Retention of Well-educated International Students in the North Denmark Region

An Exploratory Case Study of how STAY can Change and Improve the Regional Effort in a Change Management and Migration Perspective

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Date: June 29th 2015

Education: Culture, Communication & Globalization

Abstract

From a social constructivist point of view, the purpose of this masters' thesis is to provide insight into *how relevant stakeholders in the North Denmark Region can change and improve the current effort of retaining more well-educated international students in the region after they graduate*.

The global mobility of well-educated people is increasing, and international talents desire having an international profile. Socio-economic analyses show that retaining internationals is a profitable business for Denmark, which may be the reason why Danish regions and municipalities increasingly engage in projects aiming to improve their retention effort of international talents.

In the North Denmark Region, Aalborg Municipality has established a regional initiative called "STAY" which is a partnership between the municipality, the region's business community, and Aalborg University and University College Northern Jutland. The objective with this initiative is to retain more international talents in the region after they graduate. However, studies have shown that the region is the worst in Denmark when it comes to retaining international talents. Therefore, we find it relevant to determine whether STAY has been working as intended.

In order to obtain a deeper understanding of whether STAY has been working as intended, we have conducted 9 semi-structured qualitative interviews with stakeholder representatives from STAY's organization. Based on their statements, we have identified which problems and challenges STAY is facing. To make sense of these statements, a theoretical framework consisting of change management theories is applied in order to make concrete suggestions on how to change the organization and thereby enabling it to improve the region's retention effort.

Given that the North Denmark Region is the worst at retaining international talents, it seems that the necessary initiatives have not been implemented to meet the needs of the internationals. For that reason, we have conducted a quantitative survey with the purpose to discover why so many choose to leave the region after graduation. Naturally, the results of the survey called for qualification which has been done in form of a qualitative focus group interview with four international students. To make sense of the results of the survey and from the statements articulated by the students, a theoretical framework consisting of migration theories are applied in order to explain which challenges international students in the North Denmark Region experience and why they are experiencing them.

The empirical data generated through the interviews show that the stakeholders in STAY experience issues within the subjects of organizational cooperation & resources, stakeholder management, and lack of vision.

The empirical data generated through the survey and the focus group interview shows that stigmatization, network, and language play a big part when it comes to integration and accessibility to the region's labor market.

Ways of improving STAY's organization are that only stakeholders with mandate and power are allowed to be a part of STAY, to make STAY an integrated part of the stakeholder's job descriptions, to invest more human and financial resources, to employ a full time Project Manager with leadership experience, defining and communicating clear goals, to engage the North Denmark Region, to engage the region's business community and large business organizations, and finally to provide a new and uncomplicated vision for the organization.

In terms of improving retention of international talents, establishing an International House in Aalborg, with the purpose of being a social regional epicenter, is not the long-term solution. Suggestions to concrete initiatives that can be implemented by STAY are to prepare the students before coming to Denmark, welcoming and helping them by making a step-by-step guide containing practical information, promote the region's successful integration stories through campaigns, extend the opportunity of learning Danish online before arrival and emphasize the importance of learning the language from the earliest start possible, incite a more internationalized study environment to promote the social and academic integration, acknowledge internationals, and finally ensure attractive peripheral areas to strengthen the retention effort throughout the entire region.

Aalborg, June 29th 2015

Acknowledgements

This thesis has grown from lose, fragmented ideas to a very clear idea on what we wanted to work with. The thesis was formed through inspiring conversations and good cooperation. Therefore, we would like to thank each other and our contributors.

First of all, we would like to thank our supervisor, Trine Lund Thomsen, who has contributed with valuable supervision throughout the entire process. Likewise, we would like to thank Dennis Jensen, Project Manager at STAY, Lasse Frimand Jensen, Project Manager at EMBRACE and City Councilor for the Social Democrats at Aalborg Municipality, Mette Østergaard Samuelsen, Manager at the International Department of Business and Technology at UCN, Kjartan Jensen, CEO and Founder of Dataproces in Nibe, Inger Askehave, Vice-Rector at Aalborg University, Leif Bjerg Jensen, Growth Consultant at Væksthus Nordjylland, and Birgitte Bisgaard Nielsen, Academic Officer and Head of Section at the Faculty's Offices of Technical and Scientific and Medical Science at Aalborg University for interesting knowledge-sharing. Furthermore, we would like to thank Izabella Sivaka, Valeria Abramova, Andrejs Baceks, and Artem Panin, who are international students studying at University College Northern Jutland, to provide insight on their lives as international students living and studying in the North Denmark Region. In addition, we would like to thank all of you international students in the region, who responded to our survey.

Also, we would like to express sincere gratitude to the Mayor of Aalborg Municipality, Thomas Kastrup-Larsen, who answered our questions in spite of his limited time.

Despite of your busy schedules, all of you found our project interesting and took time to participate in our interviews, where each of you have contributed with your individual stories, which is exactly what makes this thesis unique. For that, we are incredibly grateful.

Sincerely,

Mathias & Julie

Table of Contents

1.0 Introduction & Problem Field

"Internationale studerende er guld værd" – (www.berlingske.dk 2013)

"Internationale studerende er en god forretning for Danmark" – (www.business.dk 2015)

"Udenlandske studerende giver penge i statskassen" – (www.dea.nu 2015)

"Venstre vil holde fast på udenlandske studerende" – (www.politiko.dk 2014)

These headlines from various Danish media are a fraction of what is and has been a hot topic of debate in Danish politics and media during the past few years; retention of well-educated international talents in Denmark. These headlines emphasize that educating international students is overall a good business for Denmark. Numbers have shown that providing international students with free education is economically profitable, however the subject calls for a more nuanced image. Based on a socio-economic analysis of international students in Denmark from 1996-2012, it has been implied that retention of internationals students is less important in a socio-economic point of view, as the economic consequences are positive regardless of whether international talents leave or stay in Denmark after graduation. However, it is only profitable since the economic benefits of those, who stay after graduation, make up for the costs of those, who choose to leave. (DEA 2015) Therefore, this fact emphasizes the importance of the thesis you are about to read.

Today, acquiring new knowledge is demanded by corporations and organizations around the world. Global mobility and student migration are increasing in scale and complexity, since students desire to have international profiles, accelerate their careers, or to experience living, studying, and working in other cultures (forbes.com 2013). As a result hereof, more students choose to study abroad as a stepping stone to permanent residency in other countries. (Gribbe 2008) Naturally, corporations demand the most talented people, since they are the key to enhance competitiveness. The boost in student migration and the financial and academic contributions they make to the host nations has encouraged relevant stakeholders such as regions, municipalities, educational institutions, and businesses to cooperate in developing and implementing new initiatives that will improve the retention of international talents (oecd.org 2015) (Varghese 2008).

The fact that Denmark is facing future demographical challenges where fewer hands must feed more people combined with the financial crisis that struck the world in 2008, has meant an increased focus on innovation and growth. As several other western countries, Denmark has changed from having a production-based industry to having a knowledge-based service industry which requires a well-educated workforce to stay globally competitive (uvm.dk 2007). As Denmark's former Minister of Education, Morten Østergaard, stated in 2012:

> "…It is required that we mobilize relevant partnerships that unites scientists, businesses, employees, and the public sector in a joined effort to find new, robust solutions… we must ensure that the cooperation between knowledge institutions, companies, and other stakeholders contributes to more growth and employment." (Østergaard 2012).

With this in mind, Denmark has to compete on the quality of its leaders and employees, as we, like other countries, cannot dig valuables out of the ground but have to drag them out of people's brains instead. Nowadays, Danish corporations do not only compete with each other about the best employees but also with companies around the world.

In the recent years, there has been an increased focus on promoting Denmark globally as a great place to live and work. This has been successful in the sense that more internationals have moved to Denmark to study and pursue a career. Naturally, this development calls for a higher focus on how Denmark can improve retention of those people, so they can contribute to the Danish society and economy. (Thuesen, Tørslev and Jensen 2011, 39-45) Some argue that well-educated internationals are not only important to retain because of their professional competences. Their international background and cultural differences are also valuable to most organizations, since having a culturally diverse workforce often means more productivity and innovation. (reglab.dk 2012) In 2013, an extensive international investigation conducted by INSEAD Business School concluded that Denmark has all the right preconditions to retain international talents. In fact, only Switzerland and Singapore are better positioned in the global competition for talents. The investigation shows that Denmark is a leading country in knowledge level, working culture, quality of life, and social security. On the other hand, it also concluded that Denmark is not good enough at communicating its many possibilities and thereby exploiting the full potential. (Anneberg and Lassen 2013)

Fewer hands feeding more people in the future is not the only challenge Denmark is facing. The intake of international students at the Danish universities has exploded in the recent years. In 2012, 442 students from other EU countries received Danish State education grant (SU) and in 2014, the number was multiplied by ten to 4,141 people. An EU sentence from 2013 decided that students coming to Denmark from other EU countries have the right to receive full Danish State education grant if they work 11 hours per week besides their studies (Møller 2014). This sentence has and will put a great pressure on the Danish welfare system, but only if Denmark fails in retaining the students after they graduate. In that way, they can pay back through their income tax what Denmark has invested in them. Now, more than half of the internationals choose to leave Denmark after they graduate, which is and will be a major economic challenge for Denmark (Forskningsministeriet 2013). Companies, NGOs, and politicians argue that Denmark is missing out on a remarkable growth potential, if it does not succeed in retaining more internationals, as each year group generate approximately DKK 1.6 billion. (Claus Aaustrup Seidelin 2014) However, the challenge is not only economical. Former leading Financial Advisor and Professor of Economics at Aarhus University, Torben M. Andersen, states:

> "It's an investment in young international students. Most often, we give them an educational subsidy in the form of free education, and in return we can increase the workforce with highly qualified people, and that can have a direct influence on the labor market and the business development. This means growth if more students choose to stay here." (Ernst 2013).

Additionally, this subject has been and still is a hot topic on the Danish political agenda. In 2014, the Danish government and 5 other parties passed a bill which realized a reform of international recruitment. It was named *"Easier Access to Highly Qualified labor – Proposal to a Reform of International Recruitment"* and contained the following 4 focus areas:

1. It must be easier and faster for companies to recruit international labor
2. **Denmark bust be better at retaining international students**
3. Reception and retention of international labor must be strengthened
4. Level playing field for international labor

In addition to this reform, the Danish government launched a concrete plan of action called *"Denmark, an Attractive Country of Education – This is how Denmark attracts and retains International Talents"* which consists of 2 main objectives:

1. Denmark must attract the best international students
2. **International graduates must be retained in Denmark**

This emphasizes the great focus on the subject of retaining international talents in Denmark.

In the North Denmark Region (the NDR), the challenge of retaining the region's international talents is also on the agenda. Often, the region is referred to as "peripheral Denmark", even though the region has the country's fourth largest city, Aalborg. However, studies from Aalborg University and the NDR show that it is the region in Denmark which is the worst at retaining international students after they graduate. (Bradsted 2014), (Hubnorth.dk 2015)

So far, only smaller initiatives have been launched in the region with the objective to solve this challenge. (Universitet 2015) In 2014, Aalborg Municipality launched the most prominent initiative called *"STAY"* which is a partnership between relevant stakeholders in the region consisting of the private business community, educational institutions (Aalborg University (AAU) and University College Northern Jutland (UCN)), the public sector, and finally the region's international students. The STAY initiative has 4 focus areas:

1. Relations between students and the business community
2. Job creation and innovation for newly educated
3. Branding and visibility
4. **International potential** (STAY 2014, 4)

When going through the *"STAY Masterplan"* which is the outlined purpose including the initiative's vision and objectives formulated by Aalborg Municipality, it is arguably difficult to criticize the well-intentioned written words. However, interviews and conversations with key stakeholders within the STAY initiative revealed that the vision and objectives did not consist with the organization's activities. Therefore, we found it necessary and relevant to investigate whether STAY has worked as intended.

Ultimately, we consider it interesting and relevant to investigate how the NDR can change and improve its effort of retaining more well-educated international talents in the region and thereby contribute positively to the national challenge of retaining more international talents and prevent Denmark's current brain drain.

1.1 The Purpose of the Thesis

The overriding purpose of this masters' thesis is to investigate how relevant stakeholders in the NDR can change and improve the effort of retaining more well-educated international students in the region after they graduate. Since our preliminary research show that STAY was established with the purpose of dealing with this challenge, we decided to conduct our first interview with STAY's Project Manager, Dennis Jensen. Based on that interview, we became aware that STAY in all probability had serious, organizational challenges that could prevent achieving the objective of retaining more well-educated international talents in the region. Additionally, it was quite obvious to us that the more humanistic perspectives such as integration related subjects were not considered in the STAY initiative as being relevant in terms of achieving the overall objective. Paradoxically, the opinions and needs of the international students, who are the target group of the STAY activities and objective, have not been taken in consideration, which is why this thesis is relevant.

An interview with STAY's Project Manager, Dennis Jensen, made us wonder whether the region's poor retention statistics is connected to the organizational challenges STAY faces. Therefore, we decided to scrutinize STAY by conducting interviews with its key stakeholders. Naturally, to change and improve the current effort of retaining the international students, it is essential to scrutinize their needs when it comes to staying in the region after graduation. Therefore, it is necessary that STAY's activities are consistent with those specific needs. For that reason, it was natural for us to include the international students through a quantitative survey conducted by 130 international students from AAU and UCN which gave rise to conduct a qualitative focus group interview with 4 international students with the intention of elaborating the results from the survey.

So, through an explorative case study design, the purpose of this thesis is to illuminate the challenges and problems that have not yet been addressed nor examined by other studies. Also, we aim to identify the specific needs of the international students with the purpose of finally proposing concrete organizational changes to STAY along with initiatives that can improve the regional retention effort. Thus, it will be possible for us to contribute with new knowledge to this specific problem field that can be valuable for all the stakeholders dealt with throughout this thesis. Based on a theoretical framework consisting of change management and migration theory, we will make suggested solutions to concrete STAY's organizational changes and to initiatives that STAY can implement in the region.

The outcomes of this thesis will have both organizational dimensions as well as humanistic. In the end, the results of the analysis will be discussed in order to offer concrete solutions that can change and improve the region's current retention effort.

Since the thesis contains an organizational and a humanistic dimension, it allows us to combine our different streams which are Organization & Leadership and International Migration and Ethnic Relations within the Culture, Communication & Globalization programme (CCG).

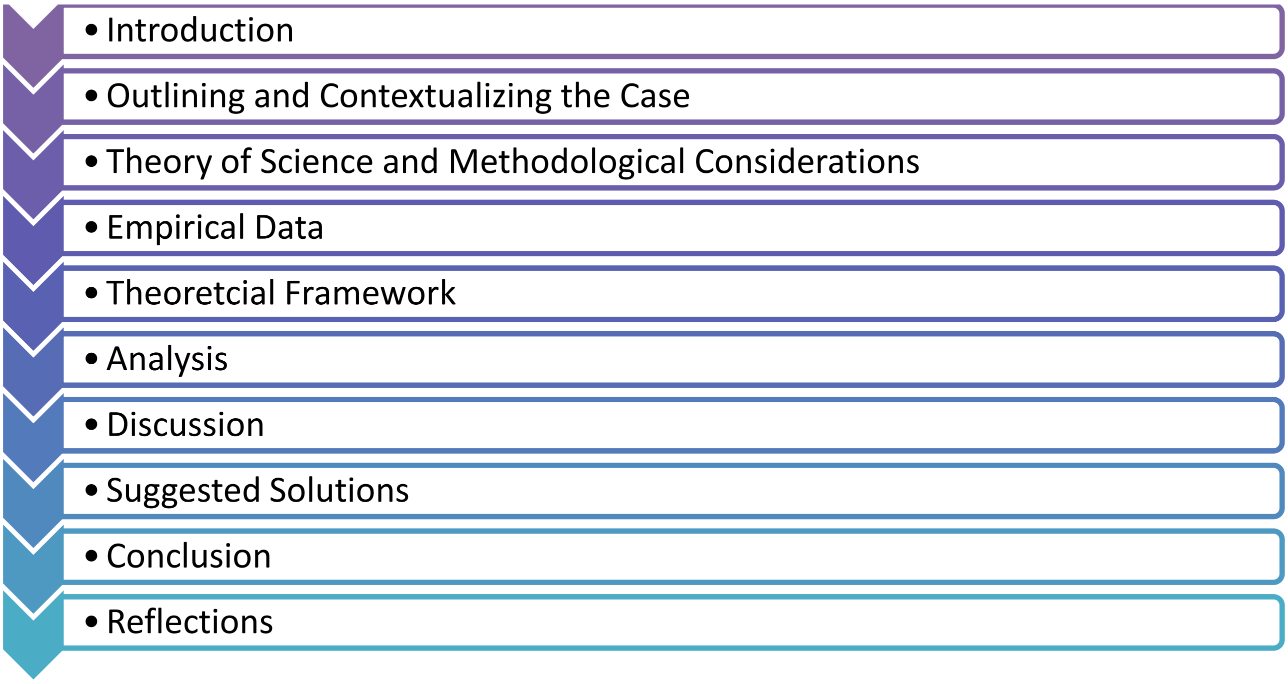
These considerations outlined so far lead us to the following problem formulation:

1.2 Problem Formulation

How can relevant stakeholders in the North Denmark Region change and improve the current effort of retaining more well-educated international students in the region after they graduate?

1.3 Structure of the Thesis

Here, a model shows the structure of the thesis:



1.4 Literature Review

Most topics have a rich tradition of research behind them. According to Professor of Organizational and Social Research at Leicester University, Alan Bryman, existing literature represent an important element behind all research (Bryman, 2012, 8). This section offers a review of some of the existing literature on retention of international students. Besides introducing the reader to existing literature and research that are already done on the field, the aim is to identify the most significant gaps in the literature.

A lot of different studies with the purpose to strengthen attraction and retention of well-educated, internationals in Denmark have been conducted. However, in our preliminary research, we have noticed that the majority of these investigations are often either smaller or larger quantitative studies. It is also worth mentioning that most of the existing studies deal with internationals that are already employed. As far as we are aware, a study focusing solely on the NDR has not yet been conducted. When it comes to literature and research on retention of international students, the findings are many. The media write about it, politicians are making thorough investigations of the benefits that come from it, different Danish organizations emphasize the importance of diversity in the workforce and even international scholars are looking into which factors that influence European migrants' life satisfaction.

The Confederation of Danish Industry (Dansk Industri) is a business organization representing 10,000 companies in Denmark and employ 1,000,000 employees – half of them abroad (Industri 2015). In 2013, The Confederation of Danish Industry published a report called *"International students are worth gold to Denmark"* completed by Claus Aastrup Seidelin, who works as a consultant at The Confederation of Danish Industry. His results are based on a report from the Administration for International Education (Styrelsen for International Uddannelse), which investigates the number of international students taking a full education in Denmark and choose to stay. (Seidelin 2013)

According to The Confederation of Danish Industry, each year group of international students who complete a master's degree and stay in Denmark to work afterwards, contribute to an average of up to DKK 1,600,000,000 to the Danish economy during their first three years of residence in Denmark. New calculations also show that if the proportion of international students, who stay in Denmark 3 years after graduation increase from 2 out of 5 to 3 out of 5, it will result in further growth of up to DKK 500,000,000. (Seidelin 2013)

In August 2013, VIA University college published an executive report called *"Retention of International Students"*. The report was completed in cooperation with the Central Denmark Region and the EU. The report focuses on the retention of international students and graduates from Technical Mercantile College (Teknisk Merkantil Højskole) and VIA University College (VIA UC). Furthermore, it examines whether different companies are satisfied with their international employees and their qualifications. It shows that the motivation for hiring highly educated international employees is mainly due to their high level of competence, and because it may contribute to increased value by having diversification among the staff. Another motivation is how international employees can help attain access to new fields and markets. It also shows that highly educated international employees contribute to innovation and creativity and that productivity and competitiveness increase when adding highly educated international employees to the staff. However, they still experience challenges and barriers when it comes to hiring internationals. Overall, the companies are very satisfied with their international employees except when it comes to their language proficiencies. 4 out of 10 companies are experiencing language difficulties in professional, work-related contexts. (College 2013)

Since pursuing a career abroad has become an increasing, global phenomenon; several international scholars have conducted research about the conditions for immigrants living abroad. One of them is Irena Kogan, who is an Israeli Sociologist and Professor at the University of Mannheim, Germany. One of Kogan's studies is called *"Inside Integration and Acculturation - Migrants' Life Satisfaction in Europe".* Her research is dealing with what factors that influence the subjective quality of migrants' lives in Europe. Furthermore, the study examines whether the immigration countries offer good conditions for some migrants while offering unfavorable ones for others. Kogan is measuring life satisfaction as the outcome of an evaluation of the direct living conditions by the individuals using a distinct standard of evaluation. For instance, this standard of evaluation depends on the cultural imprint, significant others, and individual preferences. Therefore, the life satisfaction of population groups can vary, although they might face equal living conditions due to varying standards of evaluation. The living conditions of migrants are influenced by the structural and cultural arrangements of the society; e.g., the welfare state regime and general attitudes towards immigrants. In light of the increasing international competition for skilled people, Kogan believes that her research can help to evaluate the attractiveness of immigration countries more precisely. The comparative analyses in the research are carried out for Spain, Belgium, Great Britain, Germany, Sweden, Denmark, Switzerland, and the Netherlands. At the same time, she has gathered and systematically processed relevant information concerning these countries e.g. living conditions and legal status of migrants, overall economic situation, or social inequality. (Kogan 2014-2017)

When going through existing research within this field we have become aware of gaps, which have influenced the direction of our thesis. We believe that the existing literature and research about retention of international students are useful but generally made on a statistic level. The results are overall and tell something about Denmark's capability to retain international students after graduation. As mentioned earlier, statistics show that the NDR is the worst region at retaining international students after graduation. However, existing research are based on Denmark as a country and not on specific Danish regions. There have not yet been made any investigations on why the NDR is worst at retaining international students. Therefore, we believe it is important to investigate how they can improve the current retention effort which forms the basis of this masters' thesis.

1.5 Concept Clarifications and Reading Guide

- **"Stakeholder(s)"**
  - *"A person, group or organization that has* *<u>interest</u>* *or* *<u>concern</u>* *in an organization"* (Businessdictionary.com 2015)
- **"The North Denmark Region"**
  - When we refer to the North Denmark Region it can mean two things. When we use the abbreviation "NDR" we refer to the geographical area of North Denmark. Secondly, when using "the North Denmark Region" we refer to the public institution (Region Nordjylland)
- **"Change"**
  - When writing about change in this thesis it is meant in an organizational context. Jeff and Laurie Ford define change as:

    "…a process of social construction in which new realities are created…sustained, and modified in the process of communication. Producing intentional change, then, is a matter of deliberately bringing into existence, through communication, a new reality or set of social structures." (Cheney, et al. 2010, 329)
- **"Improve"**
  - To improve something can be defined as making beneficial additions or changes to a given situation (www.thefreedictionary.com 2015).

"The current effort"

- Here, we refer to the current retention effort in terms of retaining well-educated international students in the NDR.

- **"Retaining"**
  - *"The act of keeping someone or something"* (In this case, the well-educated international students. (www.merriam-webster.com 2015)
- **"Well-educated"**
  - The international students this thesis is dealing with are all minimum bachelor students in Denmark. The reason why we are not referring to them as "highly-educated" is because a bachelor's degree in a Danish context is arguably no longer considered a "high" education compared to 10 or 20 years ago.
- **"International students"**
  - Statistics Denmark (Danmarks Statistik) defines an international student as a foreign citizen who, at the beginning of his/her education, do not have a permanent residence in Denmark and neither a Danish qualifying exam (Lauridsen 2013)

All references in this thesis are written in Microsoft Word's *Chicago fifteenth edition* style. If a reference has no page number, it means that it covers the general opinion or meaning in the quoted reference and thus cannot be determined to derive from a particular place in the reference. When interviews are referred to, the surname of the interviewee will be used along with the page number in the enclosed appendix list. Quotes, concepts, report titles etc. are translated freely from the original language.

1.6 Operating Levels

This thesis will uncover views from 4 different levels of perspective: Individual, group, organization, and society. Societal levels can be divided into micro-, meso- and macro levels and all levels are more or less dealt with throughout the thesis.

- *Micro level*
  - Here, the point of departure is interaction in groups or individual stories and statements. This perspective is utilized in the thesis by collecting empirical data consisting of qualitative semi-structured interviews of the stakeholder representatives who have had a connection to the STAY initiative, the international students who partici-

pated in the focus group interview, and the individual elaborating statements from our quantitative survey of all the international students in the region.

- *Meso level*
    - Here, the point of departure is in public institutions, organizations, culture, and social environment. This perspective is applied in the thesis when organizations like STAY, Aalborg Municipality, or the private businesses are dealt with.
- *Macro level*
    - Here, the point of departure is in political, judicial, and social structures of society. This perspective is utilized in the thesis to obtain a greater understanding of the problem field in a societal context. (Mortensen 2004, 41-76)

2.0 Outlining and Contextualizing the Case

This outlining, empirical section of the project is relevant to include in terms of understanding the context in which the case exists. First of all, we will account for the relevance of choosing to work with STAY in this thesis. Secondly, we will account for STAY's purpose and vision, and its stakeholders. Then, relevant information about Denmark and the NDR will be accounted for.

