it benefits her personal aim, as on the matter of responsibility of her own actions in the search for life and job in Denmark. Secondly, when there are issues such as interpersonal responsibility that she does not find in Denmark to the degree that she likes it, she does not require change in Denmark, but defend the situation by her Lithuanian heritage and different economic situation. As in the following example:

“(...) We are more dependent on one another. Divorce is something that stick to you. If you commit to someone, you really commit. This is how we are raised” (Lotta; 3).

That she is raised in a certain manner she stresses as something, that cannot be changed through the challenge of being a part of another culture. Why other things, such as her responsibility for her actions can be changed and not this aspect she elaborates on a bit further down in the interview:

(...) You have a society that supports you, we don't. That explains responsibility. Both ourselves but also other. That could explain why I see in Denmark it is about 'me' and in Lithuania it is about 'me and you'. (Lotta, 6)

She stresses that the economic situation is different for many people in Lithuania, which can be seen in the way that the society is built and works as a part of the responsibility system. As Lithuanian with Lithuanian family, she can therefore not take the liberty and ignore the sense of responsibility, which she feels she has been somehow raised to take. The reason why she does not expect the Danish society to change against her culture in this respect might be that she sees this societal difference, which simply sets different standards of responsibility in her opinion. As a migrant, she will thus be in between two different societal systems that foster different approaches to values such as respect and responsibility. That it is not possible for her to neglect this heritage can be explained by the personal link to the Lithuanian society through family, that still need the support from them as family members, migrants or not:

(...) many of us want to help our families, when they are not rich or able to support themselves fully, so they even sent money back.. they are working , studying here, and they even have their families at home.. (Lotta; 4)

Here, Lotta designates migrants as 'they' which can seem contradictory in the light of herself being a migrant. My questions and her answers did not reveal any more information on that point even though her sense of belonging would have been interesting to know more about in order to see if her conviction about the responsibility stems from a personal experience or some sort of generated narrative among herself and her fellow Lithuanians.

*The Rigid National Naming*

One thing is that the informants state, that there is a difference in the levels of responsibility and reasons for it, and that they understand why they cannot share the Danish culture in this respect, or that their responsibility of the closest family is not as needed in the Danish culture as it is in their homelands. Another thing is that the way they seem to distance even themselves from adapting to the Danish society in this regard have undertones of defense:

“Yeah, even from the immigrant side you know, for some years I could have bought.. I have no idea about your benefit system, about how your social system works.. I have no idea really, like.. because I’m working and I don’t need no money from no government.. But what I heard and what I saw from some other Lithuanian immigrants, is that they are getting some benefits and some social you know.. money for.. nothing, and it’s like.. “come on, how you can do that?”” (Dicte; 6)

That Dicte is experiencing some Lithuanians getting benefits and clearly disapprove it is emphasized by her verification of her own situation as one who works and do not have any familiarity with the Danish societal systems or supportive system as she states “*I don’t need no money from no government*”. How she stresses her point with this sentence, or the plot of the narrative, seems to have the purpose of leaving all doubt out, that she is not the kind of migrant that take benefit of support instead of working. The way she uses the opportunity of the interview to distance herself from these other Lithuanians, expressing her disappointment with them and stressing not being like them, shows an emotional preoccupation with this issue. Thus according to Dreyfus (2004) this is a matter of importance for her.

The notion of being from Lithuania or Latvia and from Eastern Europe in general is an aspect of difference, which all informants seem to find challenging, at least when it comes to an openness towards taking part in their culture. As the quote of Dicte above shows, she seems to feel obliged to defend herself from being from Lithuania. Raivo, quoted earlier about his Latvian language also expresses how he as an Eastern European has to “*earn*” (Raivo; 8) the Danes. As I, in order to hear concrete information about the informants’ strategy towards settlement and job contacts in Denmark, ask Daina about how she normally presents herself in Denmark, when she meets new people she states following:

“Well first of all I want to avoid talking too much about where I come from, but if I still do it I do it with a thought of being proud of where I’m coming from. But then probably I tell them what I am studying. Just to tell them, that I am not stupid.. I can study, and I am studying actually a master degree. And I think that is actually what I do usually. Tell that I am studying at Aalborg university” (Daina; 6).

The way that she is stressing how she feels prejudiced against as stupid because of where she comes from is thus an expectations she assumes to be met with. Raivo states another expectation based on his origin as Eastern European:

“We have this saying in Latvia, that ‘when you are doing something, people are looking at your fingertips’. The meaning of this expression is that they are looking at your fingers to see that you are not stealing anything. And this attitude from the Danes to Eastern Europeans, I felt it, and I didn’t like it. Even though that there was no intentions from my side.. of course still there were some bad guys that made this bad impression for all of us.(...) (Raivo; 9)

The impression that they as Eastern Europeans are stupid and steal thus seems to be a strong narrative, which make the interviewees rather hide their origin than telling about themselves. It becomes a strategy to be accepted, not to let anyone know their origin, because the impression and conception of what it means to be from Eastern Europe becomes the impression of him, which he dislikes. It shows a very strong narrative about what Eastern Europeans are. As a respond to the narrative, which is a prejudice according to Raivo’s self-understanding, Daina simply avoid talking about her origin. On the other hand Daina explains that she tells her origin proudly when it she needs to anyway. The negative impression of Eastern Europeans seems however to be strongest concerning the Lithuanians, as Daina says:

“Haha.. Lithuanians.. they have a bad reputation of stealing.. that’s the main thing I have heard about them. And then we always need to say, ‘no, I’m not coming from Lithuania, I come from Latvia’. Not to have this image that we are thieves and they not always distinguish the difference between Lithuanians and Latvians.. they think we are both the same..” (Daina; 7)

That there is a difference between Lithuania and Latvia nationally and geographically, does however not seem to be a clear distinction for Danes, as also Raivo experience, when he is first of all expected to be from Lithuania when Danes hear his accent

“ (...) then I am very angry, because I am not Lithuanian. And I know that there is a problem of distinguishing Lithuania and Latvia, because we are situated as brothers and the names are very similar.. so, I have heard that, that it is hard and.. differencing for Danes.. but yeah.. Basically I get this question, “am I from Lithuania?”” (Raivo; 10)

Their strategy towards this primary negative impression of them as stealing and stupid Eastern Europeans, is to stress their academic orientation and that they have a work in Denmark, helping them to maintain themselves and not as a part of exploiting a societal system. The reaction of this explanation seems to be of importance of the Danes that at least Raivo meets when he tells that he is working and studying in Denmark:

“Then they (Danes) are getting warmer towards me. Then they are getting warmer and the conversation goes in a more open, polite, warm, nice, easy manner. Then if you are talking about everything instead of just.. stopping a conversation by saying that you are working here at a pig farm and that’s it.” (Raivo; 10)

An initial contact with people in Denmark, which for most of the interviewees is of great importance in their search for both a job and a general good life in Denmark, seems thus easily to be interrupted by the fact that they are from Eastern European countries as Latvia and Lithuania. That it becomes important to stress other features about themselves, like that they do not receive governmental support and that they work and study in Denmark seems to be the defense against, what they experience as prejudices from the Danish side. The challenge of becoming a part of each other’s culture is therefore even bigger in this case exactly because of their Eastern European heritage, as it draws on a bad reputation, that the informants are experiencing Danes not welcoming as a part of cultural exchange. On top of that, they need to show, that being Eastern European is more fragmentized than initially expected. What seems to work is instead to show that they as migrants are willing to adopt to the Danish criteria of a Danish citizen, as when Raivo says that he works and studies and he gets a ‘warmer’ welcome.

However, the mere situation of not being from Denmark seems to be one of the biggest issues when searching for a job, as Raivo states:

“The greatest obstacle think the language and the ‘foreign thing being’.” (Raivo; 11)

By stressing his *“foreign thing being”* in relation to the challenge of becoming a part of the Danish society points to Balibar’s (2012) notion of the way civilizations build an understanding of themselves by opposing to somebody else. In that sense, Danes and Denmark are confirmed by stressing the boarder towards something or someone that is ‘non-Danish’. Migrants coming from other nations might look similar, but the pure fact that they are not from Denmark is actually enough to be critical towards them. Building their reputation on the negative image of stealing, that they are less clever and maybe even exploiting the Danish state supports indirectly a positive image of the Danes, as contradicting these features. Hence, the first impressions of him as an Eastern Europeans who probably has a bad influence on the Danish society, even though most Danes would also know that not all Lithuanians are stealing is a negative approach to him as a foreigner, which he needs to deal with. When the migrants feel excluded from the Danish social life and jobs only because of their different accent or nationality, which appears in the Danish context, it refers moreover to an underlying tendency of the ‘predatory identity’ of the majority, or the ‘Danes’ as formulated by Appadurai (2006). The point here could thus be, that when the reaction towards migrants are negative, it is

a way for the Danish population to protect themselves as a complete and national population of a state, against minority groups that are not from the same nation state. In that light the challenge of becoming a part of each other's cultures through the merging of national belongings, seems basically impossible, because Raivo as a migrant symbolizes a threat towards the majority, the Danish population. In order to be accepted within the majority's national framework it seems that the migrants needs to neglect their nationality and assimilate to an extent, where they do not in any way present their Eastern European heritage.

In some cases that seems possible, as when Lotta talks about her physical appearance:

"(...) I can see that many people start to dress up as Danes do it.. I prefer to dress up like Danes in dark coloures. It is just easier, the conversation goes easier. I saw it on fashion shows, but in Denmark I saw, ok people really dress up like this. I personally adapted. People just respect you more, than if I came with a very sweet look, looking very Eastern European speaking English, I think it would be very different" (Lotta; 5).