2.1 Selecting STAY as a Case

As mentioned in section 1.1 "The Purpose of this Thesis", after we decided to look into the subject of retaining international students in Denmark, we chose specifically to focus on the NDR. According to expatviden.dk, a knowledge bank created by the Danish Agency for Labor Market and Recruitment under the Ministry of Employment (Styrelsen for Arbejdsmarked og Rekruttering), there are not significant initiatives in the region within this area besides the STAY initiative (www.expatviden.dk 2015). In addition, we contacted the North Denmark Region with the purpose to investigate whether they are involved in initiatives related to the subject of retaining internationals. According to the region's International Coordinator, Runa Coxeter, the region is not involved in any initiatives within this subject. Therefore, it was essential to focus on the STAY initiative, as it was established to

> "…create an even stronger and more international knowledge city and region…and create growth and development in the region's businesses." (STAY 2014, 1)

According to STAY, the initiative is the first that assembles all relevant stakeholders in the region with the purpose to address and strengthen a coordinated regional retention effort (STAY 2014, 2).

2.2 What is the STAY Initiative?

In September 2012, Aalborg Municipality decided to make a special effort in the NDR. The goal was to create increased opportunities for development, growth, and employment in Aalborg and the NDR and thereby retain a larger part of the region's well-educated students. The reason for this special effort was that:

> "…some of the students stay in the region after they graduate, however too many of them leave. **That goes especially for the many international students**. Therefore, the investment can lose its value, if we do not succeed in retaining more of them…Aalborg Municipality wishes to accomplish this task in a new, focused partnership between the business community, educational institutions, and the public sector…" (Kommune 2012)

The desired long-term effect of STAY's work is that more graduates are retained in the region. The short-term effects are an increased number of well-educated employees in the region's public- and private sector, a decreasing number of unemployed graduates, and an increasing number of relations between students and businesses. (Kommune 2012)

2.2.1 The 4 Key Stakeholders in STAY

The STAY initiative was anchored in the municipality's business department, Business Aalborg, which purpose is to create growth and employment in Aalborg and the NDR. STAY was formed by relevant stakeholders from the region's business community, educational institutions, and the public sector. STAY's organization was formed without an independent board or steering committee. Therefore, to ensure coordination of initiatives, progress in the focus areas, and general visibility, a working group was formed consisting of representatives from all the relevant stakeholders. The idea was that each stakeholder representative should be responsible to inform and secure ownership in their own organizations. Thus, the core in the STAY organization is the working group, where each stakeholder is responsible for involving their own organizations and

> "…let the effort spread like rings in the water." (Kommune 2012)

2.2.2 STAY Focus Areas 2014-2017, Number 4 – The international Potential

As mentioned in the introduction, STAY has 4 focus areas:

1. Relations between students and the business community
2. Job creation and innovation for newly educated
3. Branding and visibility
4. **International potential** (STAY 2014, 4)

As this thesis' focus is on the international potential, this is the only area that will be accounted for.

In the recent years, international students have had the opportunity of using Welcome Center (VelkomstCenter) and International Citizen Service. Thus, the students have had easier access to the public authorities. However, the Welcome Center as a project is almost over and the future for International Citizen Service is also uncertain. Therefore, these activities will be continued and intensified in the form of an International House in Aalborg, which will be a physical location for the internationals in the municipality and the region. First of all, the idea is that the International House will be a so-called "one-stop-shop", where internationals can handle all thinkable practicalities, but the house is also meant to be a social epicenter for all internationals in the region. (Kommune 2012)

2.2.3 The EMBRACE Initiative

> "Denmark is in tough competition about attracting and retaining highly qualified international labor, which is why this challenge ranks high on the all Danish regions' growth- and development agendas…" (Vækstforum 2014, 2)

In continuation of STAY the so-called EMBRACE initiative was launched in May 2014. The EMBRACE initiative is a model and platform for how the effort in terms of attracting and retaining international students and highly qualified international employees can be implemented in the NDR during 2014-2015. (Vækstforum 2014, 2-5)

The purpose of EMBRACE can be divided into two tracks. First of all, a development- and dialogue track where working towards creating a sustainable, visible, and effective model for how the future work for internationalization, recruitment, and retention can be organized. Secondly, a concrete activity track where it is ensured that a wide range of initiatives and activities are targeted the recruitment- and retention effort in the NDR in 2014-2015. (Vækstforum 2014)

EMBRACE's organization is similar to STAY's, as the project

> "…takes its point of departure in an 'open coordination' by establishing a network group consisting of relevant stakeholders from the region that participate in a development forum which purpose is to establish an International House by the end of 2015. Here, activities regarding recruitment and retention can be gathered and cover the needs and challenges in the NDR." (Vækstforum 2014, 2)

Basically, the EMBRACE project is an extended part of STAY which primarily will work with information, communication, and counseling for international students. (Vækstforum 2014, 3)

2.3 The Danish Society & the Danish Media- and Political Landscape

During the last 50 years, Denmark has changed dramatically. The increased globalization and the Danish membership of the European Union have meant an increased immigration to Denmark and thus a changed demography. Today, 10 % of the Danish population consists of immigrants and their descendants. Therefore, subjects such as immigration, integration and foreign workers have had and still have a great focus in Danish media. In addition, The Danish people and politicians are also concerned with these subjects, which is why the immigration debate constantly has great attention. One of those who have conducted research on the conditions of immigrants in Denmark is Mehmet Ümit Necef, Assistant Professor of Immigrant Research at Odense University. His conclusions point that Denmark is a somewhat hostile, racist and discriminating country with very little tolerance towards immigrants. (Necef 1997) To back up his findings, numbers from Worktrotter, a meeting place for 6000 expats living and working in Denmark show that 46 % do not feel welcome in Denmark in general (Overgaard 2010).

Compared to other countries, Denmark is a very small and homogenous society built on a closely-knit culture and history. This may be one of the reasons why the Danish society has significant integration challenges. (Oxfordresearch 2014)

The tone in the Danish media arguably plays a big role when it comes to determine what is defined as a problem or a challenge that society should actively solve and thus is legitimate to a place on the political agenda (Parsons 1995, 106-109). By giving large room for certain subjects, the media can create a general sense among the people, and thereby determine whether a subject such as retention of international students reaches the political agenda. The power of the media in terms of agenda-setting and defining problems is caused by their capability of affecting the public sense and the public opinion, and thereby put pressure on political actors.

However, the media are not alone when it comes to agenda-setting. There are different understandings about who has the power to place subjects high or low on the political agenda. In the pluralistic approach the power is spread; politics are open to freedom of speech and public debate. In principle, anybody can affect the political agenda (Parsons 1995, 125). In contrast to this, political scientist Elmer Eric Schattschneider believes that agenda-setting is affected by bias, thus it is only significant actors that control what reaches the political agenda (Parsons 1995, 126). So, it is therefore primarily political parties, institutions, interest groups and other stakeholders that control the political agenda which makes it inaccessible for some people. Others, such as Cob & Elder argue that it is the conditions of the individual subject that determine whether it reaches the political scene (Parsons 1995, 127-130). Then, the function of the mass media is to spread out the important subjects to the public.

Finally, different types of problems or challenges give different types of possible solutions. Therefore, it can be relevant who has an advantage that a certain problem or challenge is given political attention, and who should carry the financial costs by political initiatives within a certain area. (Parsons 1995, 151-153)

2.3.1 The North Denmark Region

The region as an institution is responsible for three main tasks in the region:

- Health Care
- **Regional Development (Including close collaboration with the region's educational institutions)**
- Social Services and Special Education

On the region's homepage under regional development it says: *"Northern Jutland – a globalized and competitive region"* (Nordjylland 2015).

It has been politically decided that the NDR must have an international strategy, which should set the frame for the region's international engagement and define its overall goals. The strategy must be an integrated part of the region's general activities and used actively in the regional, political work in terms of securing development and growth in the NDR. The strategy must contribute to focus the effort and gain maximum benefit by creating development in the region's business community and in its educational institutions. The goal of the NDR's international strategy is:

> "The North Denmark Region will be goal-oriented, proactive, and initiating in the international area to ensure a maximum benefit of the possibilities in the increased globalization which is beneficial for the region's citizens, business community, and the educational institutions." (Nordjylland, International strategi for Region Nordjylland 2012)

The NDR is 1 of the 5 regions in Denmark. The region has 578,839 citizens and is therefore the smallest. Aalborg is the largest city in the region with 127,000 people. Regarding economic performance, the region is below both the national and regional average. At the beginning of 2013, the unemployment rate in the region was 6.6 %, which was the second highest among the Danish regions. (Commission 2015)

> "In order to link the regional strategy to the broader national strategy within business, innovation and education – called the Danish Globalization Strategy – the Ministry of Economics and Business Affairs makes a voluntary partnership agreement with the NDR. The partnership agreement ensures that the goals of the regional strategy fit the broader national goals and strategies. Each year, new adjustments are made according to the present economic situation. The setup ensures a high degree of coherence between national and regional strategies." (Commission 2015)

It is necessary to contextualize when dealing with the NDR and the subject of retaining international students. For example, if this thesis had focused on international students living in the Capital Region of Denmark, the results would arguably be very different. As argued earlier, there sometimes is a rather negative discourse and attitude in Denmark when it comes to immigrants. According to lecturer and expert in the NDR, Knud Søndergård, this discourse and attitude is traditionally worse in a region like North Denmark compared to the Capital Region of Denmark, where the level of internationalization and diversity in the demography is much higher. He argues that people from the NDR always have been very skeptical and hesitant by nature, or as it is sometimes referred to in the region "healthy skepticism" – especially when it comes to people with a different background. He believes that the special North Denmark culture is marked by its geographical position in particular. When he explains the reasons why Danes and especially people from the NDR tend to be reserved and sometimes unfriendly towards people from other cultures, he argues that people from this region traditionally prefer things to be how they always have been and that people have a general comfort with a homogenous society where most people are alike and not stand out too much in terms of physical appearance, cultural mindset, religion, sexuality etc. (Søndergård 2015)

2.4 Delimitation

In order to focus this thesis, it is necessary to account for the choices we have made.

First of all, the primary focus of this thesis is to answer *how relevant stakeholders in the NDR can change and improve the current effort of retaining more well-educated international students in the region after they graduate*. Therefore, focus is only on students who are minimum bachelor students at AAU and UCN. As the problem field deals with the fact that international students leave Denmark and especially the NDR after graduation, there is no focus on internationals that are already a part of the region's labor market. Furthermore, in relation to this problem field, some might argue that one of the main challenges is job creation. However, even if we also consider this as being an important factor of why retaining internationals is difficult, it is a field that deals with other theoretical frameworks that are far from our field of study and must be addressed by economists. Additionally, problems and challenges internationals face on Danish workplaces in The North Denmark region are not addressed, as this is a subject that has been scrutinized numerous times before. In continuation hereof, a field such as diversity management is often scrutinized when dealing with internationals in Denmark. However, we consider this to be less relevant, as we are dealing with students in educational institutions and not employees in companies.

The account for the theoretical considerations can be found in paragraph 3.11.

3.0 Theory of Science & Methodological Considerations

3.1 Introduction

The preparation of our Masters' thesis has consisted of various methodological considerations and reflections on theory of science. From the very beginning, we have been reflecting on the research design, methods, and approaches we are using during our work process. In this chapter, we will account for the reflections we have made regarding theory of science, our choice of research design, our methods and approaches, and also our choice of theories.

3.2 Ontological Considerations

Ontology means "the study of being" and is concerned with the question of what we, as researchers, perceive as reality. Wand and Weber refer to ontology as

> "A branch of philosophy concerned with articulating the nature and structure of the world." (Science 2014).

Distinguishing between various phenomena and the way people perceive them requires thoughts on our ontological stance. Ontology deals with the nature of social reality in the sense of viewing things that exist, their condition, the terms of their existence and the interaction between these (Blaikie 2009) & (Stevenson, et al. 2006). Furthermore, the constructivists' worldview is formed by individuals, as all phenomena are argued to be socially constructed through human interaction and not 'discovered' (Science 2014). Human realities are expressed through communication. In this study, it is appropriate to point out the nature of organizational reality, as we are scrutinizing STAY's organization. It is suggested that organizational reality is interpreted by the individuals who shape the organization i.e. the different stakeholders who have been a part of the STAY initiative and then made sense of through a process of internationalization. This process is concerned with interpreting an organization's socially constructed reality. (Science 2014)

To sum up, the ontological stance is concerned with, what we believe, constitutes social reality. An academic researcher's ontological worldview is his or her way of answering the question; what is the nature of social and political reality to be investigated? Criticizing a researchers' ontological stance is frowned upon, since it is the researcher's personal theory, which is impossible to invalidate empirically. Ultimately, there is no true or false ontology, and there is neither an objective truth. (Crotty 2003) The existing research paradigms have their own practices and it is important in academic research that the researcher works with a paradigm that is appropriate within the research field as well as the study's overall objectives. (Crotty 2003)

3.3 Epistemological Considerations

Schwandt, Carter & Little believe that epistemology is the study, theory and justification of knowledge. Dillon & Wals argue that it is an investigation of how knowledge is produced by people (Stevenson, et al. 2006). According to Bryman, epistemology concerns

> "…whether the social world can and should be studied according to the same principles, procedure, and ethos as the natural sciences." (Bryman, Social Research Methods 4th Edition 2012, 12)

Norman Blaikie defines epistemology as

> "The possible ways of gaining knowledge of social reality, whatever it is understood to be. In short, claims about how what is assumed to exist can be known." (Blaikie 2009, 8)

Michael Crotty argues that there are 3 different epistemological stands:

- Objectivism
- Subjectivism
- Social Constructivism

Objectivism means that knowledge exists whether we are aware of it or not. Researchers with this stance aim to discover causes, effects, and explanations. They try to predict actions and test theories and hypotheses.

Subjectivism means that comprehending human actions consists only in reconstructing the self-understanding of those who perform them. To understand others is to comprehend the meaning of what they do and to understand this meaning is to understand them in their own terms.

Social constructivism means that social phenomena develop in certain social settings. The practices in a certain context might appear to be obvious and natural, but are really artifacts of that context. Individuals and groups such as organizations take part in the creation of their perceived social reality, and that reality is constantly changing while social interactions take place. (Crotty 2003)

When viewing these 3 research paradigms it is relevant to notice that objectivism views reality as external and therefore not a subject for individual interpretation (Bryman 2012, 32). However, the objectivist stance has been challenged which lead to the development of social constructivism

(Brinkmann and Tanggaard 2010). Social constructivists believe that the world is always interpreted subjectively and constantly negotiated socially (Bryman 2012, 33).

In this study, social constructivism acts as the ontological stance, as socially constructed phenomena are being investigated, such as retention of international students as well as STAY as an organization.

Since we, as social constructivists, consider the reality to be socially constructed, knowledge within this reality must also be socially constructed. Therefore, it is not possible to reach objective and 'true' knowledge, which basically means that we are not able to create definitive knowledge. Even though the thesis cannot create definitive knowledge, it is still possible for us to investigate and study the world. Our aim is to investigate and answer the problem formulation with the purpose of creating new knowledge based on our findings that eventually must help to answer how relevant stakeholders in the NDR can change and improve the current effort of retaining more well-educated international students in the region after they graduate. Given the fact that we see the world as being socially constructed, we also see the theories and theorists we are using throughout the analysis as socially constructed. It means that they are neither true nor false, but instead different views on the subjects of organizational change management and migration.

3.4 Phenomenological Considerations

The scientific theoretical foundation of this exploratory case study is phenomenology. Phenomenology in qualitative research seeks to comprehend socially constructed phenomena from the participants' viewpoint. In this thesis, the participants are stakeholders who are a part of STAY's organization and the 4 international students in the focus group interview. Based on their views, we wish to comprehend the world, based on the phenomenological understanding that reality is the one we perceive individually (S. K. Brinkmann 2009, 44)

Edmund Husserl, German philosopher and one of the founders of the phenomenology, described phenomenology like this:

> "The lifeworld of humans is the living world which is the point of departure for any human activity. It is not the world that we observe or analyze, but often the world we take for granted when we are in the middle of something. My lifeworld is the one that I experience in a personal perspective and contains phenomena that I cannot share with anything." (Birkler 2005, 105)

As the quote implies, any human being's world is based on individual conditions, which are impossible to standardize in advance. Where the hermeneutical approach aims to comprehend and interpret a given situation, phenomenology focuses on discovering *what* needs to be understood. According to the phenomenology, one must go behind the objective and structured world to understand how the individual in question experiences a given situation subjectively. (Birkler 2005)

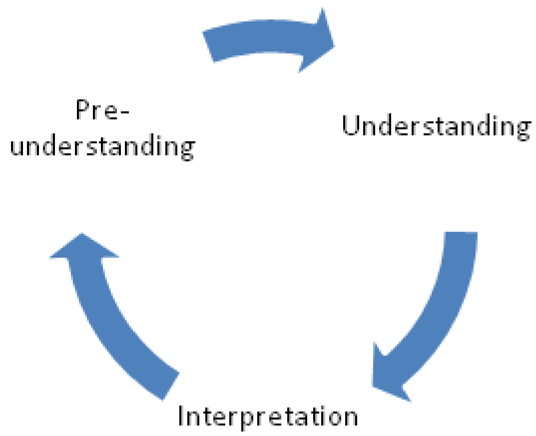
Alan Bryman believes that phenomenology is something

> "…that is concerned with the question of how individuals make sense of the world around them…" (Bryman 2012, 30).

It is essential to know that people generally act from how they interpret things and socially negotiated meanings. To make sense of various socially constructed phenomena, one must be able to understand socially constructed meanings, as well as the people who are dealt with while conducting social research.

Phenomenology exemplifies how people perceive phenomena from their point of view. Therefore, this study will employ the hermeneutical way of conducting research. (Brinkmann, 2009, s. 30) Essentially, phenomenology and hermeneutics form this case study's theoretical perspective. Phenomenology deals with the question of how people make sense of the world and conducting hermeneutical research means that one interprets empirical data incessantly throughout an academic process; meaning that the researcher moves back and forth in the empirical data to reach a holistic understanding. (Strunck 2010, 16) Hermeneutics has two central terms; interpretation and meaning. Focus is to understand human activity and the outcomes hereof. Hermeneutics is used to illuminate how we understand a problem and is primarily concerned with understanding, whereas social constructivism focuses on explaining how phenomena are created and changed (Hans-Georg Gadamer in Arbnor and Bjerke 1997). Therefore, the final result of this thesis is not a definitive truth but instead a subjective interpretation characterized and affected by our pre-understandings.

Below, the hermeneutic circle is illustrated:



The circle is divided into 3 stages; pre-understanding, understanding, and interpretation. Since pre-understanding comes before understanding, understanding is acquired through pre-understanding. Pre-understanding is perceived to consist of prejudices, and the prejudices represent the already acquired perception, which means that understanding becomes a construction of the world the stakeholders are a part of and thus affected by. (Hans-Georg Gadamer in Arbnor and Bjerke 1997) Our pre-understandings represent the first part of the thesis, where we question how STAY should change its organization to make it capable of producing and implementing initiatives that can help to improve the retention effort and thereby retain more international students in the NDR. Then, the analysis represents the understanding where focus is on analyzing the empirical data using relevant change management theories and migration theories. Finally, interpretation represents the discussion, conclusion, and reflection of the thesis where we, through the analysis, have acquired new knowledge which can help to answer the problem formulation. As the circle illustrates, the hermeneutical process is continuous, which means that every time new knowledge is produced or acquired, our understanding of the problem is changed.

3.5 Social Constructivism as a Stance

Social constructivism is a rather complex field to navigate in and it contains several different theoretical suggestions which appear to be similar. Therefore, we utilize Søren Barlebo Wenneberg's division of the field in 4 categories as a navigation tool. These categories give a great overview and make us capable of choosing the thoughts we consider relevant for the problem field we are working with. The aim is to construct a moderate and realistic social constructivist frame for this thesis.

The emergence of social constructivism occurs as a clash with previous dogmatic ways of thinking. It is particularly the belief of an objective recognition which is under attack. Social constructivism seeks to break with many of the common perceptions within the thinking of the past century, such as humanism, rationalism, positivism, and realism. (Wenneberg 2002, 13) As a clash, the social constructivism starts focusing on how knowledge and recognition occur, is created, and is produced, rather than a philosophical focus on what is true and what is false. (Wenneberg 2002, 35) In his explanation of social constructivism's understanding of recognition, Wenneberg uses a balloon metaphor where:

> "Our recognition of the world can be seen as a balloon we blow up from within helped by the language, the terms, technology, our social life etc. The balloon might expand but we will never know what there is on the other side of the balloon wall, without that this knowledge is affected by or understood from what is inside the balloon." (Wenneberg 2002, 37)

For this thesis, this way of thinking requires that we hold a critical view on static and linear models that hold a perception on causal coherences that do not consider contextual influences.

3.5.1 Wenneberg's "Slideway Metaphor"

Wenneberg believes that the order of his 4 positions is not random and that his division of social constructivism as a field must help to elucidate a slideway tendency. He uses the slideway metaphor to illustrate how many, who initially join social constructivism 1, end up having a more radical mindset, as the shifts from each of the 4 positions to the next happen smoothly. He argues that the very essence of social constructivism 1, which questions what is already given, causes the slideway tendency with a domino-like consequence. Wenneberg states:

> "To outline the slideway tendency which easily means one starts with an innocent assumption that one must act skeptical towards notions of naturalness, but ends up in a radical idealistic position where the physical reality only exists through our recognition of it." (Wenneberg 2002, 129)

So, Wenneberg puts in a hindrance to prevent the slideway tendency, where he can no longer vouch for the views and arguments of the social constructivism.

3.5.2 Wenneberg's 4 Positions

Wenneberg names the positions as social constructivism 1-4, and he emphasizes that his division of the field is an expression of his subjective construction and that others possibly will disagree with him.

Now, Wenneberg's divison of the social constructivism will be accounted for and we will illuminate where he puts in his hindrance. From this, we discuss where we find it reasonable to put in our hindrance to not end up digressing in the slideway of social constructivism. Thus, we will continually assess which thoughts we can incorporate from social constructivism in this thesis.

Social Constructivism 1 – A Critical Perspective

This position is an expression for a critical perspective that questions certain knowledge. It covers studies of the social reality where

> "… the principle: is to no not acknowledge the naturalness of social phenomena; that they have always been like that; that they could not be any different; that they should not be man-made." (Wenneberg 2002, 77)

The strength of this position is that it offers a reflective way of exposing natural everyday-phenomena, which we often forget to question as creatures of habit. The challenge of this position is to know where to stop. Social constructivism 1 easily ends up with an inability to explain in correlation with what can replace the exposed. Therefore, social constructivism 1 is often combined with social constructivism 2. (Wenneberg 2002, 71-85) This is the very same critical attitude we wish to have towards certain knowledge in the organizational context. Like Wenneberg, we believe that this position contains relevant and reasonable perspectives which contribute to our understanding of the world.

Social Constructivism 2 – A Theory about the Social

This position is

> "Different estimates on theoretical explanations of how the social reality or concrete social phenomena are created and functioning." (Wenneberg 2002, 87)

It can be considered as an estimate on the void which is left by social constructivism 1 and covers many different estimates of how the social is built. The position is considered with how knowledge is produced in society through social processes and it contains an evolutionary explanation on how knowledge and institutions arise between people and become objectified forms of knowledge from which we act upon. The difference between the position's theory and general social theory becomes the special mindset of social constructivism where

> "… the social is created through a construction process. The word 'construction' implicitly means that we are talking about deliberate actions." (Wenneberg 2002, 89)

The strengths with the theories of this position are that they can bring interesting ideas on how the void left by social constructivism 1 can be filled. However, the theories have a tendency to point towards theories with epistemological thoughts, as they typically also will apply to knowledge as a part of the social. (Wenneberg 2002, 86-97) This problem will be addressed when going through social constructivism 3.

Social Constructivism 3 – An Epistemological Position

This position is epistemologically considered and contains a revolutionary idea of our construction of knowledge about the reality as socially constructed. It is revolutionary in the sense that it makes up with the previous idea of knowledge decided by cognitive factors. Thus, it

> "… is the epistemological position which claims that knowledge about reality is solely decided by social factors." (Wenneberg 2002, 101)

In this position, the social constructivism has a different focus on what knowledge is, how it is created, and how its validity is assessed. The difference now is that from being a rather innocent theory on how social rules have occurred, it now becomes a radical epistemological position. Knowledge about reality is decided by irrational factors:

> "… factors such as power and interests that decide what turns out to be knowledge in our society." (Wenneberg 2002, 102)

From our experiences and understandings, power as a factor is inevitable in an organizational context. Therefore, we wish to take on a similar, reflective view on how knowledge is created. Thus, we believe it is possible to obtain a varied view on forms of knowledge and their occurrence. Wenneberg divides this position in two where one focuses on the social construction of knowledge about the social reality, and the other focuses on knowledge about the physical reality.