In this case of changing clothes, she knows that she can navigate around the prejudices that she feels the look of an Eastern European brings about.

However, as this last example of Dicte shows the origin as an Eastern European does not have the same meaning for everyone. When I ask her how she managed to find an apartment and job to facilitate SU, she explains that she got in contact with an agency, which helped her and her boyfriend to get a flat, and afterwards that she found some houses where she is now cleaning. She also explains that it took some time and that she has heard that some of her countrymen are getting problems when looking for a job, but that she has not have any such experiences:

"(...) I have a nice relationship with those guys, they are not like against me or thinking like.. like "they are just foreigners from Eastern Europe". You don't have to have anything with them you know.. any business or, you know.. no nothing.. because I hear these stories from time to time you know, if you are calling and just being like talking in English and they are like "no, you are not Danish we don't want you to live in our flat" etc." (Dicte; 2)

In that sense, what Dicte experiences, the challenge of being a newly arrived Eastern European migrant in Denmark is not that she is Eastern European, but that it to some people in Denmark, who manage accommodation, becomes a criteria for cooperation if she is migrant or not. The challenge is thus to navigate in this reality and find those channels, that do not see the difference as a problem within itself. Dicte seems not to have had any bad experiences herself, and tells in relation to her cleaning work, that they are of not only financial but also general support for her:

"(...) They are very nice families and they are, I am drinking even sometimes tea with them, and yeah haha.. and if I need some kind of you know.. advise or something happens in my life, I always can ask for help." (Dicte; 3)

The way she expresses her good relationship to them, through the positive meaning of *drinking tea with them* shows that she finds this supportive network within the relation to them and her experiences of their interaction helps her to create a home in Denmark.

As the analysis has shown so far, what it means to become a part of the Danish culture is dependent on both the mindset of the informants as well as topic of which a possible cultural exchange concerns. Moreover, how to become a part of the Danish culture depends as well on what the migrant stresses as the goal of migration and on what they find as required within the Danish society. Within the last and summarizing part of the analysis a division of the strategies, that the informants seem to apply within their everyday life of social interactions in Denmark, will be outlined. This categorization serves for the clarity of their behavior, which seems to draw upon different perceptions of their reality. These perceptions are defined as 'demands' or overall 'explanatory narratives' referring to the fact that the informants respond to the challenges in their everyday life, by drawing on these sometimes demanding narratives about the Danish reality. This division of explanatory narratives and the strategies of the migrants should not be interpreted as dividing the migrants up in different categories. Instead, this view upon the migrant's behavior and thoughts should serve to show how the migrants are navigating among the different constructions of difference and similarity in order to obtain international skills and a sense of feeling at home in Denmark.

## Navigating Towards a Sense of Belonging in Denmark

### The Entry to Denmark

Through the six interviews, the informants have had the possibility to elaborate on their experiences of social interaction with different people in Denmark and on how they have experienced the challenge of becoming a part of the culture in Denmark. In general, they turned out to be very reflected about their answers, giving answers of opinions and feelings, rooted in concrete experiences and compared with experiences in order to understand their situation and how they cope with it. Elli states about the experiences at university:

"I just lived with it, and "why could it be?", and "why did it happen?". I tried to figure out, what is it that they are looking for. What is prioritized here, and how I can try to get most out of it" (Elli; 2).

This approach to experiences abroad suggests a process-oriented approach to the challenge of becoming a part of the Danish society. As the first part of the analysis showed a positive process-oriented approach to the decision of migrating, characterized the migrants' answers. They feel encouraged by economic possibilities as well as the acknowledge narrative of going abroad as beneficial for future career, spread by organizations and among acquaintances. To move abroad was done in order to experience and develop international skills, and in that sense they were ready for learning about a new country, with its different values, culture, language and people.

Explanatory Narrative Number One: The Nationalistic Demand

*Strategy Number One*

However, what the analysis shows is moreover, that this process of becoming a part of each other's cultures, means in most cases the migrants becoming a part of the Danish culture and not vice versa. They think about how to be learning the language, how to behave in social situations like at university and in public, and they understand that their cultural heritage of national name, is best to be hidden in many occasions. The process turns out to be more like assimilation towards some sort of a Danish essence rather than imposing a part of their own culture in Denmark next to their acquisition of the Danish culture.

Looking for what I earlier characterized as the migrants' experienced explanatory narratives, this strategy of assimilating does thus refer to what I will call the explanatory narrative number one; the demand of nationalistic belonging in Denmark. It suggests that in order to be included in the Danish society and succeed with a job and social belonging the migrants need to become a part of the Danish culture, by striving against 'Danish-ness'. That the informants in different situations supports the idea of assimilating, suggests that they themselves to at least some degree is convinced about the strength and rationality of this strategy. This is for example when Daina supports the need of learning Danish in Denmark comparing with her own sentiments about the necessity of learning Latvian in Latvia:

"And then I had the idea, that they (the Russians) actually should learn the language. So, when I came to Denmark, I started to learn Danish." (Daina; 8)

Here she transfers her own feelings about another nationality in her own country, the Russians, upon herself as a non-Dane in Denmark. In addition, when this demand supports their initial reason of going abroad to try something new and obtain experience, the assimilation becomes a continuation of the identity and seems less challenging. One example is how the value of personal responsibility, which most of the informants stress, is inspiring and desirable. This choice of assimilating can thus be seen as a way to employ a personal

agency within the challenge of becoming a part of the Danish culture. What might on the one hand look like a constraining demand of change because of a decisive construction of national differences, might on the other hand comply with the migrants initial wish when going abroad. To experience and explore the unknown and challenging process away from their original home is thus a part of their desired experience and sense of home (Mahmoud and Märtsin, 2012).

However, when the pure notion of being the different, when the *"foreign thing being"* (Raivo; 11) as Raivo calls it, in itself becomes the hindrance for integration, and only the non-existence of accent and national heritage as the name of being an 'Eastern European', the informants express both frustration and confusion. As Ilse states in relation to political advertisements about the importance of migrants working:

"I have seen election is coming up.. and I saw these posters, like for instance the prime-minister 'Helle Thorning Schmidt' says: "All Immigrants Should Work".. and you see, she says "immigrants" and not that "everyone should work?" (Ilse; 1)

The quote suggests how she as a part of the immigrant group is puzzled over the alienation and special situation she as an immigrant finds herself in, in Denmark. The following short part of her interview shows how she has reflected upon the political structure and signal of it:

"I: honestly I feel negative emotions towards me. But everyone should work. There are also Danes that are sitting on a-kasse, not only foreigners.. she (Helle Thorning Schmidt) is trying to focus on the foreigners on a-kasse.

J: Why?

I: because I really think that that could work as her strategy, because Danes would become more national and have a feeling about who they are. But that will also built a bigger gap.

J: what does she get out of it?

I: She is coming in government. She has to strengthen her position, right?

J: and you think that making Danes feel that they are Danes and not foreigners works?

I: Yes, because it works! You feel proud of who you are.. it does work and of course people will vote for her, I think. .. At first I thought: "yeah.. ok, immigrants should work", good..maybe she is going to help us to find some work. But it's all groups.. and distinguishing one group and another group.. I still don't like to be called immigrant.. I don't know why..(...). Its really hard to say, because it specify me as someone, who shouldn't originally be here, like any kind of.. and I don't like that, I don't want that, because I want to feel that its actually ok for me to be here

J: but couldn't it signify a process of coming into the society.

E: I think it originally meaning, but somehow it doesn't feel like that, that I'm coming into the society because there are a lot of obstacles.. its not so simple the process of being a part.. Of course we have free language courses, and of course that's an advantage, but somehow it's a longer process..

J what are some of the tricky points in this process (of being a part of the society)?

E: I think different kind of attitudes from Danes.. Now I'm distinguishing Danes.. Because its not always positive.. just like saying some sentences sometimes.. also about the language.. like 'you have been here for 5 years, you should be able to speak the language' and, I'm aware of it, and it makes it even worse, that I know I should but I don't, so that's one of the small examples.. nothing else comes into my mind now.." (Ilse; 2-3)

Ilse's concern about being categorized as an immigrant in opposition to Danes can as well be explained by Balibar's (2012) notion of how the society constitutes itself through the constitution of difference, as the anthropological difference. Ilse is the one, who as earlier quoted states that she would like to speak Danish as a Dane because the accent is a hindrance. However, her present elaboration on how she analyzes the rhetoric of the Danish Prime minister Helle Thorning Schmidt shows that she interpret the presentation of immigrants to be biased and finds the message behind the political strategy to be questioned. Ilse believes that she is different from the picture of immigrants that she sees referred to on the poster. An observation like Ilse's about the present political campaign is not only a statement about Ilse's development in Denmark concerning personal affairs, but related to a more overall political development in Denmark. That the Danish Prime minister is focusing on the occupation of especially immigrants could thus be a political verification of the prejudice about them exploiting the Danish society, which the interviewees refers to. This construction of otherness Dominquez (1989) seems thus to strengthen an underlying assumption about the migrants' as not belonging as a part of the Danish population. It gathers or constitutes the national population as Danes (Balibar 2012) and serves as a management of the group of migrants (Blommaert and Verschueren; 1998).

The demands of assimilating towards Danishness suggests moreover that nationalistic coherence is a hegemonic order of sense of belonging, exercised on an everyday basis in Denmark, which refers to Billig's (1995) notion of the powerful banal nationalism. Only in a few situations, the informants stress that their foreign skills are looked well upon, as when Elli (Elli; 5) experiences her international experiences qualifying her for her student job:

"(...) as student teacher, where it was good to be international (...)" (Elli; 5)

Another example is when Raivo as noted above experiences a supportive staff at the Academy in Vejle (Raivo; 3).