Social Constructivism 3 Applied to the Social Reality

Wenneberg considers this to be a philosophical gradation of social constructivism 2. Focus is on understanding the social reality and the society coupled with 'the issues of knowledge' and by that means epistemological consequences:

> "Now, the trick is to say that a range of social facts about the reality are objective in the epistemological sense and ontologically subjective at the same time. So, they depend on that there are people who acknowledge them." (Wenneberg 2002, 103)

For example, the existence of money now depends on that there is someone who acknowledges them. Therefore, they do not exist as an objective artifact without humans to acknowledge them, and thus they become ontologically subjective. Wenneberg utilizes a video metaphor where the point is that the world now consists of what is visible in the movie but also of what goes on inside people's heads. (Wenneberg 2002, 101-104)

Social Constructivism 3 Applied to the Physical Reality

In the other position, knowledge about the physical reality is made to a social construction. This way of thinking makes up with science's elitist position as decisive authority about what is true and what is false. The demarcation criteria is questioned, which means that there is no longer a distinction between scientific knowledge and everyday knowledge. Science cannot be a final judge:

> "Science must be deflated from the pedestal – it must be unmasked…" (Wenneberg 2002, 106)

This idea is a clash with the epistemological realism where an objective realization exists. Here, the social constructivism pleads for a radical, constructivist position where terms of the science are solely the result of social and subjective factors. So, it is not possible that scientific terms are affected of both reality itself and social and subjective factors. Here, Wenneberg sees critical problems in the arguments of the social constructivism. He sees numerous grievous error-sources and puts in a hindrance under social constructivism 3. (Wenneberg 2002, 96-115)

Wenneberg does not accept that scientific produced knowledge and terms are constructed through social processes and are not rooted in reality. He argues how this way of thinking must end in an absolute knowledge relativism that eliminates the foundation of which it is built upon. He puts in his hindrance to prevent that the slideway leads to a relativism caused by the radical, epistemological constructivism where the validity of a claim is only determined by social and subjective factors. Instead, he chooses to open up a room

> *"… which allows rational reasons and where empirical data is considered pure evidence…"* (Wenneberg 2002, 162)

His argument is to introduce a distinction between rational and irrational arguments. He sees, within reason, social constructivism 3 applied to the nature, as he believes that it causes total knowledge relativism where science loses its authority. He reintroduces the justification of science by arguing for a scientist's duty of being critical which, through rational arguments, must ensure the credibility of science (Wenneberg 2002, 105-114) We believe it is reasonable that Wenneberg chooses to question the justification, the arguments, and the assumptions of social constructivism 3. We consider it imperative to question how science conducts science, and we accept that terms constructed in the scientific world are affected by social and subjective factors. However, in our world view it becomes too provocative or out of touch with reality that the physical reality does not play a role itself. Additionally, we find it ideal that scientists and the academic society have critical obligations towards own research results and assumptions.

Social Constructivism 4 – An Ontological Position

In this position, it is argued that the science and the produced knowledge decide the reality and not vice versa. It is in this position where the epistemology decides the ontology. The idea is that the perspective from which one sees the world is deciding for this. This position is also divided in two depending on whether it is applied to the social world or the physical world. This is done by turning back to the slideway metaphor. As a part of the slideway, the social constructivism ended up with an epistemological perspective; being about what knowledge is by utilizing social constructivism 1, a critical perspective, on scientific knowledge. Here, the idea is that knowledge is solely decided by the reality it is concerned with. This view is unmasked and end up in social constructivism 3. Both positions of social constructivism 3 now involve an ontological angle. According to Wenneberg, social constructivism 3 applied to the social world contains a simple ontological idealism where the social reality is created through our understanding and realization of it:

> "Social factors and social institutions presuppose that we believe them – they are ontological subjective." (Wenneberg 2002, 116-117)

The epistemological social constructivism 3 applied to the nature may also cause one to slide over into an ontological idealism. Here, the idea is that there is no reality other than what we recognize as humans. As our realization of reality is socially constructed, reality will also be socially constructed:

> "Now, it is suddenly reality itself that is socially constructed – and not only our knowledge about it" (Wenneberg 2002, 117)

Two Types of an Ontological Social Constructivism

In Social constructivism 4, the ontological idealism gets a significant role. However, it is different how and to what extent. According to Wenneberg, there is uncertainty about what lies in an ontological social constructivism. He writes about two types where one is more radical than the other. The least radical pleads for a conception where another form of proto-reality exists independently from our realization. However, it is only shaped by action. Here,

"… the reality is seen as variable and dependent of our scientific activity and realization. In the end, it is our realization that cuts the cake…" (Wenneberg 2002, 119)

Thus, the epistemology creates the ontology. It has a binomial view on the relationship between the physical reality and our realization of it. Something exists outside our realization that is shaped through our realization. Although, it is not considered how our realization can create something concrete physically.

The more radical type does not believe in anything beyond our realization; the proto-reality does not exist:

"The reality as physical existence does not exist until we realize it…" (Wenneberg 2002, 120)

Here, we are dealing with a rather extreme ontological idealism. Again, Wenneberg puts in a hindrance that linguistically illustrates where he no longer finds justification in the arguments of social constructivism. He does not believe that social constructivism 4 applied to the nature is reasonable, as this completely dissolves the nature and makes it indefinite:

"The result is an infinite chain that never ends and therefore leaves all the joints indefinite" (Wenneberg 2002, 123)

Yet, he believes that a mild form of idealism in social constructivism 4 applied to the social can be accepted, as long as there is a sharp distinction between the natural reality and the social reality. Therefore, he finds it reasonable that the social reality is being constructed through social processes; the epistemology affects the ontology. Still, he finds it problematic that the physical reality is solely constructed through our realization of it. In other words, our actions affect the reality, but the reality is not solely created through our realization of it – before our realization, something natural exists. He stresses the importance of distinguishing between the physical and the social in relation to the sustainability of social constructivism 4. (Wenneberg 2002, 114-125)

We consider the idea that objects do not exist in reality until someone realizes them is unreasonable. We choose to join what Wenneberg calls trivial epistemological constructivism

"… where the terms of science are both affected by reality itself and social/subjective factors." (Wenneberg 2002, 109)

Furthermore, we agree that there are many sources of error associated with extracting universal theories from the results of laboratory studies. Social processes and their contexts definitely play a role and it is reasonable to question how natural this whole construction really is. In continuation hereof, we believe that valid and tenable knowledge in an organizational change process must be composed in close collaboration with the reality of which it is concerned. As Wenneberg, we cannot support the radical thoughts of social constructivism 3 and 4 applied to the nature and the physical reality.

Social Constructivism and our Purpose

The basic ideas of social constructivism contain the complexity and reflexivity, and cover the way we comprehend the world, our society and organizations as a term. In other words, parts of the social constructivism provide us with a vocabulary that captures our world view, and gives us a justifiable and subjective frame of understanding for our approach to organizational change in the thesis. We form the frame of understanding from relevant ideas from the social constructivism and we end up with a moderate and realistic social constructivism. Through this, we take on a reflexive and critical attitude towards certain knowledge (social constructivism 1). In this critical way of thinking, we see one of the biggest strengths of social constructivism, as it encourages to question societal, organizational, and one's reified habits. Thus, we can reach an understanding which looks beneath the surface and finally enables us to identify the organizational problems and challenges in STAY. The fact that we use interviews in different forms as our primary way of collecting the empirical data is highly consistent with Wenneberg's idea that social constructivism to a greater extent should be pragmatically oriented and offer concrete solutions. (Wenneberg 2002)

3.6 Research Design – Exploratory Case Study

Social research scholar, Robert E. Stake, argues that a case study is concerned with the complexity and the particular nature of the case in question (Stake 1995). To build up a full understanding of the case, it

> "... must be seen within the context in which it exists…" (Vaus 2001, 235)

Therefore, this research design is appropriate since our purpose is to scrutinize why the NDR is challenged when it comes to retention of international talents.

The exploratory case study is useful to uncover or discover information about phenomena or single concepts that are characterized by a lack of detailed preliminary research. This is where a researcher has an idea or an observation and seeks to know more about it. The exploratory research design is also characterized by its ability to explore the existence of relationships between and among variables, to lay the groundwork for more systematic testing of hypotheses, to lay the groundwork that will lead to future studies, or to determine if what is being observed might be explained by a currently existing theory. (Fitzpatrick and Kazer 2012)

Our motivation for choosing this research design arose when we became aware of the challenges the NDR faces when it comes to retention of international talents. We have chosen it since it allows us to be open, curious and inquiring during our investigation.

Since the exploratory case study is based on an explorative approach, we, as analysts, have a central role throughout the study. It implies that we constantly find ourselves in a learning process, where the empirical data are examined to interpret them and to assess their relevance to the problem formulation. In this thesis, we both act as observers and analysts where we aim to understand and interpret the empirical data to finally answer the problem formulation.

Since the thesis is based on an exploratory research, we started the process collecting the empirical data. For that reason, the thesis' theoretical foundation is decided by the empirical data. So, the thesis is based on the inductive approach where data collection comes before selecting which theories to apply. Therefore, our theories are not decisive for the data collection process. Instead, they guide and provide academic insight to our analysis.

Throughout the process, it is important to notify that this is a relatively small study, and that the reality may be far more complex. Therefore, we believe that this thesis can be a preliminary study that can form the basis for a larger study.

3.7 Empirical Data

According to Bryman, the intention of conducting social research is to acquire information directly from the ones involved. He believes that

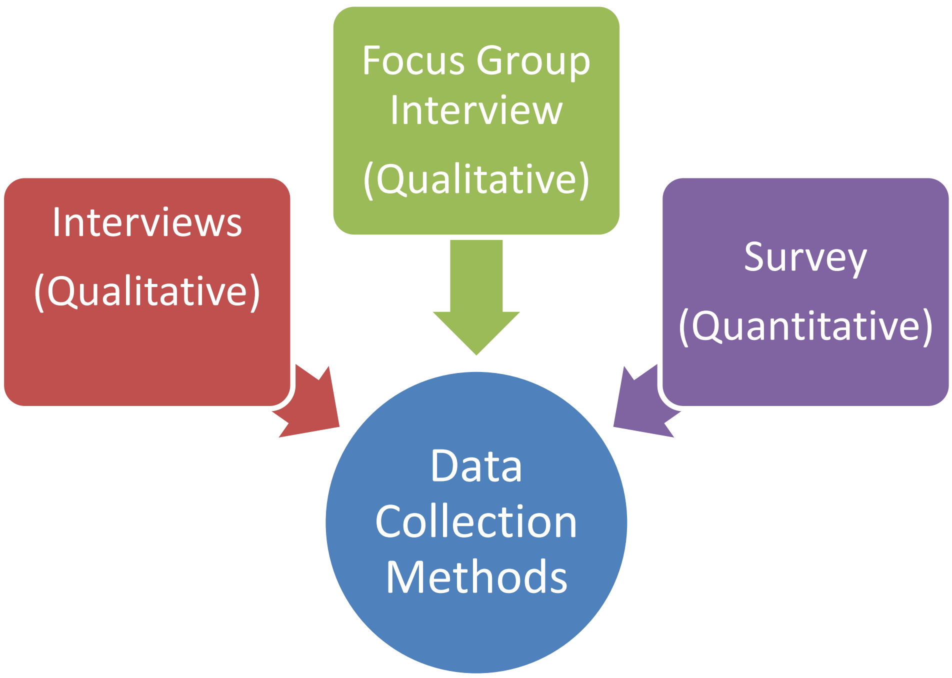
> "… it is the job of the social scientist to gain access to people's 'common sense thinking' and hence to interpret their actions and their social world from their point of view." (Bryman 2012, 30).

Since this exploratory case study takes its point of departure in the phenomenological approach, the empirical data is based on several qualitative interviews with STAY's stakeholders. First of all, these data must offer insight to whether STAY has been working as intended, which challenges STAY has faced, and how and which concrete changes can be made in the organization. Thus, the data will present information on what kind of problems arise, for whom they arise, and how they are handled by the stakeholders. The answers to these questions will provide relevant information on how the NDR can change and improve its effort in terms of retaining more international talents. Furthermore, a qualitative focus group interview with four international students from UCN has been conducted based on a quantitative survey of 130 international students in the region. This quantitative and qualitative data must provide the students' point of views on what kinds of challenges that arise for them by studying and living in the NDR and what it takes to improve the regional retention effort. Also, their answers must provide answers to how these challenges should be addressed and who should take the responsibility to address them. In STAY's organization.

In order to gain a broader view and to increase the validity, the quantitative survey for the region's international students has lead to a qualitative focus group interview with 4 international students from UCN in order to qualify the findings in the survey. This is necessary to obtain a more holistic image of how the region's students perceive the retention effort, and what they believe it takes to retain more of them. Again, it is essential to emphasize the importance of contextualization for this thesis. It is not our aim to generalize our findings to Denmark but specifically the NDR. Additionally, the primary data are supported by secondary data such as statistics, articles, reports etc. in order to achieve a higher level of validity.

3.8 Mixed Methods Research – Triangulation

Here, a model of the methods applied to collect our data is illustrated:



This thesis exercises a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. Using quantitative and qualitative research methods is referred to as triangulation. According to Bryman, triangulation is

> "… the use of more than one method or source of data in the study of a social phenomenon so that findings may be crosschecked." (Bryman 2012, 717).

Triangulation is the perception, that a more complete answer to a research question can be achieved by including both quantitative and qualitative methods. It implies that the gaps left by for instance a quantitative method can be filled or elaborated by for instance a qualitative method.

This exploratory case study combines a quantitative survey for international students at AAU and UCN with a qualitative focus group interview with 4 international students. The reason why we have chosen to employ both quantitative and qualitative research methods is to gain a broader view on our specific problem field.

An advantage with triangulation is that it increases validity when using different methods. At the same time, triangulation enables us to acquire a broader and deeper perspective on a problem. By exploiting the advantages of quantitative and qualitative research methods our aim is to achieve a more varied conclusion to the problem formulation. (Bryman, Social Research Methods 3rd edition 2008, 612)

Even if triangulation has advantages when it comes to social research, some critics point out the challenges of combining quantitative and qualitative methods, as their scientific views are different. Ontologically and epistemologically the two methods study and recognize the world in different ways. The quantitative method acknowledges that knowledge can be obtained objectively and that reality exists independently from the observer. When it comes to the qualitative method, the notion is that the researcher interprets on the interviewee's perception of reality and such an interpretation cannot be classified as an objective truth. Consequently, some critics believe that these two methods are not compatible. However, many believe that this is a philosophical question with insignificant importance to academic research. (Hammersley 1992, 142)

3.9 Quantitative Method

The purpose of conducting a quantitative survey for the international students at AAU and UCN is to investigate the reasons why so many choose to leave the NDR after graduation. The results of the survey are valuable, since our focus group interview is only based on the personal opinions of 4 international students. The survey, on the other hand, reaches a much broader group of international students. One could argue that only one focus group interview with 4 international students from UCN out of thousands of international students from both AAU and UCN could cause bias. We believe that it is necessary to investigate if the remaining international students at AAU and UCN recognize the feelings and experiences from the four international students from the focus group interview. Therefore, the survey arguably adds validity, since it reaches 130 students from both AAU and UCN.

3.9.1 Survey

We are aware that conducting a survey brings drawbacks such as low response rates, lack of motivation, misunderstanding of questions, lack of personal contact etc. (Bryman, Social Research Methods 4th Edition 2012, 658). Still, we find this way of collecting data to be relevant, since including more of the international students at AAU and UCN and their position arguably adds validity due to the higher response rate. We conducted the survey in cooperation with AAU and UCN. At AAU, the survey was forwarded to all international students through the AAU student mail. Furthermore, it was shared by the International Office at AAU as well. At UCN, the survey was forwarded through eCampus and shared at their Facebook page. Additionally, the survey was shared in Facebook groups consisting only of international students at AAU and UCN. The online link to the survey was active for 3 weeks. The survey reached students with different education programs, from different countries, and with different academic backgrounds etc. This means that the responses are based on a very wide audience within the group of international students.

Sample overview:

- AAU – student mail + Facebook pages
- UCN – eCampus + Facebook page
- International Office - newsletter
- Youth Goodwell Ambassadors – personal emails and Facebook page
- CCG – Facebook page
- Fellow international students and their networks

When contacting relevant people who were able to help us with our sampling, we asked them to share the survey with people who fulfilled the requirements. Also, when posting our online survey on the various Facebook pages we asked users to share it with their friends that fulfilled the requirements. Therefore, the approach can be defined as a snowball sample since we made an initial contact with a limited group of people and used them to establish contacts with new ones (Bryman, Social Research Methods 4th Edition 2012, 424). Of course, our goal was to gather as many respondents as possible but not less than 100.

We chose a simple layout and limited the number of questions to 15, so that our respondents would not feel stressed by an enormous amount of inquiries and possibly lose interest. A brief presentation of the topic of our master thesis was presented in the headline, and the survey was conducted through the online web application for survey solutions; Enalyzer.dk.

We wanted to know as much about the students as possible; if they attend a Danish language course on a weekly basis, if they are satisfied with studying and living in the NDR, if they wish to stay in the region after graduation, and most importantly; if yes, why? And if no, why not?

In some of the questions, the respondents were able to respond by using multiple choices. In some questions, it was only possible to answer by selecting one of the available options. In other questions, it was possible to select more than one option.

The investigation of attitudes is a prominent area in much survey research. According to Bryman, one of the most common techniques for conducting such an investigation is the Likert scale. Bryman states that

> "The goal of the Likert scale is to measure intensity of feelings about the area in question." (Bryman, Social Research Methods 4th Edition 2012, 166)

Therefore, in most of the questions in our survey, the respondents are asked to answer the questions by using the principles of the Likert scale, which means that each respondent must indicate on which level he or she agree with the statements usually on a 5 point scale going from strongly disagreeing to strongly agreeing with a neutral option in the middle. In this case, options 1-2 are characterized by being negative, option 3 is neutral, and 4-5 are positive. Additionally, in the last two questions, we made the last option open-ended, so that the respondents had the opportunity to answer by using their own words. The reason why we did that was in order to acquire more elaborative and qualitative answers from the participants since we are confident that open-ended questions can provide us with useful information about the respondents' way of interpreting reality.

3.10 Qualitative Methods

Compared to quantitative research, qualitative research usually emphasizes words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data (Bryman, Social Research Methods 4th Edition 2012). For that reason, the thesis includes 8 qualitative, semi-structured interviews with stakeholders within STAY's organization and 1 qualitative, semi-structured focus group interview with 4 international students.

By conducting qualitative interviews we acquire empirical data, which are the interviewees' subjective versions of reality. Later on, when interpreting the interviewees' realities based on our theoretical framework, we will come up with some results that should help us answering the problem formulation. As a result, the conclusion will be based on the interviewees' perception of reality interpreted by us subjectively although we aim to stay as objective as possible. Therefore, our conclusion is not an objective one as in a natural scientific research based on realism, but rather a subjective one.

3.10.1 Interview as a Method

The easiest way to obtain knowledge about other people is to talk with them. Conversation is a basic mode of human interaction and it is through conversations that we get to know other people, learn about their experiences and feelings, and the world they live in. In the interviews, we, as researchers, ask about and listen to, the interviewees' experiences. We listen to their views and their opinions expressed in their own words and thereby become wiser on their situation. The qualitative interview is a research method where knowledge is constructed in the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee (Kvale 2007, 1). Therefore, we have chosen to leave the original Danish quotes of the participants unchanged and not translated into English in order not to lose significant meanings and attitudes.

Our interviews are formed as conversations that have a structure and a purpose determined by us as researchers and interviewers. It is a professional interaction, which goes beyond the spontaneous exchange of views as in everyday conversations. Instead, it becomes a careful questioning and listening approach with the purpose of obtaining thoroughly tested knowledge. (Kvale 2007, 7)

According to Kvale, knowledge obtained through qualitative interviews is:

- Produced
- Relational
- Conversation-based
- Contextual
- Linguistic
- Narrative
- Pragmatic

The 7 characteristics form the basis of the knowledge we obtain through our interviews. It is important to remember that the *produced* knowledge is not just made up. It is produced through human interaction between us, as interviewers, and the interviewees. (Kvale and Brinkmann, Interview: Introduktion til et Håndværk 2009, 72)

Knowledge obtained through interviews is *relational* because conducting interviews, to a certain degree, creates some kind of relations between the interviewer and the interviewee. (Kvale and Brinkmann, Interview: Introduktion til et Håndværk 2009, 72-74)

Knowledge is *conversation-based* which reduce the notion of an objective truth. In order to achieve 'true knowledge', the focus must be on the conversations. (Kvale and Brinkmann, Interview: Introduktion til et Håndværk 2009, 72-74)

Knowledge is *contextual,* which means that knowledge acquired in one situation cannot necessarily be transferred into another situation. An interview takes place in an interpersonal situation, which means that the answers are dependent on the context in which the interview takes place. (Kvale and Brinkmann, Interview: Introduktion til et Håndværk 2009, 72-74)

As interviewers and researchers, it is important to be aware of the *linguistic* when working with knowledge acquired through interviews. For instance, differences between the written and the spoken language can be considerable when analyzing written material that was initially spoken. (Kvale and Brinkmann, Interview: Introduktion til et Håndværk 2009, 72-74)

Since most of the knowledge is acquired by the interviewees' storytelling, knowledge is *narrative*. Storytelling is an effective way to discover meaning in social reality. When analyzing the data, we interpret the narrative stories. (Kvale and Brinkmann, Interview: Introduktion til et Håndværk 2009, 72-74)

Finally, knowledge is *pragmatic*, which means that knowledge and opinions have validity and meaning when we seek to understand the world that the interviewees are a part of. (Kvale and Brinkmann, Interview: Introduktion til et Håndværk 2009, 72-74)

3.10.2 Semi-structured Interviews

Before the interviews, it was natural for us to construct interview guides containing semi-structured questions that covered a variety of topics. Semi-structured interview questions are very open, which constantly drive the interviewees to reflect and substantiate their answers. Arguably, the researcher will gain more information by using the semi-structured method, since the responses may be more detailed, which presumably increases the quality of the interviews. (Bryman, Social Research Methods 4th Edition 2012, 470-471) In comparison, fully-structured interviews do not give the participants the opportunity to speak freely, since questions might be narrowed down to such a degree that the answers might be just "yes" or "no". The semi-structured method illustrates biographic-narrative interviews, which means that the wording of questions will not necessarily be the same for all participants. (Wengraf 2001, 5)

The questions in our interview guides are customized and chosen carefully so that they cover each of the interviewees' opinions. All interview guides are thoroughly prepared, since they decide the directions of the interviews, and what kind of information that are extracted from the interviewees (Bryman, Social Research Methods 4th Edition 2012, 473). Yet, allowing new subjects to be brought up is also important. Furthermore, we have strived to ensure that our questions have been comprehensible and not leading. Throughout the interviews, we carefully paid attention to what was being stated to be able to ask relevant, additional questions and thereby eliciting new information without imposing our personal opinions (Bryman, Social Research Methods 4th Edition 2012, 475-478).

While interpreting our interviews, we have followed the methodological approach suggested by Kvale to obtain the basic technical and conceptual strategies when doing interviews. According to Kvale, 7 phases have to be followed when constructing interviews. Following the seven phases is a useful technique to construct an interview.

The first phase is "thematizing". In this phase, the interview must be clarified with no doubts about answering the questions; "what is the purpose of the interviews?" and "why are we constructing an interview?". (S. K. Brinkmann 2009, 122-123)

The second phase is "designing". Here, the interview is designed to acquire all the relevant information and knowledge necessary to answer the problem formulation. (S. K. Brinkmann 2009, 122-123)

The third phase is "interviewing". This phase is very important, as it is the phase in which the interview questions are asked. (S. K. Brinkmann 2009, 122-123)

The fourth and fifth phases are "transcribing" and "analyzing". Here, the researchers transcribe the interviews and decide which analyzing method to employ. (S. K. Brinkmann 2009, 122-123)

The sixth phase is "verifying validity, reliability, and generalizability". Reliability means to assess whether there is any consistency in the interviews. Validity means whether an interview really examines what is intended to be examined. (S. K. Brinkmann 2009, 122-123)

The seventh and last phase is "reporting" which means devolving a readable project constructed by a methodical approach. (S. K. Brinkmann 2009, 122-123)

According to Kvale, it is important to be aware of ethical issues when it comes to the seven phases. For instance, beyond the scientific value of the knowledge sought, the purpose of conducting interviews for our research should also be considered with regard to improving the investigated situation. In this case, we conduct stakeholder interviews to be able to finally come up with concrete suggestions on how relevant stakeholder in the NDR can change and improve the current effort of retaining more international talents in the region. For that reason, the interviewees who all are stakeholders in STAY are not only helping us – we also seek to help them. The focus group interview is conducted to determine the reasons why so many choose to leave the region after they graduate, and which specific needs they have in order to stay. Another ethical issue we are aware of is the possible consequences of the thesis for the interviewees, and the organizations they belong to. It is important to emphasize that we have had the best intentions and never sought to get anyone into trouble. When conducting interviews that may cover a sore spot for somebody; the confidentiality of the interviewees may need to be protected. Beforehand, all interviewees were made aware of the purpose of the thesis and none of them asked to be anonymous.

The reliability of semi-structured qualitative interviews is something that we are aware of, as it often has been a subject to discussion. Our argument for choosing semi-structured, qualitative interview as one of our qualitative methods is that it is interpretative and provides more thorough and subjective information than other data collection methods. However, the method also brings challenges. Often, semi-structured interviews are seen as being easier, because the researcher is free to ask or even change the questions as the interview progresses. As we see it, the questions may be semi-structured at first, but they have to be fully prepared and planned, as improvising new questions in some cases can be difficult and require training and preparation. (S. K. Brinkmann 2009, 30-31)

3.10.3 Semi-structured Focus Group Interview

A focus group interview is a method of interviewing that involves more than one, usually at least 4, interviewees (Bryman, Social Research Methods 4th Edition 2012, 501). In this thesis, the group consists of 4 students from UCN. Three of the students are 20 years old and come from Latvia, and one of them is 21 years old and comes from Estonia. The group consists of 2 females and 2 males and they have all been living in Denmark for 2 to 3 years.

According to Bryman, focus groups typically emphasize specific themes or topics that must be explored in depth. What is interesting about focus group interviews is the ways individuals discuss a certain issue as members of a group rather than simply as individuals. It is also interesting how they respond to each other's views and build up views out of the interaction that takes place between them. (Bryman, Social Research Methods 4th Edition 2012, 501) The fundamental in focus group interviews is the interaction between the participants. It allows the people involved to listen to each others' answers, which may make them argue with each other and challenge each others' views. Sometimes, it makes people want to qualify or modify views or even agree on something they probably would not have thought of without the opportunity of hearing the views of others. (Bryman, Social Research Methods 4th Edition 2012, 503)

3.10.4 Expert/Elite Interview

Besides 7 normal semi-structured interviews and one semi-structured focus group interview, our thesis also contains an expert/elite interview with the Mayor of Aalborg Municipality, Thomas Kastrup-Larsen. We define Kastrup-Larsen to be an expert and an elite member at the same time, since Aalborg Municipality is the organization that established STAY. We believe that he belongs to the expert/elite, since he is the Mayor of Aalborg Municipality and thereby has great political influence on the decisions made for the city of Aalborg. For that reason, we also believe that the Mayor must have valuable knowledge about STAY and is thereby able to account for and comment on the findings we have made during our research and data collection. Furthermore, we have noticed that Kastrup-Larsen has highly praised the STAY initiative in the media. (Kommune, www.aalborg.dk 2014)

The expert/elite interview is a specific way of applying semi-structured interviews. Those people who can be labeled as experts or elitists are people who are particularly competent as authorities in a certain field. Often, those people can be difficult to get in touch with, and when you finally get in touch with them it can be even more difficult to convince them to take part in an interview. This was also our experience. (Flick 2009, 165-166) For more than two months, we struggled to get an interview with the Mayor. Elite and expert interviews normally differ from standard semi-structured interviews, because the expert or elite member is often given special, non-standardized treatment by the interviewer (Flick 2009, 167). In our case, we were also obliged to give Kastrup-Larsen preferential treatment, since he did not had the time to meet us for an interview in person but instead agreed that we could send him precise and easy questions. We sent him 8 semi-structured, carefully chosen questions, which he responded to after three weeks. We are aware that if the interview was conducted in person we would have had the opportunity to be critical and ask follow up questions. As we forwarded the questions by email, the Mayor had much more time to prepare his answers. Considering the long waiting time for his feedback, his answers may have been carefully thought of and he may have discussed the questions and answers with members of his staff. Despite these facts, we still find his answers very useful.

Often, expert and elite interviews are used to complement other interview methods. In this case, the expert/elite interview with the Mayor was conducted after the other data collection. In this case, we used the interview with Kastrup-Larsen as an expert/elite validation of our findings regarding STAY, which makes the interview used as a complementary method. So, the expert/elite interview can be seen as another example of triangulation by bringing different perspectives on the same issue under study. (Flick 2009, 168)

3.11 Theories

As mentioned earlier, the thesis is based on the inductive approach, which means that we have collected all our data before selecting any theories. In this way, our theories have not been decisive for the data collection process. Instead, we have been able to choose the most relevant theories in order to explain and analyze the results.

From the results of the stakeholder interviews, we categorized the statements into the themes "organizational cooperation & resources" and "stakeholder mismanagement and lack of vision". We have chosen to apply Business Psychologist Axel Artke's theory on why change management often fails in organizations. To complement Artke's theory, John Kotter's 8 step model on how to conduct organizational change is applied. Additionally, relevant parts of Steen Hildebrandt & Søren Brandi's change management theories are also applied. Initially, it was the intention to only apply Kotter's 8 step model as the bearing change management theory. However, Kotter's theory cannot stand alone. Hildebrandt and Brandi's theory support Kotter's theory in an appropriate way when it comes to stakeholder management and communication during a change process. They set up concrete principles of good stakeholder management and communication during a change process. Also, Kotter's 8 step model was created based on an analysis of over 100 American organizations and why these often had troubles implementing changes (Kotter, Leading Change 1996), whereas Hildebrandt and Brandi's work with change management is based on a Danish context (Hildebrandt and Brandi 2006). Therefore, we believe that combining Kotter's and Hildebrandt & Brandi's theories is relevant, as the American and Danish organizational structures are far from similar.

From the results of the survey and the interviews, we categorized the statements into the themes "integration" meaning integration in the NDR, and "accessibility" meaning access to the region's labor market. The themes represent the two overall fields of challenges that international students are facing. We have chosen to include Norbert Elias and John L. Scotson's theory "The Established and the Outsiders" since it enables us to come up with suggestions on how to make the international students feel included instead of excluded. Along with "The Established and the Outsiders", we have chosen to include Axel Honneth's theory "The Struggle for Recognition", since we discovered that many of the international students are struggling to be recognized and accepted by the society in the NDR. The theory is relevant because it helps to explain what kind of recognition the international students need to get successfully integrated in the NDR, which, in the end, may have an influence on whether they want to stay or not. Including the theory makes us able to come up with some suggestions to STAY on some changes that will help the international students to feel more recognized and welcome in the NDR and thereby influence their inclination to stay. Furthermore, Pierre Bourdieu's 4 concepts "Social, Cultural, Economic and Symbolic Capital" are employed to account for how the different types of capitals are affected when the interviewees experience difficulties in terms of accessing the region's labor market.

3.12 Analysis

After conducting our primary data consisting of the 9 qualitative interviews and the quantitative survey, we were fortified with a lot of data. The data had to be organized in order to do a thorough analysis of our findings. To ensure a high quality of our data, we reflected on how we could process our empirical data in the best possible way.

When it comes to the qualitative data, we chose to record all the interviews carried out in person, since it gave us the freedom to be fully present, to concentrate on the interviews, and ask relevant the questions. It also gave us the opportunity to listen to the interviews several times and to transcribe them. This way has provided us with a better understanding of the individual respondents' personal stories. As a result, we have noticed things that may not have caught our attention while interviewing.

We listened to the records and read our transcriptions numerous times to identify the interviewees' attitudes and statements. After reading the transcriptions and listening to the records of the interviews, we started to recognize key themes and patterns. To ensure a systematic and structured approach when it comes to organizing the empirical data, we have used thematic coding. Bryman suggests that the researcher must look for specific features in the data when searching for themes. He also claims that repetition is one of the most common criteria for establishing a pattern, which then can be considered a theme. For that reason, topics that recur and have relevance to the problem formulation may be considered a theme. He emphasizes the importance of similarities and differences when conducting a thematic analysis. Therefore, exploring how the different stakeholders in STAY and the international students in the focus group interview discuss a topic in different ways is necessary in order to use the thematic approach properly. (Bryman, Social Research Methods 4th Edition 2012, 580)

To process the interviews with the stakeholders in STAY and the focus group interview with the international students, we analyze the data using thematic analysis. According to Bryman, thematic analysis is one of the most common ways to analyze. It is a categorizing strategy for qualitative data where the researcher reviews the data, make notes, and sort it into categories. This way of analyzing moves the analysis from a broad reading towards discovering significant patterns and developing relevant themes. (Bryman, Social Research Methods 4th Edition 2012, 580)

The quantitative data was coded via Enalyzer.dk, which organized all the answers in tables and diagrams. For instance, the Likert scale questions were diagrammed to detect the statistic tendencies. We went through all the posted comments in the two open-ended questions and put them into different categories which created a great overview.

Finally, it is relevant to mention the methodological perspective of double hermeneutics by Anthony Giddens. According to Giddens, double hermeneutics

> "… deals with a universe which is already constituted within frames of meaning by social actors themselves, and reinterprets these within its own theoretical schemes, mediating ordinary and technical language." (Giddens 1993, 170).

Throughout the analysis, we interpret the interpretations of the stakeholders through a theoretical framework to take the edge of the subjective.

4.0 Empirical Data

This section provides a presentation of the primary data we have collected. Furthermore, the section provides an introduction to each of the interviewees and an account for why they are relevant and what kind of knowledge they can contribute with.

4.1 Primary data

The primary data consist of 8 qualitative interviews with STAY's stakeholders and one qualitative focus group interview with 4 international students serving to clarify why so many international students leave the NDR after graduation. Additionally, the primary data consist of a quantitative survey. However, since a thorough account of the survey is provided in section 3.9.1, the survey will not be mentioned again in this section.

STAY consists of 4 stakeholder groups; the public sector, the educational institutions, the business community, and the international students. It is worth noticing that the students are not a part of STAY's organization. Yet, is still an important stakeholder group, since the members of the group are the ones STAY seeks to retain. These 3 groups of stakeholders who are a part of STAY's organization contain different people with different backgrounds and knowledge, but the people in each group all have in common that they represent STAY. Therefore, the interviews were not randomly conducted but meticulously planned to get interviews with at least two representatives of each stakeholder group. Each system representative was chosen by the conviction that he or she could contribute with useful knowledge about STAY that in the final analysis could help answering our problem formulation.

4.1.1 The Four Groups of Stakeholders and the System Representatives

The Public Sector:

Thomas Kastrup-Larsen

- *Mayor of Aalborg Municipality*

The Mayor basically has the overall responsibility for the municipality and can thereby be held responsible that the objectives of STAY are realized. Therefore, after conducting all of the interviews, it was necessary to critically introduce the mayor to our findings to see whether he was able to explain them. We found it relevant to include the mayor, as he is the top decision-maker with impact and power to change what may need to be changed. It is important to notice that the mayor has not been an active part of the STAY organization. Instead, his role is to represent the municipality.

Dennis Jensen

- *Business Development Consultant at Aalborg Municipality*

The Business Development department at Aalborg Municipality is the Project Coordinator for STAY. Dennis Jensen is the Project Manager for STAY and the development and implementation of the objectives regarding STAY is a part of his job description at Aalborg Municipality. He is not working full time with STAY, but he is the facilitator for the project, which is why we found him relevant and important to interview. What is important to notice is that Dennis is both representing STAY and Aalborg Municipality, since STAY was established by the municipality.

Lasse Frimand Jensen

- *City Councilor for the Social Democrats in Aalborg Municipality and Project Manager for EMBRACE at Aalborg Municipality*

After interviewing Dennis, we became aware of the fact, that the international dimension in STAY has now got its own initiative called EMBRACE. So, the project is still a part of the STAY initiative but works under a new name. Therefore, EMBRACE is now handling the international dimension, which made us expectant and curious about getting to know more about EMBRACE. For that reason, we arranged an interview with Lasse Frimand Jensen and his assistant, Rikke Skak Harboe. Since we knew that Lasse Frimand Jensen is a member of the city council we seized the chance to ask him some political questions regarding STAY as well.

The Educational Institutions:

Inger Askehave

- *Vice-Rector at Aalborg University*

At first, our intention was to interview the Rector of Aalborg University, Per Michael Johansen, which was initially agreed. We believed that he was the most relevant to interview regarding AAU's engagement in STAY's organization, since he is arguably responsible for the activities the university engages in. However, a few days before the interview, the secretary wrote us to inform that the Vice-Rector, Inger Askehave, had more knowledge about the university's involvement in STAY and we were recommended to accept their offer to interview her instead. Inger Askehave has often attended the STAY meetings and is one of the representatives from AAU.

Birgitte Bisgaard Nielsen

- *Academic Officer and Head of Section at the Faculty's Offices of Technical, Scientific, and Medical Science*

During the interview with Inger Askehave, she recommended us to speak to Birgitte Bisgaard Nielsen, since she was the most updated about the STAY initiative. Birgitte Bisgaard Nielsen is a contact person for many international students at AAU, which has made her very dedicated to improve their opportunities while studying and after graduation. For that reason, Birgitte Bisgaard Nielsen has put a lot of interest into the STAY initiative, which made her a very important informant to our research.

Mette Østergaard Samuelsen

- *Manager at the International Department of Business and Technology at UCN*

In almost every stakeholder interview we made, Mette Østergaard Samuelsen's name appeared. Of obvious reasons, we contacted her hoping to get an interview. Luckily, we were able to arrange an interview. Mette Østergaard Samuelsen is one of the driving forces in STAY and one of the people who has engaged the most in STAY. Furthermore, she is the one who suggested that STAY should have an international dimension, and, until know, she has been the one representing this dimension, which made her very relevant for us.

The Private Business Community:

Kjartan Jensen

- *Owner and CEO of Dataproces*

In May 2014, Dataproces won the so-called "STAY award" as the only possible winner, since no other companies had engaged in the STAY initiative. Dataproces "won" the STAY award due to their extensive recruitment of newly qualified and highly educated graduates from Aalborg University and UCN. Dataproces received a challenge trophy in form of a painting with STAY's logo.

Kjartan Jensen was relevant and interesting to interview to examine why Dataproces, as the only company, had been engaged in STAY. Additionally, we were curious to find out why he believed that no other companies in the NDR are engaged in STAY.

Leif Bjerg Jensen

- *Growth Consultant at Væksthus Nordjylland*

After interviewing Kjartan Jensen it became obvious that neither Kjartan nor any other of the stakeholders in STAY were aware of other companies engaged in STAY's organization. We were told that Leif Bjerg Jensen was the one in charge of inviting companies to be a part of STAY. We consider Leif Bjerg Jensen to be an important informant to our research, since he has daily contact to hundreds of businesses in the NDR. Therefore, he represented the voice of the region's companies, due to his insight in the region's business community.

The International Students:

Izabella Sivaka

- *From Latvia and student at UCN studying International Sales and Marketing*

Valeria Abramova

- *From Latvia and student at UCN studying Tourist and Business Management*

Andrejs Baceks

- *From Latvia and student at UCN studying International Sales and Marketing*

Artem Panin

- *From Estonia and student at UCN studying International Hospitality Management*

The international students play an important role in the thesis, since we seek to investigate what it takes for the region to retain more of them. For that reason, it is very important to understand, which factors that influence their decision about leaving the NDR after graduation with the purpose of implementing the necessary organizational changes and initiatives

4.2 Secondary Data

The secondary data consist of various news articles, reports, statistics, previous research etc. Furthermore, the secondary data consist of a recently conducted qualitative focus group interview with the Aalborg Municipality's Integration Committee (AMIC) in connection with Julie Mølgaard Larsen's internship at the Health- and Culture Administration of Aalborg Municipality. In her internship, she worked towards the objective of increasing the number of employees with a different ethnic origin than Danish, which was set up by Aalborg Municipality and AMIC. To help them achieve the objective, she, among other things, conducted a qualitative focus group interview with 4 members of AMIC to investigate which challenges they experience when they search for a job in or at Aalborg Municipality. AMIC handles the interests of ethnic minorities in Aalborg and helps promoting ethnic equality. AMIC also advises the City Council and the municipal departments when it comes to municipal initiatives within this area. Furthermore, AMIC is also a sparring partner for other integration actors in the municipality. The members of AMIC are appointed by the City Council on the basis of a public nomination meeting. There are 17 members of the committee. 9 of them are representatives of ethnic minorities and 8 are representatives employed in Aalborg Municipality or other partners on the region's labor market. Additionally, AMIC has completed Aalborg Municipality's Integration Policy. (Kommune, www.aalborg.dk 2015)

We consider this data relevant, since the members of AMIC are ethnic minorities themselves and therefore face similar challenges as international students do when it comes to integration and to accessibility to the region's labor market. In addition, they possess knowledge on integration and have significant influence within the integration area in Aalborg Municipality.

5.0 Theoretical Framework

5.1 Theoretical Framework with an Organizational Perspective

The purpose of this section is to account for the theorists and the theories that will be employed in this thesis. In order to investigate how relevant stakeholders in the NDR can change and improve the current effort of retaining more international talents in the region, it is necessary to apply theories from different fields. First of all, 3 different organizational change management theories will be applied to scrutinize how STAY might change its organization and thereby become capable of producing and implementing concrete suggested solutions that are consistent with the needs of the region's international students and finally improve the current retention effort.

Before accounting for the change management theories that will be applied later during the analysis, it is relevant to account for what a change is and change management in an organizational context.

5.2 What is a Change and Change Management (Within Organizations)

Change management is concerned with leading an organization through a change process. Now, it is appropriate to distinguish when you are dealing with an actual change and thereby change management, and when you are dealing with normal leadership. So, before starting to speak about change management, it must be determined when you are dealing with actually managing changes. One of the most fundamental terms in the business world today is "change", since changes are occurring in organizations every day. The businesses that understand to adapt to changes in their environment are arguably more likely to stay alive and succeed than the ones that do not understand to adapt. (Cheney, et al. 2010, 327) This is supported by Kotter, as he states that

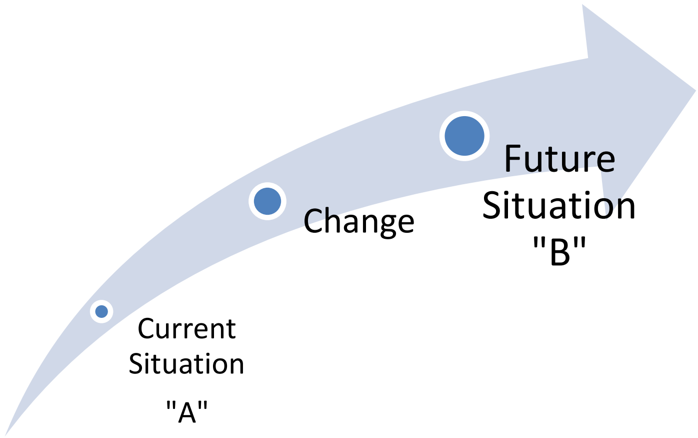
> "The terms of the business world will be even more changeable over the next decades." (Kotter, I spidsen for forandringer 1997, 18).

The definitions of change are different depending on which researchers you are dealing with and therefore also most likely different among different leaders. Management theorists Jeff and Laurie Ford define change as:

> "… a process of social construction in which new realities are created…sustained, and modified in the process of communication. Producing intentional change, then, is a matter of deliberately bringing into existence, through communication, a new reality or set of social structures." (Cheney, et al. 2010, 329)

Their definition of change is appropriate to bring into play, as it is consistent with the hermeneutic way of viewing the world (confer the hermeneutic circle in section 3.4).

Steen Hildebrandt and Søren Brandi define change as a before and after situation which is illustrated in this model:



So, a change is about moving the organization from the current situation, A, to a future situation, B. This way of seeing changes must be viewed as being very traditional and is mostly suitable for project processes, where there is a clear start and finish time. Examples of these kinds of changes could be a new staff policy, hiring new staff, or new supplier agreements etc. (Hildebrandt and Brandi, Ledelse af forandring 2005, 36-38) Hildebrandt and Brandi argue that we have moved from a situation where stability and predictability added with a little change was the dominant to a situation where change and unpredictability added with a little stability is the ordinary (Hildebrandt and Brandi, Ledelse af forandring 2005, 16). Again, there is a perception that both change management and ordinary management of continuous adjustments exist. For example, the implementation of internet based employee intranets or e-mail systems in organizations can be mentioned. With the implementation of internet based tools, it was revolutionary compared to earlier. However, is it a change, or is it merely an adjustment to the technology?

Kotter does not mention which type of changes his model is developed to lead. Instead, his 8 step model is so general that it most likely can be applied to most change situations. A final answer to when one speaks about change management, and when one speaks about regular management is probably impossible to determine. Quite simply, it can be argued that change management is concerned with leading the organization from where it is (current situation A) to where you want it to be (future situation B) as illustrated in the model.

5.3 Axel Artke's 6 Pitfalls of why Organizations Fail at Conducting Change

According to Danish business psychologist, Axel Artke, there are 6 main pitfalls organizations must be aware of when working with change management (Artke 2006). Other theorists have also dealt with the issue of why around 70 % of organizations today tend to fail at conducting change (Anderson and Anderson 2012). Artke has formulated 6 concrete pitfalls which, in his view, explain why many change processes do not work out as intended:

Pitfall 1: Inadequate Understanding of the Scale of the Change

This can be perceived a treatment of symptoms instead of solving the real problems. The lack of understanding may also appear when the necessary organizational changes are not being conducted because of narrow-mindedness regarding processes, persons, the challenge, or because too many initiatives are started at once. (Artke 2006)

Pitfall 2: Lack of Vision

A clear vision of where the organization is going is essential for any change. Changes do not succeed out of luck or because of fate. They succeed because of hard work and a common vision. If the change stakeholders are not capable of explicitly describing and communicating the vision, and if the vision does not contain an encouraging energy of a bright future, it is often a sign that the vision is missing. (Artke 2006)

Pitfall 3: Inefficient Change Agents

A change will most often require that an empowered group of stakeholders is behind it. In other words, there must be enough power, competence, and human understanding with the driving forces in the change. If the change is primarily conducted by one person, it is important that the person is mature enough to compensate for his/her own weaknesses. If the people behind the change are selected from historical and/or organizational (power) terms rather than from the needs of the change, the constellation of people in the organization will often be inefficient. (Artke 2006)

Pitfall 4: Post-rationalization of the Change Process

Often, leaders, employees and stakeholders believe that the change is "a great idea", until the change starts to affect their own area. This can result in "the great time of explanations"; i.e. why the change seems like status quo, why small changes are good enough, why the change is adjusted to fit existing processes and work routines, and why it is really important to maintain traditions and illustrious rituals. (Artke 2006)

Pitfall 5: Believing that the Change is Only a Technical Assignment

All changes are social processes. If the people who are a part of the change are perceived as 'things', the change will create problems or stop. This happens when the change agents start to talk about that "employees should just do what they are told", or "if they do not understand it now, it is their own problem". It can also happen if only technical problems and assignments are discussed. (Artke 2006)

Pitfall 6: The Use of Geographic and Organizational Boundaries as Demarcation Lines for the Scale of Changes

The conducting of changes can be stopped when they collide with other parts of the organization. If historical boundaries can block an actual solution to the problem, the change will lose its driving force and eventually die out. A change cannot be blocked by "if you take care of your department, I will take care of mine". This view belongs to an outdated silo mentality. (Artke 2006)

5.4 Hildebrandt & Brandi's Stakeholder Management and Communication Theory during a Change Process

Stakeholder management is one of the areas that require special attention from the management in a change process. To achieve a successful change process, it is imperative that all the involved stakeholders understand why the change(s) is/are necessary, and also which part they will be playing under and after the change. Steen Hildebrandt and Søren Brandi believe that focusing on the working areas of the stakeholders is essential in a change process. Therefore, it is important that the management knows how the stakeholders will be affected by the changes. So, good communication is the key to ensure that all stakeholders are working for the same objective. If the management does not succeed in creating an understanding among the employees that the given changes must be implemented, the management risks that the whole change process fails before it is finished. So, how can the management make its stakeholders aware that the changes are necessary (cf. Kotter's "create a sense of urgency), and how can the management ensure that all stakeholders are working for the same goal? (Hildebrandt and Brandi, Change Steps 2007)

Hildebrandt and Brandi set up four principals that apply in proportion to what they believe is good stakeholder management (Hildebrandt and Brandi, Change Steps 2007, 59-62):

Continuity – "The Common Thread"

From the beginning, there has to be continuity in the change process; a common thread which must indicate how stakeholders should be involved and their level of involvement. This guideline must go through the change process and thus create stability and secureness around it. (Hildebrandt and Brandi, Change Steps 2007, 60) For example, the common thread could be initiated by creating a schedule in which the management can analyze the stakeholders that are assessed to be most affected by the change process. According to Hildebrandt and Brandi, the analysis of which stakeholders that are the most important regarding the change is important during the whole change process, as it can provide answers to the following questions:

1. **Who are affected by the changes?**
2. **How will they be affected?**
3. **What can/must/shall we (STAY) do about it?** (Hildebrandt and Brandi, Change Steps 2007, 40-42)

The Parameter of Understanding: a Proactive Approach to the Changes

The second and third principle is the parameter of understanding and a proactive approach to the changes. One of the most vital assignments during a change process is to make sure that all stakeholders feel sufficiently informed about the changes and heard by the management. Thus, the management can set the agenda towards the stakeholders in a way that does not question what the management wants to achieve with the changes and how they in cooperation can reach the formulated vision and objectives. (Hildebrandt and Brandi, Change Steps 2007, 60-61)

Adjusting the Vision

Hildebrandt and Brandi's fourth and last principle is adjustment of the vision. The road towards implementing changes in an organization is often curved and filled with obstacles. This implies that the management sometimes has to adjust the vision to the environment and the terms that surround the organization. Likewise, the management has to adjust its management of the stakeholders by matching the expectations around the adjusted vision. In this way, the communication is kept open and honest, and the stakeholders feel involved and informed about the change process. (Hildebrandt and Brandi, Change Steps 2007, 61)

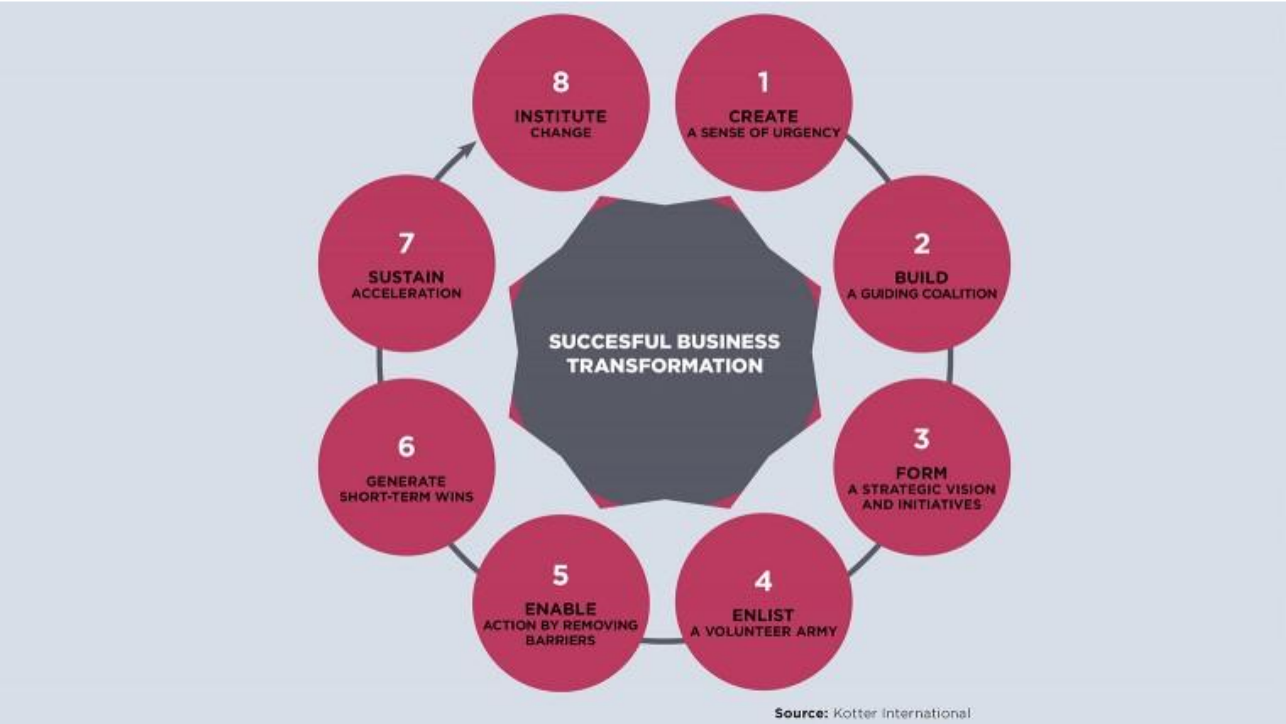
Now, Kotter's 8-step process for leading change will be accounted for:

5.5 John Kotter's 8-Step Process for Leading Change

John Kotter is a management professor at Harvard Business School and CEO at Kotter Associates (Kotter, I spidsen for forandringer 1997, 231). He is considered to be one of the leading researchers within the field of change management and his 8-step theory has formed the basis for several other theories by other researchers (Hildebrandt and Brandi, Ledelse af forandring 2005). Kotter's 8-step theory was created based on his analysis of more than 100 different organizations' failed change processes.