*Strategy Number Two*

There seems to be a second and counter-nationalistic strategy that several of the informants apply when they face the nationalistic demand. As when Dicte states as earlier quoted, how she needs “*no money from no government*” (Dicte; 6) it opposes her not only to the group of Eastern European that might obtain financial support; she also distinguish herself from many Danes, who are supported by the Danish government. Another example of such a national niche that they relate to, is when Lotta explains how “*we*” in Lithuania are more responsible towards family members and relationships. Her affiliation to Lithuanian culture here is not related to the same prejudices as Dicte refers to, but more the fact that to acquire the Danish culture in all aspects is simply impossible because of obligations she cannot dismiss. In that sense, they express how the challenge of becoming a part of the Danish culture is not always a challenge that they wish to go through. A way to defend themselves could be how they are stressing their pride of being non-Danish. This strategy does however seem to hold the risk that they will stay in this position of being outside a Danish community as Latvians or Lithuanian, because they confirm their opposition towards Danes and the Danish society, by stating this. Referring to Dominguez (1989) this constitution of difference between Danes and Eastern Europeans seem to be confirmed and stressed by the Eastern Europeans themselves. Their otherness lies, according to Dicte and Lotta, in some characteristics about them as not receiving governmental money and being more responsible for other people than Danes are. This construction seems to work as a defense, and as long as the narrative about Lithuanians as stealing appears around them, it could be assumed that this defense and thus constructed difference is strengthened as well. Referring to the initial dream of becoming a part of the Danish culture, this strategy seems only to share the belief of national sovereignty as incompatible with other national cultures, and the migrants will not become a part of the Danish culture through social interaction with people in Denmark. Referring to Balibar (2012), the opposing stance towards other national groups might define the national group itself, but the construction of the difference seems rigid and confirming.

Another risk is that they at some point will choose to move back to the countries from which they came, and where they feel national belonging. Only Daina and Raivo are considering this, even though their argument of moving back stems from their longing towards family and that Raivo has a job offer in Latvia. As they weigh their chances of getting a job in Denmark small exactly because of their nationality, it might however be the indirect reason why they as a young family consider to move back again. Raivo explains after the interview that as a father he needs to consider the responsibility of his family. To plan and create a home in relation to the job-offer, which promises economic stability, is a way to continue his sense of identity as father, and thus

a meaningful sense of home in Latvia. As earlier stated the migrants explore and strive for the unknown as a part of the process of creating a sense of home abroad. However, where the nationalistic demands becomes impossible to accommodate, and they seem to pull back towards their home countries, both in words and physically, the homing-process seems to be disconnected to the Danish environment. This seems to indicate that the construction of national difference as incompatible can be influential on the migrants' possibilities of staying in Denmark, or moving back.

#### Explanatory Narrative Number Two – The Demand of Sharing Cultural Values

##### *Strategy Number Three*

That this apparently insurmountable demand and thus challenge of becoming a part the Danish society has not resulted in the migrants return yet, might be explained by another explanatory narrative about how to belong in Denmark. This explanatory narrative concerns the demand of sharing cultural values. It is revealed through a third strategy that to some extent undermines the hegemony of the nationalistic demand and thus the subjectification of the migrants (Balibar, 2012). It means to participate and stress the participation within other communities than the national, and in this way defend the right of existence in Denmark as international students. One example given earlier is Raivo, who emphasized that he is in Denmark as a part of the Danish workforce and that he studies, which does not correspond with the prejudices about Eastern Europeans exploiting the Danish society. That he feels people becoming warmer towards him, is an emotional expression of the positive relation he builds with Danes. To belong to a 'working and study community' in Denmark is thus a strategy towards an initial positive contact to Danes. That he still finds it hard to get a job because of the "*foreign thing being*" (Raivo; 11) says something about how strong the prejudices against him as a foreigner seems to be. Daina gives another example of how she finds it possible to relate to Danes in relation to shared values:

"Yes, but they (Danish acquaintances) are 40 plus, because they have a more similar thinking to our thinking (...) they have still more traditional thinking of what is the man's role and the woman's role in society. Where now people are more open to anything, and more partying, and interests that I sometimes don't have that much. For example going out every Friday, Thursdays and all the other days, just drinking a lot and just partying partying. So, I actually rather spend quality time with somebody above 40 and not thinking about getting drunk every Friday, than going out with those who are doing that" (Daina; 5)

How she here expresses her sense of belonging to these people emotionally, stating that they spend "*quality time*" (ibid) together because of their "*similar thinking*" (ibid.) suggests that her personal involvement and conviction is strong, referring to Dreyfus (2004). Again it shows that feeling connected to Danes in spite of

any knowledge about national heritage is possible. Here the importance of shared values as the basis for a relation, is the narrative that they draw on as an accepted explanation. The difference, that separate her from other young Danes, are not that they are Danes but that they are drinking. Referring to Dominguez the 'Otherness' and difference between them and other people in Denmark can thus be constructed around values and not bound to ethnicity. Referring to Mahmoud and Märtsin (2012) this present example of Raivo and Daina shows moreover how they re-establish a sense of home among unknown people by sharing familiar values. How they navigate around the nationalistic demand shows that even though it might be a strong narrative it is possible to stay in Denmark and feel a sense of belonging.