Kotter divides the 8 steps into 3 groups: Steps 1-4 are initiated to unfreeze status quo in the organization and these steps constitute the fundamental work for a change process. In steps 5-7 a range of new methods are introduced. Finally, in step 8, the changes must be anchored in the organizational culture. (Kotter, I spidsen for forandringer 1997, 28) Initially, Kotter believed that a lot of organizations tend to go directly to step 5 after which a change is pushed onto its other leaders and the rest of the employees. Additionally, Kotter's initial idea was that all steps had to be completed chronologically before moving on. (Kotter, I spidsen for forandringer 1997, 29) However, he later realized that the 8-step process is dynamic, changeable, and not linear according to the organizations using it (Cohen 2005, 5-6).

Here, Kotter's model is illustrated and each step of it is accounted for.



Step 1: Create a Sense of Urgency

"Craft and use a significant opportunity as a means for exciting people to sign up to change their organization" (Kotter 2015)

When an organization faces a change process it is a necessity that it has a concrete problem to solve or challenges to overcome. If this is not the case, the organization will have a hard time convincing its employees to engage in the change process. Therefore, creating a sense of urgency for change is extremely important among the change leaders. One of the biggest pitfalls is if the organization is not capable of making the employees feel that a change is absolutely necessary. If the change is not perceived to be important from all employees in the organization, the chances of achieving successful change are very poor. In addition, motivating the members of the organization to meet the demands and solve the assignments related to the change process is vital in order to succeed. So, in relation to this, having employees that are adaptable and willing to change is extremely important. If creating a sense of urgency among the employees is successful, they will most often be more motivated to contribute to the change in a positive way. However, creating a sense of urgency for change is much harder than it sounds, which is also the reason why a lot of changes processes fail. (Kotter, Leading Change 1996)

Step 2: Build a Guiding Coalition

"Assemble a Group with the power and energy to lead and support a collaborative change effort" (Kotter 2015)

Kotter believes that in order to achieve successful change in any organization, a carefully chosen group of competent employees must be in charge of steering the organization through the change process. According to Kotter, a well-known pitfall is that many organizational leaders believe that one single person can form the guiding coalition. However, it is not possible that one person can take on this job alone. Therefore, it is essential for leaders to assemble the right team consisting of the right people, who can manage the rest of the organization in the change process.

A successful guiding coalition can be constituted after the following 4 criteria (Kotter, I spidsen for forandringer 1997, 70-71):

1. **Positional influence**
    - Especially top leaders have the necessary power so that other influential employees cannot block the change.

2. **Expertise**
   - Are all necessary angles represented? If not, external consultants with experience within change management must be involved.
3. **Credibility**
   - The guiding coalition must have a good reputation in the entire organization so that they are taken seriously by everybody working with the change.
4. **Leadership**
   - The members of the coalition must be experienced leaders in order to implement the change process.

A poorly constituted coalition is a big disadvantage. The coalition's purpose is to ensure having the necessary information at the time that are actually necessary; for example, when making non-routine decisions. Therefore, Kotter believes there are two types of people to avoid. People who do not make room for others, and people who create mistrust. (Kotter, I spidsen for forandringer 1997, 73)

Besides members of the group must possess traits such as engagement and motivation, it is imperative that the members seem credible to the rest of the organization. If the guiding coalition does not seem credible, it will be very difficult to motivate the rest of the organization to maintain vigor, understanding, and motivation for the change. (Kotter, Leading Change 1996)

Step 3: Form a Strategic Vision & Initiatives

"Shape a vision to help steer the change effort and develop strategic initiatives to achieve that vision" (Kotter 2015)

According to Kotter, there are 3 purposes with a good vision:

1. **It specifies the general course for the change**
2. **It motivates the employees to go in the right direction**
3. **It contributes coordinating the actions of different people in a quick and efficient way**

When step 1 and 2 are completed satisfactorily, the organization is ready to move on to the third step. Now, the steering committee that was assembled in step 2 must shape the future strategic vision and initiatives for the organization. In this process, it is important that the strategic vision and the new initiatives are consistent with the actual change the organization wishes to undergo, as this makes the change process less confusing for people in the organization. Additionally, it is central that the steering committee comprehends that the chosen vision and initiatives must work in interaction with the internal and external factors that the organization is affected by at the given time. A typical pitfall in this step would be that the steering committee thinks too theoretical and neglects to show the rest of the organization how it is possible to realize the vision and the new initiatives. (Kotter, Leading Change 1996)

Step 4: Enlist a Volunteer Army

"Raise a large force of people who are ready, willing and urgent to drive change" (Kotter 2015)

This fourth step focuses on how the steering committee communicates the vision and initiatives from step 3. It is important that the steering committee communicates in a way so that the entire organization understands exactly what the change means and what its overall objective is. Therefore, it is advantageous to have the simplest and clearest vision as possible, as the chance of understanding and accepting the vision is increased in all parts of the organization. According to Kotter, this means that the vision cannot produce difficult technical terms or slang terms, as this will disturb the communication. If the communication is disturbed and the employees do not understand the message, it becomes impossible for the employees to incorporate the vision in the workday. A good way to go around it is to communicate the same message in various ways so that the employees are informed about the new change vision. In this way, the organization maintains motivation and commitment among its members, and they will continuously be reminded what the purpose of the change really is. (Kotter, I spidsen for forandringer 1998)

Step 5: Enable Action by Removing Barriers

"Remove obstacles to change, change systems or structures that pose threats to the achievement of the vision" (Kotter 2015)

Kotter believes that even though the organization has the necessary vision and has effectively communicated it throughout the entire organization, it is still necessary to enable action. Even if the employees are excited about the new vision, different complications may make it difficult to take action. It is not the intention that all thinking barriers must be removed, however Kotter points out 4 significant areas to be aware of (Kotter, I spidsen for forandringer 1997, 126):

1. **Structures must be made compatible with the vision**
    - It is not good that these block the necessary action.

2. **Qualifications of the employees must be upgraded**
    - It cannot be lack of knowledge and skills that block change. For example, it might be necessary to offer courses in conflict resolution or change management in consequence of new working methods.
3. **Information and employee systems must be brought in line with the vision**
    - It is not good that insufficient systems block for action.
4. **Leaders who work against the necessary change must be confronted**
    - Leaders must always be in front of a change process.

This is the step where a foundation for action throughout the entire organization must be created. This is done by giving the employee the necessary skills they need in order to undergo the change process. In addition, it is important to remove the barriers the employees are facing every day. There are different ways to ensure that the employees possess the right skills. According to Kotter, one of the typical pitfalls of this fifth step is focusing that the employees have the opportunity to acquire the right skills; however, no focus is put on how to provide them with the right framework to exploit the acquired skills. Skills development is an important part of making an employee a part of the change process, and it is therefore essential to be aware that the employee can utilize the acquired skills. Also, it becomes noticeable in this step if there are employees that, through their actions, work against the change. If this is the case, immediate action must be taken to get the employee to work for the change and also to avoid that a resistance towards the change spreads among the rest of the workforce. (Kotter, I spidsen for forandringer 1998)

Step 6: Generate Short Term Wins

"Consistently produce, track, evaluate and celebrate volumes of small and large accomplishments – and correlate them to results" (Kotter 2015).

The short term wins have a clear purpose. They contribute to build up the necessary credibility to keep the change process going (Kotter, I spidsen for forandringer 1997, 151). The short term wins boost the faith of the guiding coalition members that the organization is moving in the right directions. Additionally, the short term wins make it more difficult for negative inputs to break through. On this stage in the change process, one must remember that a change takes a long time and that it is important to maintain engagement, motivation and drive. Since a change is a long-term process with a main objective that may seem far away, especially for some employees, it is important to set up subsidiary goals along the way. Thus, it is possible to retain employees in the change process. A change process can be a difficult and tough assignment for the individual employee, as there are a lot of habits that need to be changed, and the uncertainty weighs more than ever before. That is precisely why subsidiary goals are important, since the employees then can see that working with the change process pays off. The subsidiary goals serve more purposes; first of all, it is possible to constantly keep an eye that the organization is on the right track in the change process. Additionally, achieving subsidiary goals contributes with positivity in the organization as well as larger confidence in the change of which the organization is undergoing. Last but not least, subsidiary goals contribute to analyze whether the internal skills and resources of the organization are the right ones in order to get through the change process successfully.

If it turns out that the organization is lagging behind in some areas, it is possible, when having subsidiary goals, to fix that by acquiring the necessary skills or resources in the given situation. All things considered, subsidiary goals are ways in which the organization can create a sense of urgency among its employees (step 1), and that is an indispensable feeling to create in order to achieve a successful change. Kotter believes that one of the typical pitfalls in this step is that the management now forgets the previous steps and no longer focuses on the important communication part and creating a sense of urgency. Another typical pitfall is that the management neglects to focus on having subsidiary goals. (Kotter, I spidsen for forandringer 1998)

Step 7: Sustain Acceleration and Produce More Change

> "Use increasingly credibility to change systems, structures and policies that don't align with the vision; hire, promote and develop employees who can implement the vision; reinvigorate the process with new projects, themes and volunteers" (Kotter 2015)

After experiencing the first success, it is important to maintain the drive (Kotter, I spidsen for forandringer 1997, 166). That means the first successes must be used to keep momentum and not celebrate the already achieved successes. So, the early wins must be used as starting points for more changes and thereby more success. (Kotter, I spidsen for forandringer 1997, 178)

In step 7, the organization must focus to consolidate results and produce more change. In the previous step, it was explained how important it is to have subsidiary goals in the change process. However, there are also elements of danger with subsidiary goals. For example, one of the biggest elements of danger on this stage in the change process is to celebrate the subsidiary goals as if they were the main goal of the change. This can mean that the employees in the organization no longer believe they have to "fight" for the change. They might begin to feel satisfied, since they have accomplished the objctive, and the sense of urgency then crumbles. Therefore, when celebrating accomplished subsidiary goals in the organization it is necessary to stay focused on the previous steps in the model. On this stage in the change process, the organization needs the steering committee, which was assembled early in the process, to rise to the occasion. At present, the organization has come so far in the change process that the steering committee not necessarily stands alone with the assignment to keep the change process going. By now, large parts of the organization should work with them. (Kotter, I spidsen for forandringer 1998)

Step 8: Institute Change

> "Articulate the connections between the new behaviors and organizational success, and develop the means to ensure leadership development and succession" (Kotter 2015).

Step 8, which is the last step of the model, is anchorage of new approaches in the organizational culture. When the new routines of the employees have been changed successfully, and when these routines have proven to be a success over time, the new working methods must be anchored in the organizational culture.

> "Culture is not something you can manipulate. Attempts of grasping it and push it into a new form never works, because the culture is intangible." (Kotter, I spidsen for forandringer 1997, 194)

Kotter believes that all employees are hired after whether they fit into an organization's culture (Kotter, I spidsen for forandringer 1997, 186). The culture affects all areas in the organization, but it is still relatively invisible. Kotter actually compares employees' relationship with fish's relationship to water. (Kotter, I spidsen for forandringer 1997, 187)

Since the organization has reached this final step, it does not mean that the change process is successful or will stay successful. For the change to be sustainable long-term, it is a prerequisite that it is anchored in the organization and in the mindset of its members. The new adapted behavior from the change process will only be able to continue if it is anchored in the organizational culture. According to Kotter, one of the large pitfalls in this step is that the organization celebrates that it has reached the target and forgets to think long-term and thus misses the long-term gains of the change process. In that connection, it is important the organization shows its employees which cultural changes that have happened in the process, and the attitudes in the workforce that have contributed to the final goals have been reached. Kotter argues that the most important change in the change process is the one that happens in step 8. Here, the organizational culture changes, and the change is anchored in the organization. In that connection, it must be remembered that changes of this kind are not something that happen over a short period of time, but something that happen over a longer period of time and requires hard work and big motivation of the whole organization. (Kotter, I spidsen for forandringer 1997)

5.6 Criticism of Theories

5.6.1 Hildebrandt and Brandi's Stakeholder Management and Communication Theory during a Change Process

Hildebrandt and Brandi have not set up a visual model of how an organization should communicate and manage its stakeholders like Kotter. In our view, this can be an advantage and a disadvantage.

It can be an advantage not to have a concrete, visual change process model, as the management then can pick and choose the elements of the theory they consider most relevant to the organizational change process they are facing. Thus, the management is able to adjust the change management theories to the communicative methods and strategies they use within their organization.

It can also be a disadvantage that Hildebrandt and Brandi do not set up a change process model like Kotter. One of the advantages by having a concrete model to follow when a management in an organization has to implement changes is that there is a communicative frame to relate to. A model like Kotter's can act as a checklist for the phases and steps that an organization can and must go through in relation to implementing the changes in the organization. It is not meant that a management must follow a model slavishly, however it is possible for the organization to pick and choose the phases and steps they consider relevant for the changes they need to be implemented.

5.6.2 Kotter's 8-Step Model

Kotter's view of how to lead an organization through a change process is definitely applicable, but it is also appropriate to question whether the model can stand alone. The model is widely recognized all over the world. However, theory is one thing and practice is another. The world has changed a lot since 1996 where Kotter presented this theory; not only how organizations conduct change, but also the scale and frequency of changes.

First of all, Kotter's 8 steps are based on concrete empirical experiences, but Kotter does not provide us with concrete practical tools. For example, some of the steps are dealing with the fact that it is important to engage and motivate the people who are part of the change process. However, there are not a lot of concrete suggestions to how you actually do that in practice. In connection with step

8, Kotter suggests using dismissals and promotions as a motivation tool, but there are certainly other ways to motivate people that would be more successful. Having a constant threat of being fired is arguably not very motivating for employees on today's labor market. (Kotter, Leading Change 1996, 196)

Secondly, Kotter initially presented the 8 step model as a linear process; meaning that the steps should be followed chronologically from 1 to 8 (Kotter, Leading Change 1996, 23). Yet, in Dan Cohen's book from 2005, *The Heart of Change Field Guide*, Kotter changes this view to one where the change process is dynamic and unpredictable. He argues that an organization may have to start with step 2 or step 6 and those 8 steps can overlap during the change process:

> "The process of change is, by nature, dynamic. As a result, the change process might start in the middle…some steps are typically executed continuously during the change process to generate the energy needed to make the change a reality. Some steps will be revised several times in the course of a transformation." (Cohen 2005, 5-6)

Here, Kotter makes a good point regarding organizational change processes; most organizations are different from each other in many ways. What is right or wrong at a given time in one organization is rarely the same in another. Therefore, it is important for organizations that consider using Kotter's 8-step model not to stare blindly on the linear approach, as Kotter initially suggested in 1996. Therefore, the model must now be viewed as a dynamic process where the steering committee in an organization can assess which step of the model they want to start with, which steps that are necessary to reconsider, and when they believe the change process is done. A change process is arguably a diffuse concept and it can be difficult to decide when and whether such a process is completed. Therefore, it is inadequate to view a change process as a stable, rigorous, and linear process. On the contrary, it is a continuous, dynamic, and ever-changing process.

One can argue that the individual organization should also assess whether to use all steps of the model as a whole, or whether to pick and choose the steps that are believed to be necessary to carry out through a change process in their given organization.

Now, the second part of the theoretical framework will be accounted for.

5.7 Theoretical Framework with a Migration Perspective

This part of the theoretical framework provides an exposition of the three theories; "The Established and the Outsiders" by Norbert Elias and John L. Scotson, "The Struggle for Recognition" by Axel Honneth, and the 4 concepts "Social, Cultural, Economic and Symbolic Capital" by Pierre Bourdieu. The theories are chosen on the belief that each theory is able to explain the outcomes of the others. In that way, the theories complement each other and make it possible to provide a common and comprehensive explanation of why the international students in the NDR experience the challenges that they outlined through the focus group interview and the survey.

5.7.1 The Established and the Outsiders by Norbert Elias and John L. Scotson

In the book "The Established and the Outsiders" the German Sociologist, Norbert Elias, and School Teacher, John L. Scotson, carry out a study of social relations within and between communities. (Press 2015) The study is carried out in the beginning of the 1960's and is based on a small community called Winston Parva, which was located in a suburban area in the outskirts of a large and wealthy industrial town in central England. Winston Parva was separated from other parts of the town by a railway and it had a population of less than 5000 people. Even though Winston Parva was separated and had a small population, it still had its own industries, schools, churches, shops and clubs. (Elias and Scotson 1994, 1) Elias and Scotson categorized Winston Parva into 3 neighborhoods:

1. **The middle class neighborhood**
2. **The "old" working class neighborhood referred to as *the Village***
3. **The "new" working class neighborhood referred to as *the Estate***

The first group (group 1 and group 2) was seen as "the established" and the second group (group 3) was seen as "the outsiders". The division of the two groups of residents was based on the length of residence in Winston Parva. According to Elias and Scotson, Winston Parva was build during the 1880's and the first area that came up was zone 2. During the 1930's and 40's, zone 1 was built as a residential district with detached houses. People with high incomes moved in to zone 1, which became an area for the affluent people. Zone 3 was built later but was claimed to be a poor area, which was haunted by rats. For that reason, the apartments stood empty for a long time despite low rents. The area was not inhabited until an army camp and a military industrial complex were established in the area. Right after the area became inhabited, an "us" and "them" relationship arose between the established in zone 1 and 2 and the newcomers in zone 3. (Elias and Scotson 1994, xv)

The residents in the old-established group (group 1 and 2) treated the members of the newer group of residents (group 3) as outsiders and stigmatized them as people of lesser human worth (Elias and Scotson 1994, xv). According to Elias and Scotson, more powerful groups generally look upon themselves as the "better" people, as endowed with a kind of group charisma, with a specific virtue shared by all its members, and lacked by the others. For that reason, group 3 was thought to lack the distinguished group charisma, which the dominant group (group 1 and 2) together attributed itself (Elias and Scotson 1994, xvi). Elias and Scotson claim that

> "… it can be observed again and again that members of groups which are, in terms of power, stronger than other interdependent groups, think of themselves in human terms as better than the others" (Elias and Scotson 1994, xv).

Elias and Scotson found that the "established" group refused to have any social contact with the "outsiders" apart from that demanded by their occupations. They treated all newcomers as people who did not belong and lumped them all together as people less well-bred. After a while, the newcomers seemed to accept that they belonged to a group of lesser virtue and respectability, even though there was no difference between them, besides how long they had been living in Winston Parva. (Elias and Scotson 1994, xvi) There was no difference in nationality, ethnicity, color or race between the residents in the two groups; neither did they differ in their type of occupation, their income and educational levels. Both groups represented the working class, which made them belong to the same social class. For that reason, the explanation of the established/outsider relationship rather had to be found in the relationships between the inhabitants in the areas. Therefore, Elias and Scotson decided to look into how people established relations in life when they went to school, worked, did business etc. They argued that the most elementary forms of social life develop mutual dependency and constitute the basis for the existence and formation of society. They found, that the conflict was happening mainly between old and new groups. The only difference between the two groups was, as mentioned before, that one of the groups was formed by old residents, who had been living in the neighborhood for 2-3 generations, while the other group was based on newcomers. At the top of the hierarchy they found those with a long history in the community. (Elias and Scotson 1994, xvii)

According to Elias and Scotson, there were 3 factors that strengthened segregation and maintained the societal structure. The first factor was what they called "the old mother-centered family" in which group 1 and 2 was reproduced. Secondly, they found that local clubs and family networks played an important role. Thirdly, they claimed that gossip had an important role when it came to establishing and supporting social order. They believed that cliché based judgments, condemnation, and discrimination of "them", while praising and promoting "us", continuously fed the existing order. The gossip had both an integrating and a segregating effect, since it contributed to the development of group charisma and collective shame. (Elias and Scotson 1994, 99-101)

According to Elias and Scotson,

> "One group can effectively stigmatize another only as long as it is well established in positions of power from which the stigmatized group is excluded." (Elias and Scotson 1994, xviii)

Therefore, Elias and Scotson believed that the established group's exclusion and stigmatization of the outsiders were powerful weapons used by the latter to maintain their identity, to assert their superiority, and keeping others firmly in their place. (Elias and Scotson 1994, xviii) Also, attaching the label of "lower human value" to another group is, according to Elias and Scotson, one of the weapons used in a power struggle by superior groups as a means of maintaining their social superiority. Elias and Scotson claim that a person can experience stigmatization on the individual level if the person belongs to a stigmatized group. They claim that in every society there is a range of terms stigmatizing other groups. "Nigger" or "homo" are examples hereof. The terms used in established/outsider relationship have implication because of the context in which they are used. The terms symbolize the fact that a member of an outsider group can be shamed if he or she does not live up to the norms of the superior group. (Elias and Scotson 1994, xxv) Overall, if there is a difference in people from established/outsider groups' physical appearance, it often works as signals of people's belongingness to groups with different power ratios, different status, and different norms. (Elias and Scotson 1994, xlvii-xlviii)

In the first part of the book, Elias and Scotson spell out how the theory can be applied to a whole range of changing patterns of human inequality such as relations between classes, religion, ethnic groups, colonized and colonizers, men and women, parents and children, and gays and straights. (Elias and Scotson 1994, Foreword) They claim that the theory can be used for analyses of small, local communities and work places, as well as for regions, nations and global systems. (Elias and Scotson 1994, 160)

5.7.2 The Struggle for Recognition by Axel Honneth

Axel Honneth is a German professor and philosopher who is primarily known for his book *"The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts"* (Danske, 2014) ". In the book, Honneth completes a theory that emphasizes the importance of social relationships to the development and maintenance of a person's identity. He claims that one of the preconditions for self-realization is human relations of mutual recognition. Honneth supports his theory by referring to empirical findings of the social sciences.

Honneth believes, that a human's well-being is dependent on the existence of well-established, 'ethical' relations. He argues that these relations are taking place within; love, law, and 'ethical life', which he claims, can only be established through a conflict-ridden developmental process and specifically through a struggle for recognition. According to Honneth, a person's identity formation depends largely on the development of self-confidence, self-respect, and self-esteem. All three modes can only be attained and maintained through recognition by someone, who one also recognizes. This means that the prerequisite for self-realization depends on the establishment of relationships of mutual recognition. These relationships are not just given but must instead be established and expanded through social struggles. (Honneth, 1995)

Honneth states 3 points which cannot exist without mutual recognition:

- **Close relations of love and friendship**
- **Legally, institutionalized relations of universal respect for the autonomy and dignity of persons**
- **Networks of solidarity and with shared values where members of a community can be acknowledged**

He accounts for the 3 modes of recognition; self-confidence, self-respect, and self-esteem. He calls these 3 modes "practical relations-to-self", and he believes that they all have something in common. These 3 "practical relations-to-self" modes contain a dynamic process in which individuals come to experience themselves as having a certain status. Honneth claims that to be able to relate to oneself in a certain way, it is necessary to experience recognition from others. This means, that one's relationship and attitude towards oneself, then, emerges in one's encounter with other's attitude toward oneself. (Honneth, 1995)

The following part includes a thorough explanation of the 3 modes; self-confidence, self-respect, and self-esteem.