Explanatory Narrative Number Three – The Demand of Acquired International Expertise

*Strategy Number Four*

When Lotta describes how it is easier with Danish after two years, and that it is ok now, it suggests that she has found another focus on the goal in Denmark than to assimilate fully, in order to succeed in Denmark. After two years, she will still have an accent, but that she finds this level of Danish sufficient in order to cope with a life in Denmark, suggests a third explanatory narrative about being a part of the Danish culture. It is also what is being referred to when it in reports is said, that Denmark needs the international workforce because of the economic advantage, and that already now, it can be seen how international students have been beneficial for the Danish state in spite of the free education and payment of SU as the governmental support (Damvad, 2013). The demand to international students is in this optic, not that they should assimilate to become Danish in a nationalistic sense, but only to be acquainted with the Danish society. This different demand of 'international expertise' I thus find as the third and influential explanatory narrative of internationalism, which as well guides strategies of the informants. Drawing on this demand of them to be acquainted with the Danish culture, learning about it, but at the same time expected to maintain their own cultural heritage, allow them to fulfill their dream of learning about a new country, exploring abroad. At the same time they can uphold an important connection to their familiar cultural values abroad. That the informants meet this narrative in Denmark, at the university where they are encouraged to come, or within events as the earlier exemplified 'International Potential Day' might be a part of the explanation of why the informants have stayed in Denmark for several years still believing in and looking for a job. It is a strategy, by which, it is possible to navigate past nationalistic explanatory narrative of how to become a part of the Danish culture. In contrast with what Appadurai (2006) suggests, the non-national population, or, what could be called an ethnic minority (Dominguez 1989) is here characterized by being empowered in Denmark, exactly because of their difference or "*foreign thing being*" (Raivo; 11). The migrants do instead seem to be needed

in the Danish state because the population of ethnic Danes is incomplete in relation to the demands of the Danish export market and thus the Danish state. The articulation of the difference becomes a management of these, however, not through a critical stance towards the different migrant, referring to Balibar (2010), rather the opposite. This narrative suggests that the migrants' chance of continuing a sense of identity by obtaining what they came for, which is to explore and become a part of the Danish culture, creating a sense of home and acquiring a job, seems possible.

With these different strategies, my suggestion is therefore, that even though the nationalistic demand seems highly decisive for the actions of the migrants demanding their nationalistic assimilation to a certain extent, there are as well other present options in the search for a sense of home in Denmark. Opposing themselves from Danes, by drawing on their own nationality is one counter-nationalistic way to create their own niche, but to undermine the nationalistic hegemony by establishing other communities within Denmark that draws on values and occupation is another. Balibar's (2012) notion of the importance of anthropological differences within a nation, building the national coherence through opposition towards the foreigner seems thus to be demonstrated to some extent within the reality of the migrants, but that they succeed in navigating within this realm shows that other narratives about the population's sense of belonging is present in Denmark. The national identities, which Billig (1995) sees uphold through the execution of ideological habits and thus banal nationalism can therefore be changed, as it is not primordial. The cultural difference and constitution of the differences especially might have implications for the process of becoming a part of each other's cultures. However referring to Dominguez (1989) it is thus the objectification of the differences and not the differences within themselves, that creates 'Otherness'.

The initial goal of the migrants, which was to undergo a development in Denmark and obtain international experience can with the approach of Mahmoud and Mårtsin (2012), be understood as their aspiration for establishing a sense of home through migration entailing both personally developing experiences and the search of familiarity and stability. In Denmark, they are met by demands that in some cases, as in the question of personal responsibility, require that they develop skills, which is a part of what they searched for. In other cases the demands becomes insurmountable, as denying their national affiliation or speaking Danish without accent (Raivo; 10, Ilse 10), and they seek the familiar or safe; stressing their original culture or searching for other senses of belonging. It shows that they are able to develop a sense of home in continuation with their sense of identity navigating among the different demands and explanatory narratives of how to become a part of the Danish culture, with strategies that they have created based on these narratives, which they meet in social interactions.