Self-confidence

According to Honneth, love is the most important factor when it comes to self-confidence. He believes that there cannot be an interpersonal relationship without love. A relationship based on love between individuals must be based on a mutual need to provide a basis of recognition and self-confidence. He believes that the kind of recognition that is achieved by family or close friendships is a precondition for successful interaction in social contexts. This recognition occurs in the private sphere and helps to maintain the fundamental self-confidence, which is necessary for an individual to operate in social contexts. Honneth claims that the emotional recognition, which individuals obtain in the private sphere, enables them to participate in other communities and social contexts. An individual will experience problems with managing oneself in social contexts if he or she does not achieve recognition in the private sphere. (Honneth, 1995)

Self-respect

According to Honneth, self-respect is a matter of viewing oneself as legitimated to the same status and treatment as every other person. This relation-to-self is therefore about legal rights. Honneth believes that self-respect is affected by a person's sense of possessing the universal dignity of people, and also whether or not a person has a good opinion of him- or herself. Therefore, self-respect is a matter of the universal rights and recognition in society that occur in the judicial sphere. In the judicial sphere, the individual has the opportunity of attaining legal recognition and legal equivalence with other members of society. According to Honneth, an individual's need to be recognized as a member of society is connected with his or her self-respect. However, if these universal rights are violated, the person's self-respect will be affected negatively. Honneth argues that these universal capacities shift over time concurrently with the shifts in the conception of the procedure by which political and moral issues are solved. The more demanding this procedure is going to be, the more extensive the features that constitute a subject's moral accountability will be. In order to understand his contention, Honneth refers to 2 historical processes. First, he asserts that there has been an increase in the number of people who are treated as full-fledged citizens. Secondly, he also asserts that there has been an increase in the actual content of what it means to be a full-fledged citizen. By this, Honneth believes that there has been and always will be a development of political and welfare rights. (Honneth, 1995)

Self-esteem

According to Honneth, self-esteem is the opposite of self-respect. Self-esteem involves a sense of what makes a person special and unique. This means, that what differentiates a person from others must be something valuable. For that reason, to lack self-esteem is to have the feeling that one has nothing valuable to offer, and individuality and self-esteem must therefore be linked. According to Honneth, this means that members of denigrated groups have enormous difficulties being perceived in anything but stereotypical ways. The achievement of self-esteem is possible in the solidarity sphere, and Honneth believes that when it comes to solidarity; shared concern, interest, and values must be in play. He claims that

> "To the extent to which every member of a society is in a position to esteem himself or herself, one can speak of a state of societal solidarity." (Honneth 1995)

By this, he means that a good, well-functioning society is when individuals have real and good opportunities for full self-realization, and where no member of the society are being denied the opportunity to earn esteem. The relationships in the private sphere can either have a positive or a negative effect on the solidarity sphere. If an individual has close friends and a good and caring family who recognizes and supports him or her, it may contribute that the individual acquires more self-confidence, which gives the individual greater opportunity for positive recognition. On the other hand, if the individual does not have close relationships with family or/and friends, it may cause that the individual has little or no self-confidence, which may result in negative or no recognition by the society. Honneth's arguments can be usefully compared to the culturally oriented struggles of subaltern groups that have influenced debates worldwide. The subjects are often multiculturalism, ethnicity, religion, and sexuality. Honneth's central point is that in pluralistic and mobile societies it is difficult to maintain self-esteem, if systematic denigration of one's subculture takes place. (Honneth, 1995)

The Good Life and the Integrated Community

According to Honneth, it is important to obtain recognition that influences the 3 modes; Self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem to achieve a good life. Therefore, Honneth criticizes the perception of the individual as being solely responsible for his or her achievement of happiness, well-being, and a good life. He believes that lack of recognition within these 3 modes causes an increasing number of depressions. He argues that to achieve recognition it is necessary to move in communities where the individual is able to use and develop his or her skills and perceive themselves as valuable to the community. Honneth claims that the 3 forms of recognition are important in an integration process and that a society of solidarity is characterized by the society's ability to integrate people with different values and competences. (Honneth, 1995)

5.8 Social, Cultural, Economic and Symbolic Capital by Pierre Bourdieu

The French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu, is known for his theory "The Forms of Capital" from 1986. Bourdieu was interested in the ways society is reproduced and how the dominant classes retain their position. (Routledge 2015)

This part of the theoretical framework will only account for Bourdieu's 4 types of capital, since this element of his theory is most relevant for this thesis.

According to Bourdieu, capital means a value or a resource that a person possesses. The value of the capital depends on the field in which it is brought into play. Through the capital, a person has the opportunity to influence the field and thereby enhance his or her power. (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 86-87)

According to Bourdieu, capital exists in 3 basic forms: cultural capital, economic capital, and social capital. In addition, there is a fourth type of capital that the 3 basic types can appear in; the symbolic capital. When cultural, economic or social capital are added a symbolic value it is called symbolic capital. For instance, a smart car (economic capital) appears as a status symbol (symbolic capital). What creates the symbolic capital is that individuals naturally attach value to specific kinds of symbols. (Susen and Turner 2011, 18)

According to Bourdieu, these concepts of capital enable people to model a society's class structure. He pays attention to the fact that the forms of capital are sometimes exchanged or translated into one another; their conversion is often possible. Also, the different forms of capital can work as a circle, since a high level of a certain capital can help to achieve a higher level of other capitals. When determining an individual's position within a society's class structure it is vital to study the volume of capital available to this individual as well as the structure of this capital that shows which forms of capital this individual's total capital is composed of. (Susen and Turner 2011, 18)

According to Bourdieu, the 3 basic forms of capital are:

- ***Social capital*, made up of social obligations ('connections'), which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the forms of a title of nobility.**

- ***Economic capital*, which is immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the forms of property rights.**
- ***Cultural capital*, which is convertible, on certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the forms of educational qualifications.** (Bourdieu, The Forms of Capital 1986)

Social Capital

Bourdieu defines social capital as the following:

> "Social capital is the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition." (Bourdieu and Wacquant, An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology 1992, 119)

In other words, social capital covers an individual's membership of a group which provides each of its members with the collectivity-owned capital. The social capital is based on the individual's social network and contacts, and family background. Social capital refers to networks in the sense of social relationships upon which one may draw to realize certain goals. Bourdieu believes that by having good relations and contacts individuals may find it easier to get a good education and a good job. In this way, low social capital can, to some extent, compensate for the fact that you do not have a high economic and/or cultural capital. Therefore, a high social capital means having a wide network and good social relations, which, in some cases, can create the opportunities for achieving economic and/or cultural capital. (Susen and Turner 2011, 18)

Economic Capital

By economic capital, Bourdieu means

> *"… money or assets that can be turned into money…"* (Benson and Neveu 2005, 4)

This means that economic capital is an expression of the individual's economy. Therefore, high economic capital is when an individual has a good economy and material goods. Money creates more opportunities for the individual, since high economic capital opens the doors for a lot of opportunities. Therefore, economic capital can be used for getting a higher social capital. Economic capital also enables people to reach a higher cultural capital. Conversely, individuals can achieve a higher economic capital, if one has a high cultural capital in form of, for instance, a high education. (Benson and Neveu 2005, 4)

Cultural Capital

Bourdieu refers to cultural capital as the ways in which people would use cultural knowledge to undergird their place in the hierarchy. Cultural capital encompasses such things as educational credentials, technique expertise, general knowledge, verbal abilities and artistic sensibilities. Having a high, cultural capital may also contribute to an increase in economic and social capital. (Benson and Neveu 2005, 4)

Cultural capital exists in 3 forms:

- **In The Embodied State, which means:**

"… in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body; it is linked to the body and presupposes embodiment. Its aquisition is called Bildung, cultivation – presupposes a process of embodiment, incorporation, which, insofar as it implies a labor of inculcation and assimilation, costs time, time which must be invested personally by the investor."

- **The objectified state, which means:**

"… in the form of cultural goods pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines, etc."

- **The institutionalized state, which means:**

"… in the form of academic qualifications." (Bourdieu, The Forms of Capital 1986)

Symbolic Capital

Symbolic Capital is something of a generic term emerging from the interplay of the economic, social, and cultural types of capital. All 3 types of "original" capital lay the foundations for an individual's overall position, good reputation, renown and prestige in society, thus determining his or her place in the hierarchy. All the 3 capital forms can appear in the symbolic capital. It is the capital to which one's environment attributes value. According to Bourdieu, it is vital to analyze symbolic capital when it comes to modern societies. (Susen and Turner 2011, 18)

5.8.1 Criticism of Theories

Elias and Scotson's theory was carried out in 1960 which, of course, is a fact that we need to keep in mind. The theory may be affected by the time in which it was completed. However, we still believe that the theory is representative and that it can be applied in this thesis. As Elias and Scotson point out themselves, the theory can be used in analyses of small local communities and work places, as well as for regions, nations, and global system and in all kinds of changing patterns of human inequality. When it comes to the 2 other theories both of them have been subjects for criticism by other scholars. In 2013, Danielle Petherbridge published a book with the title *"The Critical Theory of Axel Honneth"* in which she provides a comprehensive study of Axel Honneth's work, tracing the theoretical trajectory from his earliest writings on philosophical anthropology to the development of the theory of recognition. In the book, Petherbridge argues that Honneth's early work provides significant insights for the reconstruction of the normative project of critical theory and the articulation of a conceptual framework for analyzing social relations of power and domination. Petherbridge argues that these aims are not fully realized in Honneth's more mature project and that central insights fade, as his project develops. Petherbridge seeks to demonstrate that the basis for an alternative theory of inter-subjectivity, which can account for both an adequate theory of power and normative forms of subject-formation, can be immanently reconstructed from within Honneth's own work. (Petherbridge 2013)

Petherbridge is also the editor of another book called *"Axel Honneth: Critical Essays with a Reply by Axel Honneth"* in which a collection of critical interpretations on the work of Honneth are brought together. The book contains critical interpretations on his development and extension of the theory of recognition and much more. The book also includes a comprehensive reply by Axel Honneth that not only addresses issues and concerns raised by his critics but also provides significant insights and clarifications into his project overall. (Petherbridge, Axel Honneth: Critical Essays with a Reply by Axel Honneth 2011)

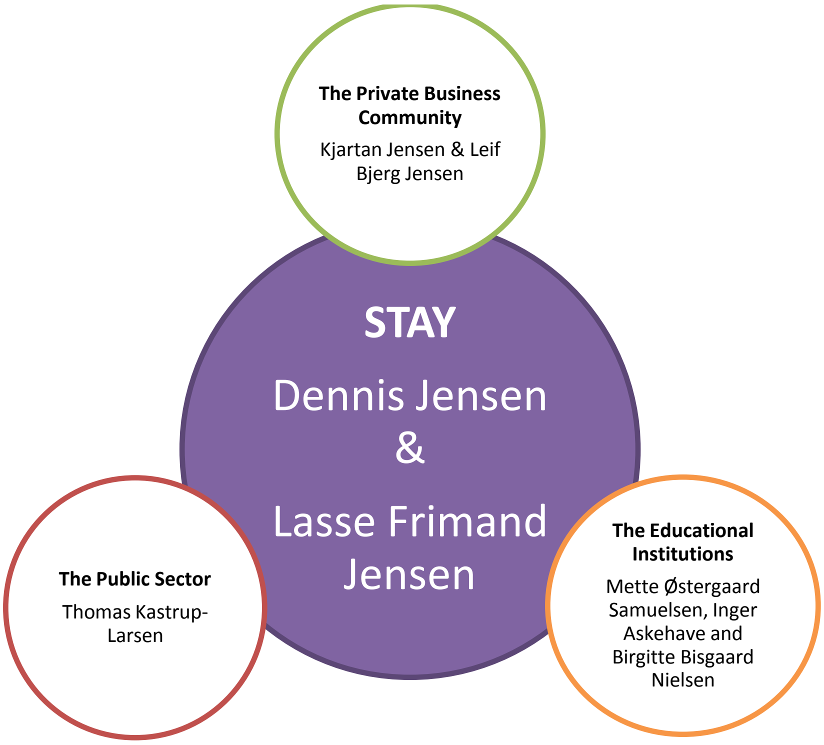
As mentioned earlier, Bourdieu's theory has also been subject to criticism. In 2002, Alice Sullivan published an article with the title *"Bourdieu and Education: How useful is Bourdieu's theory for researchers?"* in which she discusses Bourdieu's theory of education with particular reference to the concepts of cultural capital and habitus. She argues that the concept of cultural capital is substantive enough to be potentially useful to empirical researchers. In her article, she also assess some of the empirical work concerning cultural capital and the problems involved to operationalize the concept. (Sullivan 2002, 144-166)

Despite the criticisms of the theories, we still find them relevant and useful to include in the thesis as analyzing tools. However, when working with the theories in our analysis we will have the criticism of the theories in mind to obtain the most reliable result as possible.

6.0 Analysis

6.1 Analyzing the Organizational Level

Now, the analysis of STAY's organization will be conducted based on 8 qualitative interviews with the key stakeholders and so-called system representatives within the organization. Here, a model of STAY's 3 stakeholder groups is presented:



In this first organizational part of the analysis, we will conduct a thematic analysis with the purpose of identifying the organizational problems and challenges within the STAY initiative. It is relevant to mention that this analysis is conducted at meso level in form of statements from the system representatives. This analysis is necessary in order to later account for the change process STAY must undergo with the purpose of improving and changing the current effort of retaining international students in the NDR. This change might be necessary for STAY's organization to undergo, as it is essential to construct an adequate organizational frame and thus implement relevant initiatives that comply with the specific needs of the region's international students.

As mentioned in section 3.12 "Analysis", the analysis will be carried out thematically. For that reason, the analysis will consist of 2 parts that each represents interrelated themes. When going through the interviews it is clear that they are characterized by recurring themes divided into 2 parts. The themes are "organizational cooperation & resources" and "stakeholder mismanagement & lack of vision". All three change management theories will come into play according to their relevance with the different themes. Arguably, this gives a more comprehensive analysis of all the stakeholder views instead of analyzing each stakeholder interview separately.

6.1.1 Organizational Cooperation & Resources

In the beginning of the interview with STAY's project manager, Dennis Jensen, we asked him to elaborate how the organization is currently constructed in terms of the international area. According to the STAY Masterplan, it was the intention that all efforts and initiatives should have an international dimension in the STAY initiative (STAY 2014). He answered that the international area had never been an independent area and that this aspect had been difficult to contain for the other areas in STAY. The stakeholders who were interested in the international area such as UCN, AAU, and Lasse Frimand Jensen from the EMBRACE project believed that there was not paid enough attention to the international area, while other stakeholders in the organization found it disturbing to work with. Therefore, the easy solution was to establish a new project which is only focusing on the international area. (D. Jensen 2015 Appendix 1, 10-11) So, in the interview with Lasse, we asked him to account for the reason why STAY it was necessary to establish the EMBRACE project. Lasse argued that STAY, in his opinion, was never meant to be an executive branch. On the contrary, he believed that STAY was meant as a more academic and strategic funded project. We asked him whether STAY should not be more executively funded in terms of reaching its formulated objectives. He agrees, and argues that it is even confusing to him and the people in the EMBRACE project, as there are many grey areas between being executive and non-executive.

> "… jeg tror, at man ikke helt efterlever de principper, man har sat op omkring konceptet, som man fastlagde til at starte med. Det, tror jeg, er udfordringen nu, at man har etableret et koncept, men man kan godt se, at der måske er andre ting, der skal i spil…" (L. F. Jensen 2015 Appendix 2, 23)

He continued by stating that he does not believe STAY complies with the original principles which were decided from the beginning. In his opinion, the challenge now is that people are starting to realize that organizational changes are needed to move the project forward and reach the objectives. (L. F. Jensen 2015 Appendix 2, 23-24)

When comparing the statements from Dennis and Lasse it seems unclear how STAY's organization is formed. This is supported by STAY member and leader at the International Department, Mette Østergaard Samuelsen who represents the educational institutions in STAY. When asked about which challenges she sees as being the largest in terms of reaching the objectives in STAY, she answered:

> ”I forhold til at komme videre så er det svært lige nu at finde ud af, hvor STAY er henne, fordi den udmelding vi fik før jul var, at alle grupperne var blevet opløst… Men jeg synes, det er svært, fordi det virker meget løst lige nu og med hvad, der skal ske, og igen ved jeg ikke med hvem, der kommer, og hvilket mandat de har med sig, og hvor meget man vil det. Der skal action bag ordene. Men STAY tænker jeg også var et forsøg på at samle alle de her interessenter, som har interesse i det her felt, og samle mange af de forskellige initiativer, som foregår alle mulige steder, … så der kunne opstå nogle nye ting på tværs, og som kunne være med til at løfte den her opgave… Der er bare ikke kommet noget særligt konkret ud af det, hvor man kan sige, der er kommet det og det initiativ, og det er helt klart noget mht. de mandater osv.” (Samuelsen 2015 Appendix 3, 41)

Here, Mette argues that she does not know the status of STAY at the moment and that she has been informed that STAY is no longer running. In addition, she finds it problematic that the organization sometimes consists of stakeholder representatives who do not have the mandates from their own organizations to initiate relevant initiatives and move the retention effort in the right direction. UCN is not alone in being confused about STAY's organization at the moment and criticizing the mandates of some of the stakeholder representatives in STAY. When asking the Academic officer and Head of Section at the Faculty's Offices of Technical, Scientific, and Medical Science, and who also represents the educational institutions in STAY, Birgitte Bisgaard Nielsen, about her impression of STAY, she answered:

> "… det er meget lidt vi kommer til de møder, og det er det fordi, vi ikke får noget ud af det. Med al ære og respekt for det folk nu laver, så bliver det lidt en snakkeklub, og det kan det meget nemt gøre med sådan nogle projekter her. Der er nødt til at komme noget handling på… det kræver altså dedikation og ressourcer, før man kan få sådan et projekt her op at køre, og det er der ikke i STAY, og så bliver det bare en masse mennesker, der gerne vil, men også har en masse andre arbejdsopgaver… Vi er med, men det er ikke noget, vi lægger fuld energi i… det dur ikke, at man ikke har en fast medarbejder på en eller anden måde; en, der er fuldstændig dedikeret til det her og skal løbe det i gang, og det skal man have flere steder fra…" (Nielsen 2015 Appendix 7, 70-71)

According to Birgitte, she is not attending the STAY meetings very often, as she believes her time is better spent on an already quite successful national retention project called 'Youth Goodwill Ambassadors' run by 'Copenhagen Capacity' which is the organization behind 'Wonderful Copenhagen'. In that project, around 35 selected international talents from all Danish universities act as ambassadors to promote Denmark as an attractive educational destination. In return, these students are promoted by the universities in cooperation with different companies which ultimately increase their job opportunities in Denmark. In fact, Copenhagen Capacity has launched regional retention projects that focus on business cooperation. However, the NDR is the only Danish region that is not involved in these projects. (Nielsen 2015 Appendix 7, 71-72) According to Vice-Rector at Aalborg University, Inger Askehave, it is a big problem that the NDR is not involved in STAY's organization. When we asked her which of the stakeholders that should facilitate a project like STAY, she replied:

> "… det er jo ikke kun Aalborg Kommune, som vores unge mennesker skal afsættes til. Det er jo regionen, så jeg tror, det er den rigtige vej at placere sådan et projekt, og det har jo egentlig også hele tiden været fokus i STAY, men jeg tror ikke det har været taget ud over kommunegrænsen, men det mener jeg, er det rigtige at gøre…" (Askehave 2015 Appendix 6, 62)

Here, she argues that STAY primarily focuses on Aalborg Municipality and does not reach out to all the other municipalities in the NDR, which we know is a big challenge that the region is facing.

When we asked Aalborg's Mayor, Thomas-Kastrup Larsen, about his view on the fact that Aalborg University has been compelled to cooperate with an organization placed in Copenhagen rather than STAY in the NDR about the region's retention challenges, he stated:

> "… STAY leverer ikke som sådan ydelser på samme måde som Copenhagen Capacity, som i øvrigt er en god samarbejdspartner for STAY og lokale aktører…" (Kastrup-Larsen 2015 Appendix 8, 80)

Here, the Mayor claims that Copenhagen Capacity is a great collaborator for STAY, which, according to Birgitte, is not true. Birgitte continues by stating that the meetings she has attended only end up in empty talk and coffee drinking and that action towards concrete initiatives is never taken. She emphasizes the importance of having people in the organization who can provide full time dedication to the project and that more resources must be invested in order for STAY to ever reach its objective. The most important resources are money, time, and the right people with the right mandates to make a substantial difference. Right now, in her opinion, STAY consists of people who want the project to succeed, but unfortunately do not have the right organizational frame or the sufficient resources to move in the right direction. In addition, Birgitte mentions her frustration towards the region's lack of interest and participation within the subject of retaining international students. In fact, 2 years ago, she invited Copenhagen Capacity, the North Denmark Region, and Aalborg Municipality to a meeting regarding the regional business cooperation projects. However, the representatives from the North Denmark Region did not have the necessary mandate to make any decisions. After the meeting, she did not hear from the region again, and the opportunity of participating in a successful project unfortunately passed. (Nielsen 2015 Appendix 7, 71-72)

Birgitte's account for the North Denmark Region's lack of involvement in terms of retaining international students is quite consistent with the impression we got when calling the region's International Coordinator, Runa Coxeter, to ask her about this issue. She confirmed that the North Denmark Region is not involved in any projects regarding retention of international students. AAU and UCN, represented by Mette and Birgitte, are not alone in having a critical eye for the way STAY is organized. CEO and owner of Dataproces, Kjartan Jensen, is one of the representatives from the region's business community in the STAY organization. When asked why Dataproces, as the only company in the region, engages in STAY, and how he believes the initiative has been working so far, he answered:

> "Jeg tror, det kom sig af, at vi søgte noget fundraising i EU, og i den forbindelse kom vi til at snakke med Dennis Jensen, og han præsenterede så det her for os, og om vi ville være med til at slå et slag for det. Det er derfor, vi er involverede i STAY. Vi synes også, det var en god ide, og at vi kunne opnå nogle fordele. Det er bare mere trægt nu, end da det lige blev sparket i gang… Jeg synes ikke, der er sket noget siden. Jeg har ikke hørt noget fra dem siden… Jeg er ikke helt sikker på, om det har fungeret indtil videre." (K. Jensen 2015 Appendix 4, 49)

Kjartan's statement supports the fact that there is great uncertainty among the stakeholders whether STAY is still active, and that they are not being informed about the project's current status at all. Additionally, when we asked Growth Consultant at Væksthus Nordjylland, and member of the STAY organization, Leif Bjerg Jensen, to give his professional opinion on how STAY has been working organizationally thus far, he stated:

> "Det første år fungerede det fint nok, der var en vis energi i det, og der var en energi fra Kommunen, som holdte de der møder med os… De er i gang med at finde deres ben at stå på, tror jeg. Så løb det hele bare lidt ud i sandet. Jeg har ikke set eller hørt ret meget siden sommeren sidste år (2014)… Jeg hører, at det mere eller mindre dør lidt ud. Med hensyn til organiseringen, så mangler der lidt en projektleder på det. En, der havde nogle muligheder for at kunne gribe nogle af de her bolde og arbejde videre med det. Det er jo organiseret i en form for partnerskab, og det er jo meget fint, men det ender jo altid op med, at det er nogle ekstraopgaver, som folk sidder med hver især rundt omkring udover det, de har i deres dagligdag. Der er ingen tvivl om, at i en presset hverdag, så griber man fat i det, som man bliver målt og vejet på, og som ens overordnede kommer og siger. Nogle af elementerne i STAY var jo bare noget ekstra, hvis man lige havde tid. Når man kommer med sin viden og engagement og ikke kommer videre, så dør det hurtigt. Så mister man hurtigt sit engagement, og så gider man ikke se på det igen, for det kommer jo ikke videre alligevel. Det er sådan en mekanisme, der sker i folk. Vi har snakket om, at der skulle en projektleder på, og der blev søgt penge til det, men jeg ved ikke, om der kom noget ud af det." (L. B. Jensen 2015 Appendix 5, 56)

According to Leif, there was a lot of energy in STAY during the first year especially from Aalborg Municipality. However, according to him, that energy turned to dust, and he has not heard from

STAY since the summer of 2014. When it comes to how the organization is constructed, Leif believes that STAY needs a full time Project Manager to take action on the concrete ideas and initiatives that have been suggested and generated by the stakeholders. He argues that STAY's problem is that the organization is based on a volunteer effort that basically holds none of the members accountable, as the members of the stakeholder groups all have enough to do with their full time jobs. Furthermore, he explains that when people bring their knowledge and engagement, and then feel they are not moving anywhere, a project quickly dies.

Now, after accounting for all these stakeholder statements concerning the subjects of organizational cooperation & resources in STAY's organization it is relevant to bring the relevant parts of the organizational change theories into play to analyze the statements. As we know, Kotter's suggests in step 2 of his 8-step model that it is necessary to build a guiding coalition and assemble a group with the power and energy to lead and support a collaborative organizational change effort. After examining the statements of the stakeholder representatives from AAU, UCN, the Mayor, and the region's business community, one can argue that STAY has managed to assemble a group of relevant people to lead and support the change process that eventually can improve the effort of retaining international students in the NDR. Although, it is reasonable to question, whether the organizational frame for dealing with the regional retention challenges has been appropriate. In terms of cooperation, it is very problematic that some stakeholders occasionally have sent representatives to the STAY meetings without the necessary mandates to make decisions and start initiatives on behalf of their respective organizations. Naturally, it is difficult to move forward in any organization, if the people shaping it are of no liberty to make independent decisions. This is supported by Axel Artke; in the third of his 6 pitfalls to why organizational changes often fail, he argues that the reason is inefficient change agents. According to Artke, a change requires an empowered group behind it; meaning that there must be enough power, competence, and human understanding with the driving forces of the change. He goes on by stating that if the people behind the change are selected based on historical and/or organizational (power) considerations, the constellation of people in the organization will often be inefficient. When scrutinizing the individual STAY members, it is difficult to point at other more qualified people to work on solving the regional retention challenges. In continuation of this, Kotter agrees with Artke and argues that it is essential to assemble the right team consisting of the right people, who can manage the organizational change process. In Kotter's view, the guiding coalition should be constituted of people who possess the criteria of positional influence, expertise, credibility, and leadership experience to accomplish successful change. When examining the members of STAY's organization, these criteria are arguably all represented. For example, in terms of positional influence and leadership, there are top leaders represented in form of Vice-Rector at Aalborg University, Inger Askehave, CEO and Founder of Dataproces, Kjartan Jensen, and leader for the International Department at UCN, Mette Østergaard Samuelsen. Additionally, Growth Consultant at Væksthus Nordjylland, Leif Bjerg Jensen, has an enormous network and expertise within the business community in the NDR especially in terms of facilitating an organizational change process. Furthermore, Birgitte Bisgaard Nielsen has several years of experience within the field of retaining internationals through her work with the Youth Goodwill Ambassadors Project. Additionally, in terms of credibility, Project Manager at EMBRACE, Lasse Frimand Jensen, holds a position as City Councillor at Aalborg Municipality, and Inger Askehave is, besides her job as Vice-Rector at Aalborg University, a published and well-reputed author. Even if all these stakeholder representatives arguably possess the right criteria of constituting a successful organization, it is hard to ignore the fact that the Project Manager at STAY, Dennis Jensen, has very little leadership experience compared to some of the other members of STAY's organization. As Leif, Birgitte and Mette all argued in their interviews, it is vital that STAY engages a full time dedicated Project Manager to achieve the project's objective. (L. B. Jensen 2015 Appendix 5, 55), (Nielsen 2015 Appendix 7, 70), (Samuelsen 2015 Appendix 3, 37-38) It is obvious that not having a full time, experienced Project Manager to handle the coordination and cooperation among the stakeholder has been one of the largest challenges for STAY.

This leads us to focus on the subject of resources invested in the STAY initiative. Among the stakeholders we have interviewed in relation to this thesis, there is a broad unity regarding the lack of human time invested in STAY.

For example, when Mette was asked what she considers to be the weak points in STAY, she answered:

"Det har helt klart haltet i og med, at hvis vi har haft nogle initiativer, hvor vi har sagt, at det vil vi gerne, så er der nogen, som har sagt "Jamen jeg har ikke tid til at følge det til dørs. Jeg synes, det er en god idé, og jeg vil gerne bakke det op, men jeg har ikke tid til at gå ind og putte kræfter i det, for det kan jeg ikke forsvare i forhold til det, jeg laver". Nogle kan også være bange for, at hvis vi sætter noget i gang så skal vi passe på med at slå det for stort op, for hvis vi ikke har andet end vores egne ressourcer, hvem er det så lige der skal løbe med det? Hvis man ikke kan gå ud i organisationen og pege på nogen, der kan hjælpe mig og sige "du skal hjælpe mig med det her, og det skal du bruge tid på"… Det er styrken, at man kommer, fordi man er interesseret i det her, men også svagheden… På den ene side vil man gerne kunne hjælpe, men man er bange for at få slået for stort et brød op, som man ikke kan følge til dørs, fordi man ikke har ressourcerne til det" (Samuelsen 2015 Appendix 3, 37-38)

Here, she argues that several initiatives have actually been prevented from being implemented due to the lack of time among the stakeholders. Again, the problem relates to the organizational structure of STAY, as it is based on a voluntary 'commitment' and thus not a part of the participating people's job descriptions. In fact, the lack of time has prevented the stakeholder groups of applying for some of the DKK 500,000 that Aalborg Municipality has allocated to STAY activities. As Dennis stated while speaking about the lack of timely resources:

> "Aalborg Kommune har sat en halv million af til det her projekt, som de her grupper kunne byde ind på, men der var stort set ingen søgning til de her midler. Det var jo netop fordi at man tænkte "Det kan godt være at vi har en idé, men vi gider ikke folde den ud, for vi ved godt, hvem der så skal lave den", så man kom aldrig videre" (D. Jensen 2015 Appendix 1, 12-13)

In terms of resources, the greatest challenge seems to be people's time rather than how much money the municipality has invested in the project. When asked how Mette feels about the fact that STAY is based on a commitment and thereby a voluntary effort, she supported Dennis' view regarding the lack of interest in applying for the STAY funds:

> "Jeg tror faktisk, at de har problemer med at få de 500.000 kr., som de har sat af, brugt. Man kan jo ikke bruge pengene, medmindre man har et konkret event, og medmindre der bliver kastet mindst ligeså mange menneskelige ressourcer efter det." (Samuelsen 2015 Appendix 3, 39)

Here, Mette supports the fact that money and human resources go hand in hand in terms of achieving results. When the Mayor was asked whether he believes that sufficient funds have been allocated to STAY in terms of reaching the objectives of retaining more international students, he answered:

> "Der findes ikke målsætninger i forhold til at fastholdelse af flere internationale i STAY. Jeg kan henvise til, at der i den nye uddannelsesstrategi findes en række handlingsanvisninger i forhold til målgruppen. Aalborg Kommune kan ikke indfri potentialet i forhold til de internationale medborgere alene. Vi skal indgå i strategiske partnerskaber med erhvervslivet, uddannelsesinstitutionerne, foreningslivet og andre om at løfte opgaven." (Kastrup-Larsen 2015 Appendix 8, 82)

Here, the Mayor avoids the question and claims that there are no objectives in STAY in relation to retain more international students in the NDR. However, the exact words in the STAY Masterplan published by Aalborg Municipality, are:

> "… Det er første gang, at vi samler alle aktører og sammen sætter fokus på at fastholde nyuddannede dimittender i Nordjylland…" (STAY 2014, 2)

Additionally, in the STAY abstract from Aalborg Municipality, it is specifically written that:

> "Indsatsens mål/målepunkter vil være flere internationale studerende… En del unge bliver i landsdelen efter endt uddannelse, men mange rejser herfra igen. Det gælder i særlig grad de internationale studerende. En del af investeringen kan derfor miste sin værdi, hvis det ikke lykkes at fastholde flere nyuddannede… Den ønskede langsigtede effekt i STAY er, at flere kandidater fastholdes i regionen" (Kommune 2012, 7)

Even Dennis claims that STAY has no written objectives. When asking him whether STAY has achieved any of its objectives so far, he answered:

> "Vi har ikke rigtig defineret noget mål på forhånd…" (D. Jensen 2015 Appendix 1, 20)

So, it would be an understatement to argue it is a problem that the Mayor and thereby the person with the overall responsibility for STAY's success is not even familiar with the project's objectives and very purpose. In addition, it is arguably even more problematic that the Project Manager is not familiar with the objectives either. Therefore, we will go deeper into the subject of lack of vision later. Secondly, the Mayor continues by stating that Aalborg Municipality cannot realize the potential of the international students alone, and that it is necessary to form strategic partnerships with the business community, the educational institutions, and other stakeholders to handle that job. Here, it arguably seems that he is not aware that he basically explains the foundation of the STAY initiative, which appears to be somewhat unprofessional, especially due to the fact that he has had almost 3 weeks to look over and answer our interview questions.

However that may be, to get back to the broad unity among the stakeholders that there is a lack of human time invested in STAY, it is arguably impossible to solve this challenge without investing more economic capital. In order for the involved stakeholders to invest more time and dedication in STAY and thereby enable them to implement relevant retention initiatives, the work in STAY has to be an integrated part of people's job descriptions and not only something to do when they find ten minutes here and there. It is hard for us to argue and assess whether the allocated funds of DKK 500,000 is the proper amount for the activities in STAY. However, it is certain that buying more of people's time and thereby make STAY a part of people's job descriptions will arguably require more money.

So, these stakeholders agree that the lack of human resources in STAY is one of the greatest barriers to move forward and achieve the formulated objectives. According to Kotter, removing barriers and obstacles is essential for an organization in a change process. First of all, he argues that organizational structures must be made compatible with the vision. For STAY, this means that the current organizational structure that is built on a voluntary effort arguably has to change to move forward. Additionally, Kotter believes that information and employee systems must be brought in line with the vision. For STAY's case, it means that communication with the organizational stakeholders has to be upgraded significantly for people to engage more in the project. As we know from many of the stakeholder representatives, several of them are unsure what status on STAY is and whether the project is still active. We will get back to the theme of stakeholder communication in the next section of this analysis. Finally, Kotter argues that members of the organization who work against the necessary change must be confronted. As Dennis argued in his interview, in the beginning, the international area in STAY was a burden to some of the stakeholders in the organization. Therefore, STAY chose to name the international area EMBRACE. However that may be, one can argue that a project as STAY, especially considering its overall vision and objective which is to retain more international students in the region, should be able to contain and handle this area especially because of all its highly competent and relevant stakeholders. Therefore, STAY's Project Manager could have confronted those stakeholders who found the international area too disturbing to work with and explained them the importance of the area in terms of achieving STAY's overall objective.

6.1.2 Stakeholder Mismanagement & Lack of Vision

Another theme that appears to be a significant challenge throughout the interviews is how STAY has mismanaged the stakeholders in the organization. The very idea behind STAY is that the primary stakeholders are the business community, the educational institutions, and the public sector:

> "Aalborg Kommune ønsker at løfte indsatsen (STAY) i et nyt fokuseret partnerskab imellem erhvervsliv, uddannelsesinstitutioner og offentlige myndigheder." (Kommune 2012, 3)

When we asked Dennis what STAY does in order to make sure that the region's businesses can contribute to achieve the overall objectives, he stated:

> "… Grunden til det ikke er mere alarmerende for mig, at der ikke er flere virksomheder involveret, er fordi at i hele min erhvervskarriere, der har jeg været i vores erhvervsafdeling, og jeg har set gang på gang det der med, at virksomhederne de kommer, når der er noget konkret. Det her med at være med til at udvikle et eller andet, det gider de ikke helt. Det koster deres tid, og det sker bare ikke. Så fordi vi ikke er kommet over rampen med de der aktiviteter, og det ikke rigtig er sket, så er vi heller ikke nået dertil, hvor det med virksomhederne er blevet så aktuelt…" (D. Jensen 2015 Appendix 1, 15)

Here, Dennis does not find it alarming that STAY has not been able to engage more than one interested company besides Dataproces willing to engage in STAY's work. In his view and experience, businesses only participate in projects when they have a concrete agenda and vision to relate to. However, it is reasonable to question whether the STAY initiative has been communicated carefully and sufficiently enough to the region's businesses. One can argue that his attitude neglects the importance of the participation of the businesses in the project and also collides with the very purpose of STAY which is that the effort must be carried out through a focused partnership between the regions business community, educational institutions, and public sector. When Leif was asked what he thinks about STAY, he answered:

> "… Omkring STAY så er udfordringen, at hvis man ser på hele interessentgruppen, så er der både uddannelsesinstitutionerne, karrierecenteret og ehvervsfremmeaktiver, men vi mangler jo hele virksomhedsdelen. Der er masser af folk, der hjælper og servicerer; altså privatkonsulenter og andre aktører, der hjælper med at få mennesker i job. Vi mangler bare hele arbejdsgiverdelen. Dem, der vifter med flaget og siger, jeg har et job – hvor er de henne i STAY? De er der ikke! De er i hvert fald ikke med i organiseringen, de er ikke med i opstarten osv. Det er en mangel i STAY. Det er jo der hvor jeg ser hele initiativet bremses ved at man har masser ideer og tanker, og store bannere mig her og mig der… Jeg tror ikke, at STAY har gjort noget ud af at samarbejde med virksomhederne som sådan, det tror jeg ikke. Vi har jo masser af samarbejde med virksomhederne, jobcentrene har samarbejde med virksomhederne, A-kasserne har samarbejde med virksomhederne, universitetet har samarbejde med virksomhederne, UCN har…" (L. B. Jensen 2015 Appendix 5, 54-55)

Here, Leif argues that STAY's main challenge is that the businesses in the NDR are not represented in STAY other than Dataproces. In his opinion, STAY desperately needs the region's businesses to engage in the retention effort, as they are the ones who are able to create the jobs. Furthermore, he considers the lack of business involvement to be one of the key reasons to why many initiatives cannot be implemented in STAY. He specifically points out that STAY's organization has not done anything to establish cooperation with the region's business community, which he considers to be a big problem and thus a mismanagement of the project's key stakeholders. One of his examples of the lack of participation from the business community is the cancellation of the so-called STAY Match event in 2014. The idea was that businesses could present concrete challenges to well-educated students from AAU and UCN, give them the opportunity to act as consultants and solve these challenges, and thereby prove the advantages of hiring academics. (L. B. Jensen 2015 Appendix 5, 57) However, Leif argues that Aalborg Municipality and STAY did not support him in the effort to recruit the businesses. He explains that he felt he did not have anything concrete to "sell" the companies, because they simply could not see the benefits of participating in the event:

> "… Jeg havde forhørt mig rundt omkring, og spurgt i forbindelse med den her aktivitet, om det var noget, som virksomhederne ønskede at stille op til, og jeg havde en 4-5 løse fugle på taget. Så begyndte vi skal skulle til at planlægge arrangementet, og så hoppede de fra. "Vi har an-

sat" eller "vi behøver ikke", "vi har ikke tid" og hvad man ellers kan bruge af forskellige undskyldninger. Så gik jeg til Aalborg Kommune og sagde, at de også lige måtte hjælpe til her. Men der kom ikke rigtig nogen. Men alt blev sådan set bare smidt over på mig." (L. B. Jensen 2015 Appendix 5, 56-57)

When we asked Leif what STAY could have done to facilitate a better cooperation with the region's businesses, he answered:

"Så skulle de have fået erhvervsorganisationerne med til konferencerne og med i arbejdet og få dem til at trykke på. Det er jo dem, som virksomhederne er organiseret hos. Fx Dansk Service, Dansk Industri og hvad de ellers hedder. De havde ikke behøvet at gå ud til den enkelte virksomhed, men de skulle have haft de store organisationer med inde over, dem mangler de." (L. B. Jensen 2015 Appendix 5, 57)

According to Leif, the way to reach out to the region's business community is not to concentrate on approaching businesses independently with lose ideas that do not convince them that STAY is worth investing time in. On the contrary, he argues that STAY has to cooperate with the Danish business organizations such as The Confederation of Danish Industry (Dansk Industri) and Danish Service (Dansk Service) etc., which most of the businesses are members of, in order to convince them that engaging in a project as STAY is a good idea.

Kjartan supports Leif's view that STAY should facilitate the contact between businesses and the students. When asked about his stance to the fact that STAY is a voluntary effort, he stated:

"Man kunne jo godt lave en eller anden form for board med folk, som arbejder konsekvent med det, og som også kunne, når man er samlet, have noget mere styrke for at kunne slå igennem. Få sat nogle ressourcer af til det. få kanaliseret ressourcerne de rigtige steder hen, for det er jo altid et problem. Der er altid mange forskellige interesser, som trækker i forskellige retninger. Hvis der ikke er et ordentligt commitment, så er det svært at forene kræfterne. De (STAY) burde nok gå mere i retning af at etablere kontakten i stedet for. Når jeg kommer hjem fra et STAY arrangement, så gør jeg ikke ret meget mere, så er det jo færdigt for mig. Så venter jeg på, at de gør noget igen, medmindre jeg har noget håndgribeligt med hjem, man kan forholde sig til… En måde at få højtuddannet arbejdskraft til at komme ud i de små og mellemstore virksomheder i Nordjylland er ved at give dem en pose penge i hånde, hvor de så kan blive indfaset i virksomheden. Man skal give dem en chance for at gøre sig uundværlige. Jeg tror bare, at der er rigtig mange, som ikke får chancen. Det er jo fordi, der ikke er videndeling. Der tror jeg, at STAY kunne være et udmærket centrum for den videndeling, hvis de arrangerede nogle events, hvor højtuddannede og virksomheder begge var til stede. STAY er nødt til selv at sælge deres budskab, virksomhederne har for travlt med at sælge deres egne ting. Det vil aldrig kunne komme til at fungere, at det er en frivillig indsats, der skulle være nogle politikere, der samlede det op og bar det videre." (K. Jensen 2015 Appendix 4, 50-51)

First of all, Kjartan supports the criticism of STAY's organizational construction and believes that the construction of the organization as a voluntary effort has a negative effect on how STAY is able to manage its stakeholders. As Kjartan argues, STAY should focus on facilitating and establishing the contacts between the region's businesses and the students. He continues by emphasizing that it is important businesses are presented with concrete initiatives they can relate to and not just participate in empty conversations that do not lead to something. In his opinion, STAY could be an excellent center of knowledge-sharing in terms of arranging successful events where businesses and students are able to get familiar with each other. Furthermore, he emphasizes that STAY has to communicate their message and purpose a lot more effective, as the businesses are too busy with other things. Finally, he does not believe that the current construction of STAY's organization will ever succeed, as all the stakeholders are participating on a voluntary basis and are thereby not held accountable for their participation in STAY's work.

Concerning the subject of mismanaging the stakeholders, when the Mayor was asked to account for which businesses that actively participate in the STAY project, he answered:

> "... Det har aldrig været hensigten, at virksomhederne skulle spille en praktisk rolle i projektet. Vi har stor erfaring i at inddrage virksomhederne og måden er sjældent at involvere virksomheder i udviklingsarbejdet. Business Region North Denmark vil ikke lave et virksomhedssamarbejde omkring tiltrækning og fastholdelse af udenlandsk arbejdskraft. Denne indsats vil ske i EMBRACE projektet. Indsatsen gennemføres i to spor. Det ene er etablering og organisering af International House, som samler service og tilbud for internationale borgere under samme tag og det andet er et konkret aktivitetsspor, hvor det sikres, at der i perioden 2014-2015 udmøntes en række tiltag og aktiviteter målrettet rekrutterings- og fastholdelsesindsatsen i Nordjylland." (Kastrup-Larsen 2015 Appendix 8, 80-81)

Again, it is easy to get confused about the actual intentions of the STAY project, as the Mayor and thereby the top leader seems to have very different views than the rest of Aalborg Municipality. He claims that it has never been the intention that the business community should play an active role in STAY's organization. However, the exact opposite is written in Aalborg Municipality's STAY abstract:

> "… Aalborg Kommune ønsker at løfte indsatsen I et nyt fokuseret partnerskab imellem erhvervsliv, uddannelsesinstitutioner, og offentlige myndigheder… Til at sikre koordinering af initiativer, fremdrift i indsatsområderne, synlighed om STAY mv. er der etableret en arbejdsgruppe med deltagelse af alle interesserede parter…" (Kommune 2012, 3-4)

Here, it is specifically stated that the region's businesses are supposed to be an active part of STAY in terms of securing coordination, form initiatives, and progress in the project's focus areas. The very idea behind STAY is to involve the relevant stakeholders in all parts and activities of the project. Therefore, STAY arguably becomes quite obscure especially for the involved stakeholders, as the project itself and its organization are difficult to navigate in.

As we know from Hildebrandt and Brandi's Stakeholder management and communication theory, stakeholder management is one of the areas that require special attention in a change process. What appears to be some of the common features among the three change theories in this thesis are that it is imperative that all stakeholders understand why the change is necessary (Kotter's step 1, "create a sense of urgency" and Artke's pitfall 1, "inadequate understanding of the scale of the change") and which part they will be playing during and after the change process. For STAY's case, this has not been communicated well enough to the stakeholders. As we pointed out earlier, some of them do not even know whether STAY still exists, because they have not heard anything in a very long time. As Hildebrandt and Brandi state, good communication is the key to ensure that all stakeholders are working for the same goal. However, when there are several different directions from the Mayor, STAY's project leader, and Aalborg Municipality, it arguably becomes difficult and obscure to figure out how to relate to the organization. The confusing and conflicting communication and the mismanagement of the stakeholders has, without a doubt, been a problem for STAY in terms of utilizing the available resources in form of the stakeholders in the organization, who have been participating in the project on a voluntary basis with assumedly good intentions of improving the retention effort in the region. Furthermore, Hildebrandt and Brandi argue that one of the most vital assignments during a change process is to ensure that all stakeholders feel sufficiently informed about the changes and heard by the management. Thus, the management can set the agenda towards the stakeholders in a way that does not question what the management wants with the changes and how they all, in cooperation, can reach the formulated vision and goals. When asked about which concrete initiatives STAY has launched, Inger Askehave answered:

> ”Jeg må ærligt indrømme, at jeg ikke kan sige hvad det er for nogle initiativer, som der er blevet iværksat direkte som et resultat af det her…" (Askehave 2015 Appendix 6, 61)

Even STAY's Project Manager, Dennis, admits that STAY has not yet produced any concrete initiatives. Again, he explains the lack of activities with STAY's organizational construction, which is based on a voluntary basis:

> ”… De målsætninger og aktiviteter er lagt op til hver enkelte arbejdsgruppe, og så har partnerskabet vist sig ikke endnu at være stærkt nok til det her, og det er også det, som vi talte om i telefonen. Partnerskabet er til en vis grad lykkedes, og der er også et vis kendskab til hinanden og

alt det her. Aktørerne kender hinanden bedre, end de nogensinde har gjort, men hver gang der skal laves konkrete aktiviteter, så sker der ikke rigtig noget…" (D. Jensen 2015 Appendix 1, 8)

This is supported by the international students from our focus group interview. When we asked them whether they knew any initiatives from STAY or EMBRACE, they concurrently answered:

"… no!" (Sivaka, et al. 2015 Appendix 9, 86-87)

With regard to STAY and the statements from the stakeholders, it is impossible to argue that they have been sufficiently informed. Naturally, this has undoubtedly affected the quality of the organization's work thus far, as no concrete initiatives worth mentioning has been established. This leads us to the last theme which is "lack of vision".

According to Kotter, one of the most important aspects of a change process is to shape a vision to help steer the change effort and develop strategic initiatives to achieve that vision. When examining the written material about the STAY project and the stakeholder interviews it is clear that there is confusion about the objectives and the actual vision of STAY. In his theory about why changes often fail, Axel Artke argues that a clear vision about where the organization is going is vital for any change process, and if the stakeholders who are participating in the change are not capable of clearly explaining and describing the vision, it is often a sign that the vision is lacking. When scrutinizing STAY's vision in the STAY Masterplan, it is arguably too long. What characterizes a good vision is that it should describe what you do, be short and simple, and easy to explain to outsiders. (Spearmon 2013) It is easy to get confused about what STAY actually does when reading the vision. In fact, it is not until the end that one realizes what STAY is actually about. Secondly, the vision is no less than 20 lines, which is arguably 6-7 times more than what it should be and that makes it harder to fully comprehend. When speaking about the objectives and the vision for STAY, the Owner and CEO of Dataproces, Kjartan, stated:

"… Jeg synes også, målsætningen er god om at få flere til at blive i regionen, men om de har den rigtige strategi til at nå deres mål sætning, og komme ud og nå de aktører. Det kan jeg ikke helt vurdere." (K. Jensen 2015 Appendix 4, 50)

Kjartan knows what the overall objective with STAY is, however he doubts whether the strategy in terms of reaching it is the right one and also make the stakeholders cooperate. When we asked Leif about his view on STAY's vision and objectives, he answered:

"Det har jeg ingen anelse om, jeg ved ikke engang hvilke mål der er." (L. B. Jensen 2015 Appendix 5, 55)

He is not even familiar with what objectives STAY has. When Birgitte Bisgaard Nielsen from AAU spoke about STAY's vision and objectives, she heavily criticized the current vision:

> "… Hvis man ikke kan forklare det i løbet af 3 bullet points, så er det bare ikke godt nok. Så er man ikke skarp nok på, hvad det er, man vil. Hvis du tænker på, hvad der kan få Aalborg Universitet til at gå ind i et tættere samarbejde med kommunen, så skal det være så stort og så håndgribeligt, og et eller andet sted skabt ud af en nødvendighed. Der har virkelig været et behov, hvor vi ikke selv har kunnet løse problematikken i forhold til de internationale studerende… jeg kan ikke sige, hvad der er gået galt i STAY, men et eller andet er der i hvert fald gået galt. Jeg tror måske, det har været for tænkt eller for… Jeg kan bare sige, at hvis det er de der kaffemøder vi har, så vil jeg ikke bruge min tid på det. Så vil jeg hellere gå ud og finde et job til en udenlandsk studerende, det er der meget mere værdi i. Vi skal sidde ved det samme bord for at blive enige om, hvor vi skal hen. Det bliver bare meget DJØF agtigt, meget snak, meget fine ord, meget lange sætninger, og det bliver ikke én målsætning. Vi skærer det ikke ned, vi koger det ikke ned. I virkeligheden burde vi skrive et speciale sammen og så bare gå efter konklusionen. Den proces mangler vi. Derfor kunne det også være fedt at få erhvervslivet ind til at sige "hold nu kæft"." (Nielsen 2015 Appendix 7, 76-77)

She supports the fact that STAY's current vision is too long and complicated. Furthermore, as Kotter and Hildebrandt and Brandi argue in their change theories, organizations must craft and use a significant opportunity as a means for exciting people to sign up to change their organization. For example, when STAY's organization faces this change process it is a necessity that it presents a concrete problem to solve or challenges to overcome to its stakeholders. According to Birgitte, this has not been the case and therefore the organization has a hard time convincing the employees to engage in the change process. Creating this sense of urgency for change is extremely important, and one of the biggest pitfalls for STAY is not being capable of making the stakeholders feel that the change is absolutely necessary. When the change is not perceived to be important from all stakeholders in the organization, the chances of achieving successful change are arguably very poor. Birgitte argues that STAY might have been too theoretical instead of taking concrete action towards the initiatives that have been crafted among the stakeholders. Again, she argues that the STAY meetings end up in empty talk with a lot of fine words and long sentences. In her opinion, it needs to be boiled down to something more concrete that is easier to work with for the stakeholders to work for the same goal. In connection to this, she also agrees that the solution could be to engage the business community a lot more, as businesses often have a more hands on approach with less talk and more action. As Kotter argues in his third step, a typical pitfall is when an organization thinks too theoretical and neglects to focus on how it is possible to actually realize its vision and initiatives. In addition, STAY's Project Manager has to adjust the management of the stakeholders by matching the expectations around the vision. In this way, communication is kept open and honest, and the stakeholders feel involved and informed about the change process. This has clearly not been the case for STAY, since almost all stakeholders have stated that they have not been sufficiently informed about anything in STAY. As Artke argues in his second pitfall to why changes often fail, a clear vision of where the organization is going is essential. He adds that changes do not succeed out of luck or because of fate but out of a common vision. When STAY's stakeholders are not capable of explicitly describing and communicating the vision, and if the vision does not contain an encouraging energy of a bright future, it is often a sign that the vision is really missing.