Hence, these different narratives exist side by side and establish the reality in which both the migrants and every other human live in. They are establishing the challenge for the migrants to become a part of the Danish society in different ways. However, how people approach these narratives, navigate among them and let them decide this reality is not only establishing the circumstances of the challenge, but seems to be dependent on the individual choice and pre-understanding. The migrant's navigation among the narratives towards their personal creation of a sense of home and belonging in Denmark seems to be an example of this. To strengthen their process even more, enhancing their feeling of sense of belonging and possibility to obtain a work and home in Denmark, demands an awareness of that the narratives are constructed, and thus possible not only to live and confirm, but to choose or not, create and recreate. For the following years, which seems characterized by both international interest and national precaution, it will therefore be interesting to see not only which role Eastern European students in the Danish society is given, but the way that they with these narratives as constituting societal structures will negotiate their role among the Danish population.

## Conclusion

Knowing about the demand of highly educated migrants in Denmark and a satisfaction with specifically Eastern European students this research began with a puzzlement about a statement of a young Lithuanian woman, stressing challenging differences in Denmark and that it was a challenge to become a part of each other's culture in Denmark. Believing that it would be beneficial for both the migrants and the Danish society to support the process of overcoming this challenge, the aim of this thesis has thus been to explore the challenge as well as circumstances for the challenge that students from Lithuania and Latvia face when striving for a sense of home and belonging in Denmark.

In order to reveal knowledge on the topic, a number of semi-structured interviews have been conducted with six migrants from respectively Latvia and Lithuania. It was expected that it gave the possibility to elaborate on their experiences of social interactions, in which their challenge were most prominent. With a pre-understanding of the field and an initial theoretical awareness, the research has been characterized by a hermeneutical approach. As a methodological approach towards the answers, narratives have been looked for, applying Dreyfus's (2004) 'Five-stage model of skill acquisition'.

The interviews offered moreover the possibility to obtain an insight to what guided the migrants towards Denmark in the first place, and thus their goal of the migration process. In this regard, it turned out that they all had a very positive understanding of the concept of international experience. This seemed to be a believe, that they had obtained through a strong narrative within their country of origin about the future potential within the job-market. To strengthen and to some extent create this narrative the institutional and organizational layer was emphasized, mentioning both student-organizations, EU-regulations and the possibility of obtaining SU in Denmark was emphasized by the migrants. Moreover, several of the informants expressed going abroad as a way to experience something new and in this sense a chance of personal self-development. The interest in exploring something new, as a part of a continuation of their sense of identity and thus their sense of home, seemed to encompass this strive for challenge. Hence, the informants did not seem afraid of the inherent challenge of moving away from everything they knew – their original home – to Denmark. In addition to this feeling of continuing their life plans abroad, several of the informants emphasized the interest in obtaining a job and maintaining their relationships, which was a part of the explanation for their migration. Both personal exploration, future opportunities and a sustained familiarity thus seemed important for the migrants.

Analyzing the interviews, with a focus on where the migrants experienced their challenge of becoming a part of the Danish society, a number of themes seemed to step forward. Here, especially language, cultural behaviors and the designation of the migrants seemed to be prevailing themes around which the exchange of culture and acquaintance were met by very different responds. Looking at these responds and the reasoning behind such responds, the analysis shows that the migrants seemed to draw on different explanatory narratives about the demand of how to become a part of the Danish society. Here, especially three of such explanatory narratives have been highlighted. The first explanatory narrative concerned a demand of nationalistic belonging within the Danish society, where the migrants in order to become accepted needs to assimilate to the Danish culture. This demand resulted in a strategy of either assimilating or defending themselves through their own national belonging. This counter-nationalistic strategy suggested that this narrative was not only a part of the Danish reality, but an understanding of belonging, which the informants believed in themselves. These strategies could also be understood in relation to their strive for both the unknown and the familiar within their search for a sense of home abroad.

The second explanatory narrative that the migrants met, about how to become a part of the Danish culture, concerns the importance of sharing cultural values, such as work, behavior and interests. Applying the strategy of emphasizing such affiliation with Danes, the informants seemed to obtain a connection and sense of belonging among the unknown Danes, and hereby establishing a feeling familiarity and acceptance.

The third explanatory narrative about the demands of becoming a part of the Danish society is that it requires to have international expertise. In order to meet the requirements of this narrative, the migrants apply what is found as the fourth and last appointed strategy. It entails to become acquainted with the Danish culture, however not within the nationalistic understanding of the word, but in addition to their own culture. This strategy do as well entail to both explore a new culture and at the same time maintain the familiar culture and strive for the initial dream of obtaining an international awareness, with interest not only for the migrant but also for the Danish labor market.

How the migrants' role of being different is articulated differently within the three explanatory narratives of how to become a part of the Danish culture, points to Dominquez (1989) notion of how difference as ethnic difference can become an objectification and management of the 'Other', or the migrants (Blommaert and Verschueren, 1998). It entails moreover the possibility of self-determination, as is seen, when the migrants stress, that they as internationals have certain potential in Denmark. This management of their difference is however also seen to have the possible negative impact on the migrants' strive for becoming a part of the

Danish society, when the national differences per se is seen as the obstacle of sense of belonging. Here, Balibar's (2010) notion of the anthropological difference, as well as Appadurai's (2006) theory about the 'Fear of small numbers' (Appadurai, 2006) gives an explanation of how such national tendencies is the national populations' attempt of preserving a national purity, by denying the non-national population access within the community of the nation state. The nationalism that upholds such difference within the everyday life, as seen in the examples of demands about accent-free language or prejudices against Eastern European people, can be supported by what Billig (1995) calls 'Banal nationalism' (Billig 1995).

The way, that the informants seem to navigate among the different explanatory narratives about how to become a part of Danish culture suggests not only, that being an Eastern European student in Denmark demands an understanding of the requirements and an ability to switch between the different strategies. In this way, they are themselves agents of their own reality in Denmark, when navigating and applying their different strategies, and takes part in the recreation of the different narratives. Through this present investigation of six young peoples' experiences within Denmark, the challenge of becoming a part of the Danish culture, striving for continuation of both a sense of identity and a sense of home, seems therefore to be characterized by both personal expectations and the ongoing negotiations of articulations of differences and similarities. This is what is happening and experienced in social interactions between people in the everyday life. The circumstances of the challenge is to decide which strategies and narratives that should be applied and confirmed, and it demands insight and reflections among all concerned such interactions, as it is decisive for how to create and recreate the everyday life. Looking at the increasing and requested number of international students in Denmark, a majority of the Danish population seem to be invited into such considerations.

## Literature

### Articles

Balibar, E. (2012). Civic Universalism and Its Internal Exclusions: The Issue of Anthropological Difference. *Boundary 2* 39: 1, Duke University Press

Bamberg, M. (2010). Narrative Analysis, in H. Cooper *APA Handbook of research methods in psychology* (vol. 3). Washington, DC: APA Press

Dreyfus, S. E. (2004). *The Five-stage Model of Adult Skill Acquisition*, Bulletin of Science Technology & Society, Sage Publications

Dominguez, V.R. (1989). *The management of otherness: "Ethnicity" in the United States and Israel*, Yugoslavia, Journal of Ethnic Studies

Mahmoud H.W., Märtsin, M. (2012). Never at Home? Migrants between Societies, in Valsiner, J., *The Oxford Handbook of Culture and Psychology*, New York: Oxford University Press

### Books

Appadurai, A. (2006). *Fear of small numbers*. Durham and London: Duke University Press

Billig, M. (1995). *Banal Nationalism*. London: Sage Publications Ltd

Blommaert, J., Verschueren, J. (1998). *Debating Diversity – Analysing the discourse of tolerance*. London: Routledge

Castles, S., Miller, M. J. (2009). *The Age of Migration*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition. China: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009

Kvale, S. (2007). *Doing Interviews*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Østergård, U. (2007). Stat, nation og national identitet, in Andersen, H. and Kaspersen, L. B. *Klassisk og moderne samfundsteori*, 4 th. edition. København: Hans Reitzels Forlag

### Reports

Damvad (2013). *Internationale studerendes karriereplaner*; Damvad for Styrelsen for Universiteter og Internationalisering, Styrelsen for Fastholdelse og Rekruttering, Aarhus Universitet og VIA University College

Junge, M., Blomhøj, K. E. (2015). *Samfundsøkonomisk analyse af internationale studerende*, Tænketanken DEA

Supule, I. (2015). *The emigrant communities of Latvia: National identity, transnational relations and diaspora politics* (<http://migracija.lv/inenglish>). Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, University of Latvia. ESF project. Unpublished data

### Web pages

Danielsson, A. (2010, February 10). *Brain-drain. Or Brain-gain?* Found 18.4.15 at:  
[www.balticworlds.com/brain-drain-or-brian-gain/](http://www.balticworlds.com/brain-drain-or-brian-gain/)

Gyldendal, Den Store Danske, Found the 17.5.2015 at:  
[http://www.denstoredanske.dk/Sprog,\\_religion\\_og\\_filosofi/Sprog/Fremmedord/mi-mo/migrant](http://www.denstoredanske.dk/Sprog,_religion_og_filosofi/Sprog/Fremmedord/mi-mo/migrant)

Jensby, A.G. in Eksportmagasinet (2015). *Eksportsucces står og falder med de rette kompetencer*. Found at 15.5.15 at

Lind, A. (2015, March 26) *Minister: Udlændinge på SU er gevinst for Danmark*. Found 20.4.15 at:  
[www.dr.dk/Nyheder/Indland/2015/03/26/124332.htm](http://www.dr.dk/Nyheder/Indland/2015/03/26/124332.htm)

Styrelsen for videregående uddannelser. Found 10.3.15 at:  
<http://www.su.dk/SU/betingelser/udenlandsk/ligestillingeu/arbejde/arbtageselvst/Sider/default.aspx>

### Appendices

Interview with Daina

Interview with Dicte

Interview with Elli

Interview with Ilse

Interview with Lotta

Interview with Raivo