6.1.3 Summary

In terms of STAY's organization, the international area in STAYwas renamed to EMBRACE under leadership of Lasse Frimand Jensen. This was due to the fact that some stakeholders found the area too disturbing to work with in spite of its significant importance for the region. According to Lasse, Dennis and the Mayor, STAY was meant as an academic and strategically funded project, whereas the STAY Masterplan certainly clarifies the project of also having an executive dimension in form of the concrete initiatives the stakeholders are gathered to produce and implement. It is clear that the confusion about STAY's organizational construction and purpose has been a barrier in order to move forward and reach the objective of retaining more international students in the region. Likewise, cooperation between the stakeholders has proved to be extremely difficult, since many stakeholder representatives often have been participating in important meetings with no mandates to make the necessary decisions towards concrete retention improving initiatives. Therefore, the meetings have been characterized by empty talk and coffee drinking, as Birgitte Bisgaard Nielsen stated. In fact, Aalborg University has found the STAY project so unserious that they are now only participating in the meetings out of duty and not because they believe it is possible to achieve actual results. Instead, they have chosen to focus on the Copenhagen-based Youth Goodwill Ambassadors project. In addition, the lack of participation and engagement in STAY from the North Denmark Region is a significant problem, since STAY is meant to be a regional project that includes all the NDR's municipalities and not just Aalborg. The North Denmark Region is aware of the STAY project, as Birgitte invited them to participate in the project two years ago. However, the region's representatives where at no liberty of making decisions on behalf of the North Denmark Region, and the contact between them unfortunately died. According to the stakeholders, the lack of the North Denmark Region's participation has undoubtedly prevented STAY in spreading to the entire region. Also, there is a broad unity among the stakeholders that STAY desperately needs a Project Manager with leadership experience, especially due to the fact that the organization is based on a "commitment" and thereby a voluntary effort from all the stakeholders. The largest disadvantage with this construction is the lack of human resources in form of time invested in the project. In relation to this, it is necessary that more money is invested to secure the key stakeholder representatives have STAY incorporated in their job descriptions so that concrete initiatives improving the retention effort in the region can be implemented. Another big challenge for STAY has been the great uncertainty among the stakeholders regarding the project's objectives. In fact, some of them are not even familiar with them, and the Mayor of Aalborg, Thomas Kastrup-Larsen, claimed that the project does not even have objectives in terms of retaining more international students, which is not true according to the STAY Masterplan. Even if STAY has managed to involve relevant and competent stakeholders in the project, it is still argued that the most important stakeholder of all, the region's business community, is not sufficiently represented. Again, the Mayor, STAY, and the stakeholders share very different views on this issue. However, it is certain that the majority believe that the engagement of the business community is a key prerequisite for STAY in order to reach its objective of retaining more international talents. The problem is that the region's businesses have a hard time comprehending what STAY is and what its purposes are, since the communication of the visions almost has been nonexistent. What is also interesting is that none of the stakeholders can mention examples of any concrete initiatives that STAY has implemented. In general, the stakeholders believe that the information level from STAY has been extremely unsatisfying, since some of them do not even know whether STAY is still active. Arguably, one of the biggest problems and maybe even the root to most of the problems is that STAY's formulated vision and objectives are too complicated to comprehend. In addition to this, it is as if STAY has not managed to convince its stakeholders that an organizational change is necessary to achieve the objective of improving the current retention effort in the region. Finally, there is disunity among the stakeholders whether STAY should be an executive branch or just be strategically and academically funded. However, the intentions written in the STAY Masterplan argue that the purpose of STAY is to facilitate cooperation between relevant stakeholders about forming concrete initiatives that in the end will improve the region's retention effort. Ultimately, there is a definitely a mismatch between what STAY is supposed to do and what is actually being done.

6.2 Analyzing the Individual Level

After identifying the organizational challenges inside STAY's organization, we found that STAY must undergo an organizational change process in order to be able to change and improve the current effort of retaining international students in the NDR. This change process is necessary for

STAY to undergo in order to comply with the actual needs of the region's international students. Therefore, it is now the time to identify the needs of the international students and to analyze whether the STAY initiative complies with those needs.

In our survey, we asked the international students whether they wish to stay in the NDR after they graduate. The international students had the option of either answering, "Yes" or "No". 59 % of the international students answered "No", while 41 % answered "Yes". The numbers arguably speak for themselves. More than half of the respondents want to leave Aalborg or the NDR after graduation, which emphasizes the importance and relevance of the thesis. After the international students had indicated their standpoint by either clicking "Yes" or "No", they were presented to a number of statements, which represented different reasons that we believe might affect international students' decision on whether to stay or to leave. Since this thesis is seeking to find the answers to how the current effort of retaining international students in the NDR can be improved, we will, in this analysis, only be focusing on those who answered "No" to stay in the region. By analyzing the reasons to why they want to leave after graduation stated in the survey, in the stakeholder interviews, and in the focus group interview, we believe it is possible to identify the needs of the international students and thereby which initiatives that must be implemented by STAY in order to comply with those needs.

When it comes to the statements in the survey, which the international students have selected as reasons to why they want to leave the NDR after graduation, 5 of the 11 options especially stand out with a relatively high score compared to the remaining options:

1. 45 % of the respondents agree with the following statement:
"I consider my job opportunities to be bad in Aalborg and the region compared to my home country or other countries"

2. 36 % of the respondents agree with the following statement:
"I don't feel there is a general great interest in international students staying in Aalborg after graduation"

3. 34 % of the respondents agree with the following statement:
"It's hard to get integrated as an international living in Aalborg"

4. 30 % of the respondents agree with the following statement:

"I don't think there are enough attractive cultural and social opportunities in Aalborg and the region"

5. 23 % of the respondents agree with the following statement:
"I believe that Aalborg in general is bad at making internationals feel welcome"

These statements from the survey represent 5 different challenges which we consider relevant and important to scrutinize further. We believe that these are the main challenges, since they are consistent with the challenges mentioned in the stakeholder interviews and in the focus group interview.

The 5 outlined challenges can be divided into 2 themes:

- The challenges regarding *integration* in the NDR.
- The challenges regarding the *accessibility* to the labor market in the NDR.

These 2 themes consist of the following subtopics which will now be analyzed thematically:

Integration:

- Culture in a Danish context
- Stigmatization on a general level
- Language

Accessibility:

- Language
- Network
- Stigmatization on an individual level
- Opportunities

6.2.1 Integration

The first part of the analysis which focuses on integration will be conducted on meso level; meaning that we mostly focus on the societal aspects that affect the integration process rather than the individual aspects. Instead, the micro level and the individual aspects will be dealt with in "accessibility". Primarily, Elias and Scotson's theory "The Established and the Outsiders" will be used in this part to account for how the Danish society and culture, the language, and stigmatization on an overall level can affect the integration process. Honneth's theory of recognition will also be employed.

Culture in a Danish Context

As accounted for in section 2.3 "The Danish Society & Media- and Political Landscape", there has been an increase in the immigration to Denmark during the past 50 years. Compared to other countries, Denmark is small and has always been a very homogenous society. The NDR has by expert, Knud Søndergaard, been appointed to be the most homogenous region in Denmark. He argues that due to the homogeneity, people from the NDR have always been very skeptical and hesitant by nature especially when it comes to people with a different background. Therefore, one can argue that it can be more difficult for immigrants to be integrated in this region. Also, the homogenous population can find it hard to welcome new people with a different background into their society. As accounted for in section 2.3.1 "The North Denmark Region", the NDR brands itself with the slogan *"Northern Denmark – a globalized and competitive region".* The North Denmark Region's organization has an international strategy that sets the frame for the region's international involvement. It I stated that the strategy must be an integrated part of the region's general activities and used actively in the regional, political work in terms of securing development and growth in North Denmark. According to Project Manager for STAY, Dennis Jensen, this strategy has not yet proved to be successful. He stated:

> "Jeg kan godt blive bedrøvet og forundret over, at vi langt hen ad vejen tror, at Aalborg er en international by, og i erhvervsplanen var der jo nærmest international skrevet i titlen. Men det er egentlig slet ikke den opfattelse jeg har, når jeg er rundt forskellige steder i kommunen. Det er lidt paradoksalt. Engelsk kundskaberne er egentlig ret gode, men der er bare en tilbageholdenhed i kulturen." (D. Jensen 2015 Appendix 1, 19)

Dennis does not believe that the region can be characterized as being international. He believes that there is some kind of reticence in the culture and among the people from the NDR. International Coordinator at UCN, Mette Østergaard Samuelsen, claimed that the international students often tell her that they find it difficult to get to know people in the NDR. She stated:

> "Vores internationale siger, at de ikke kender nogen danskere, og det er svært at lære danskerne at kende." (Samuelsen 2015 Appendix 3, 42)

Mette's view was confirmed in the focus group interview with the 4 international students from UCN:

> ”They are very closed. They prefer to stay all together.” (Sivaka, et al. 2015 Appendix 9, 91)

Academic Officer at AAU, Birgitte Bisgaard Nielsen, agreed that people in the NDR are very self-contained. She stated:

> ”Som Nordjyder er vi jo ikke helt vildt gode til at tage folk ind, vi er flinke indtil kl. 16, men så tager vi hjem, og det er der, hvor de har allermest brug for, at man er der.” (Nielsen 2015 Appendix 7, 74)

As accounted for in section 2.3.1, “The North Denmark Region”, Kurt Søndergaard explains the reasons why especially people from the NDR tend to be reserved and sometimes unfriendly towards people from other cultures by arguing that people from this region traditionally like things the way they always have been. Additionally, he argues that people from this region have a general comfort with a homogenous society where most people are alike and not stand out too much in terms of physical appearance, cultural mindset, religion, sexuality etc. As argued in section 2.3, “The Danish Society & Media- and Political Landscape”, there is sometimes a rather negative discourse and attitude in the NDR when it comes to immigrants. The international students in the focus group interview have experienced something similiar to what Kurt Søndergaard argues. When we asked them how satisfied they are with studying and living in the NDR, they stated:

> ”All the Danes that I have met are kind of closed and they prefer to stay together and not to talk to internationals… we can be 2 internationals and 4 Danish people in one group, and then the 4 Danish people will speak among each other in Danish, and we cannot understand. They don't try to understand us or include us, they think we are stupid and that they can do everything better because they are from here studying on their own language. So for them, we are not here.” (Sivaka, et al. 2015 Appendix 9, 90)

The Danish students and the international students are studying on equal educational levels. However, according to the international students, the Danish students still consider themselves better and smarter than the international even if their assertions may be untenable. As the interview continued, the international students emphasized that the example is representative for their general view of people in the NDR. Their overall perception of people in the NDR is that they are not very accommodating towards people with different backgrounds.

According to Elias and Scotson, the reserved and unfriendly behavior that international students believe that people from the NDR have towards foreigners can be explained by an “us” and “them” perception. The “us” and “them” perception is often seen from the “established” group's point of view, where this group is praising and promoting themselves, while condemning and discriminating the others. According to Elias and Scotson's theory, one could argue that it is possible to divide the Danish students and the international students into "established" and "outsiders" groups. In this case, the international students can be perceived as the "outsiders" and the people from the NDR can be seen as the "established". One of the reasons why they can be categorized as "outsiders" is because they are newcomers and thereby a minority just as in Elias and Scotson's theory. However, in Winston Parva, the only difference between the "established" and the "outsiders" is how long they have lived in the city. In our case, the international students are newcomers who possess another nationality, another language, another culture, and sometimes also another race, appearance, and religion compared to the majority of the ethnic Danes. Arguably, these differences segregate them even more from the general population. In the theory, the members of the established group looked upon themselves as "better" people and treated all newcomers as outsiders and generally stigmatized them as people of lesser human worth. Some of the international students who commented on the survey have experienced something similar. In the survey's last question, the international students who said "no" to whether they want to stay in the region were asked why they want to leave the NDR after they graduate. Some of them elaborated their stance by commenting;

> "I feel like I am not very well socially accepted among the population in the North Denmark Region." (Survey 2015 Appendix 13)

> "I am only staying here because my boyfriend has his business and his kids here. Otherwise I would run away from Aalborg as fast as I can. Internationals are very much unwelcome, No job opportunities after graduation, and Danish society has no interest in accepting international experience. P.s. probably situation is better in Copenhagen, however, not in North Denmark." (Survey 2015 Appendix 13)

> "Despite the rather unfriendly discourses (in relation to foreigners), I still would like to stay here since I have personal connections and like the cleanliness and outdoor nature. Hopefully, the understanding of foreigners will change with time and our contribution to the Danish society will be acknowledged." (Survey 2015 Appendix 13)

According to the international students, they believe that foreigners are very unwelcome in the NDR, and they are struggling in order to be socially accepted and recognized by the people they meet. Honneth claims that to be able to relate to oneself in a certain way, it necessarily requires recognition from other people. This means that one's relationship and attitude towards oneself depends on other people's attitude toward oneself. In this case, the international students do not feel recognized by the general population in the NDR, and they do not feel that they are granted the same status and treatment as every other person. According to Honneth, an individual's need to be recognized as a member of society is connected with his or her self-respect. Therefore, self-respect is a matter of legal recognition and legal equivalence with other members of society. For that reason, the situations described in the statements by the international students can affect their self-respect, and as a consequence, they may chose to move to another region or country where they are more recognized, their self-respect is not violated, and the chances for being integrated are better.

Since the international students are struggling to be recognized and included in the NDR, it can be discussed whether STAY's only initiative on the international area so far is a good idea. As accounted for in section 2.2.2, "STAY Focus Areas 2014-2017, Number 4 – The International Potential", EMBRACE and thereby STAY is planning to establish an International House in Aalborg, which will be a physical location for the internationals in the region. The idea is that the International House will be a so-called "one-stop-shop" where internationals can handle all thinkable practicalities. However, the house is also meant to act as a social epicenter for internationals living in the region. The Project Manager at EMBRACE, Lasse Frimand Jensen, stated:

> "På den måde kan vi også videreudvikle de her tilbud, for der sker jo rigtig mange ting for internationale i byen. Der er International Tuesday og International Wednesday i Studenterhuset og biblioteket har alle mulige arrangementer og I-Life og AIESEC har rigtig mange arrangementer. Der er sindssygt mange tilbud, men det er en jungle at finde hoved og hale i hvad der sker. Det med at man kan samle det hele ét sted gør det meget federe for de internationale." (L. F. Jensen 2015 Appendix 2, 25)

His assistant, Rikke Skak Harboe, continued by stating:

> "Det er meningen at det skal være internationalt mindede folk der kommer. Alle er velkomne men det bliver sådan et sted, hvor internationale har deres fokus. Vi vil gerne have at netop foreningslivet gør at alle dem som gerne vil internationale kommer med i det." (L. F. Jensen 2015 Appendix 2, 25-26)

In the interview with Mette, she agreed that the plan to establish an International House is a good idea. She stated:

> "Jeg synes jo, at der skal være arrangementer og aktiviteter derinde for de internationale, vi presser i hvert fald på for, at det skal blive et aktivt hus. Så man kommer til at stå stærkere udadtil, som om man vil de internationale." (Samuelsen 2015 Appendix 3, 43)

Both Lasse and Mette, who are frontrunners for the international area in STAY, believe that the International House is a good idea. Lasse believes that gathering all the offers and activities for internationals in one place makes it far more attractive for them to live in the NDR. The Mayor of Aalborg, Thomas Kastrup-Larsen, agrees with Lasse and Mette. He believes that gathering all the offers and activities for the internationals in one place will enhance not only the internationals' but also the people of North Denmark's enjoyment of life. He stated:

> ”Arbejdet med at fastholde flere internationale studerende efter endt uddannelse er vigtigt. Opgaven er placeret hos Embrace-sekretariatet, der arbejder på at samle og organisere alle de mange forskellige forenings- og fritidstilbud til internationale studerende, som eksisterer i Nordjylland. (…) Synligheden i de tilbud, vores mange foreninger har, er altafgørende for, at vores internationale borgere tager imod de mange forskellige tilbud, som kan give mere livsglæde for både de internationale, men også de lokale borgere." (Kastrup-Larsen 2015 Appendix 8, 84)

Lasse, Mette, and the Mayor might be right in their assumption and the International House will possibly be well received by the internationals in the region. It will arguably become a success on the short run, but in the long run, it is debatable whether the house will contribute positively to the integration of internationals living in the entire region. Arguably, there is a risk that the initiative will imply that they will just be even more excluded instead of included in the society. In the International House, the internationals will meet people who are like-minded; meaning that it will be other internationals with the same mindset that they are excluded and belong to an "outsider" group in the society. Also, by giving international students a house that should work as a social epicenter may not work in the long run, since it may create an even greater distance between the "established" and the "outsiders". By giving the international students their own place may slow down the integration process, because the house risks becoming an international subculture. Owner and CEO of Dataproces, Kjartan Jensen, supports this. When we asked him to share his thoughts about the plans of the International House in Aalborg, he stated:

> ”Jeg er ikke sikker på, det vil være særlig hensigtsmæssigt og positivt i længden i forhold til integration, fordi det ville være en bestemt type, der kom i sådan et hus. Det vil være alle dem, der har dem, der har de behov, og så ville de møde ligesindede i stedet for at blive en del af samfundet." (K. Jensen 2015 Appendix 4, 52)

Here, Kjartan believes that the house will have a segregating affect instead of an integrating affect in which he could be right. In the house, the internationals do not need to struggle in order to be accepted and gain recognition. Since everybody may be equal and in the same boat, the internationals may find it easier just to stick together instead of making an effort to be integrated and break out of the "outsider" group. Also, they do not need to learn or practice their Danish language skills, since it will not be necessary when everyone around them is speaking English. Social relationships might also be easier to obtain in the house since "outsider" groups tend to stick together. Lasse's assistant, Rikke, argues that Danes who have an interest in international relations are very welcome in the house. However, it can be questioned how many Danes will be regular visitors in the house especially when taking the context of the general mindsets in the NDR into account. Since experts claim that the majority of the people living in the NDR have a general comfort with a homogenous society, the chance that Danes will be hanging out in the house along with the internationals might not be that high. Mette also advocates for the International House, and she also believes that the house should host events and activities for the region's internationals. Furthermore, she attaches importance to the fact that the establishment of an International House will signal that the region has an interest in the internationals, which, according to her, will make the public image of the region much better. So, for Mette, the establishment of the house is not just about doing something good for the internationals but also about improving the region's image. Therefore, based on that statement, it can be questioned whether establishing an International House is about symbolic value or real value. The Mayor believes that the international house will enhance not only the internationals' but also the Danes' enjoyment of life. As mentioned earlier, the house will most likely enhance the internationals' enjoyment of life on the short run, but as the integration in the NDR gets harder their enjoyment of life will most likely decrease. It is a bit unclear what the Mayor means, when he argues that the International House will also enhance the Danes' enjoyment of life. Since the majority of the Danes in the NDR will most likely not be uses of the house, taking the regional context into account, it could be argued people in the NDR will be satisfied with the house, since the internationals will then be gathered collectively in one place. That might, to some extent, make people in the NDR able to maintain the homogenous society that many tend to prefer.

One could argue that giving the region's internationals an International House is to do them a great disservice. The idea behind the International House is really good and arguably with good intentions. Lasse argues that they got the idea from Copenhagen, where there is an International House as well. The International House in Copenhagen is a great success, which has inspired STAY and EMBRACE. However, it does not seems like they are aware of the fact that Copenhagen is arguably more multicultural and heterogeneous in the demography, which means that people might be more open-minded than in the NDR. For that reason, making the house a meeting point for social intercourse may not have consequences such as creating subcultures, slow down the integration process etc. to the same extents as it will have in the NDR. For that reason, it might be preferable just to make the house a "one-stop-shop" and let the house handle administrative tasks. In this way, the social activities will still be spread and the internationals will to a greater extent navigate in the whole region and interact with more native Danes than if the house becomes a social epicenter for internationals.

Stigmatization on a General Level

Another factor which international students believe hinder them in order to get integrated in the NDR is the high level of stigmatization towards foreigners. Many of the survey's respondents especially paid attention to stigmatization when commenting on the last question. Some of them stated:

> "I don't want to stay here because of high level of discrimination towards immigrants." (Survey 2015 Appendix 13)

> "I believe the society in Copenhagen is way more open-minded towards foreigners and the labor market provides more opportunities for non-Danes, so basically my only option of staying in Denmark would be to move there, otherwise I would have to seek a career elsewhere. Staying in Aalborg on the other hand would require me to be absolutely perfect in Danish and even then I will probably not be able to compete with Danish job applicants due to stereotypes, prejudice and even racism. Although the general attitude towards me has been normal, I feel like I am not very well socially accepted among the population in North Denmark. I have had a case where I have been verbally abused, threatened and asked to leave social events due to my foreign background and inability to speak fluent Danish. I have also been a subject to what some call 'silent-racism' where people do not necessarily express their intolerance actively, but make sure you feel like you do not belong and that you are unwelcome. Since those people were all more or less my age that means they could be my future colleagues if I decided to stay here and with the tolerance level they presented I do not see how it would be a normal human working environment for either of us. I understand very well that one should not draw general conclusions for an entire region based on the behavior of a limited number of individuals, but incidents like the ones described above are very offensive and difficult to look past." (Survey 2015 Appendix 13)

The person behind the second statement believes that a city as Copenhagen is way more open-minded towards foreigners. The person also believes that he or she will not be able to compete with Danish job applicants due to stereotypes, prejudice and even racism. The person does not feel accepted among the population in the NDR and different situations have implied that the person feels like he or she feels unwelcome and as if he or she does not belong in the region. The person from the survey is not the only one feeling unwelcome in Denmark. As accounted for in section 2.3, "The Danish Society & Media- and Political Landscape", numbers from Worktrotter, a meeting place for 6000 expats living and working in Denmark show that 46 % do not feel welcome in Denmark in general. Our own survey shows that 23 % believe that the NDR in general is bad at making internationals feel welcome. As accounted for in section 2.3", "The Danish Society & Media- and Political Landscape", Mehmet Ümit Necef has conducted research on the conditions of immigrants in Denmark. He concludes that Denmark is a somewhat hostile, racist, and discriminating country with very little tolerance towards immigrants. As mentioned before, the rather negative discourse and attitude in Denmark towards immigrants is traditionally worse in the NDR compared to the Capital Region of Denmark where the level of internationalization and diversity in the demography is arguably much higher.

Lasse agreed that the discourse towards foreigners is rather negative. He stated:

> "Grunden til det så ikke skulle være særlig attraktivt at blive her er fordi vi måske nogle gange kan være lidt for fremmedfjendske i tonen især i medierne… I skulle prøve at komme med ind i byrådssalen, når DF og nogle af de andre er der. Der er bare en drejning, som gør det acceptabelt at være super kritisk overfor folk med anden etnisk baggrund. Det er jo nærmest blevet mainstream i dansk politik at sige noget negativt om udlændinge, så det tror jeg helt klart er den største udfordring. Det er også grunden til, at dem der er her flytter herfra. Så mindsettet og en anden politisk bølge… jeg tror bare, det er befolkningens tankegang, som skal ændres." (L. F. Jensen 2015 Appendix 2, 33)

As accounted for in section 2.3, "The Danish Society & Media- and Political Landscape", the subjects of immigration, integration, and foreign workers are often debated in the Danish media with a rather negative discourse. The immigration debate is not only discussed in the media but also between several politicians and in the Danish population. These days, the immigration debate ranks very high on the political agenda, and in several election campaigns up to the parliamentary and municipal elections the debate on immigration and integration has been dominant. One can argue that the negative discourse towards immigrants may pose a negative stigmatization of immigrants into peoples' mind, especially in the NDR.

According to Elias and Scotson, the prejudices, stereotypes and stigmatization that the "established" hold against the "outsiders" while praising and promoting themselves has both an integrating and a segregating effect. An integrating effect, since it contributes to the development of group charisma in the "established" group and a segregating effect in the "outsider" group, since it contributes to the development of collective shame and reduces the chances for being successfully integrated in the society. One could argue that the integrating effect also takes place within the "outsiders"; meaning that people within the "outsider" group have the exclusion of society in common, which bind them together and contributes to some kind of cohesiveness among them. This can arguably be viewed as another argument to why the International House might not be a good idea in the long run, since the distance between "us" and "them" may become even bigger.

Language

When the international students are navigating in the NDR they arguably blend into society. However, as soon as they start to speak English instead of Danish, native Danes will arguably meet them with prejudices. It is not possible to assess by their appearance whether they are studying at the university, or if they are foreign workers, to whom there is also, to a certain degree, held different prejudices against. In this case, their lack of Danish language proficiency is a narrative symbol on them belonging to an "outsider" group.

When we asked the respondents in the survey whether they attend a Danish language course on a weekly basis 59 % of them answered "no". When asking them how well they consider their Danish language proficiency skills 61 % answered that they are bad or extremely bad at speaking and understanding Danish. When asking the 4 international students in our focus group interview thether they attend Danish language courses, all of them answered that they had tried but it did not work out:

> "They go through it very fast, and if you don't attend one lesson it is difficult to understand what they are talking about in the next class. Because of the studies I don't really have the time. I find it hard to manage school and job and language class at the same time." (Sivaka, et al. 2015 Appendix 9, 88)

This statement from the international students bear witness that the scheduling of the region's language courses may need to be rearranged in order to make the offer more attractive and flexible. Inger Askehave believes that the most important factor in terms of being integrated in the NDR is to be capable of speaking and understanding the Danish language. She stated:

> "Jeg vil sige, det vigtigste er de kan dansk. Det er man nødt til. Vores region er simpelthen ikke international nok til at kunne kapere det, så det er noget af det, som vi punker dem meget for. Vigtigheden af at kunne dansk, hvis man ønsker at blive efterfølgende. (…) Det vil også gøre det nemmere for dem at begå sig, for vi ser udenlandske studerende som har svært ved at klikke med danske studerende fra andre linjer og i det hele taget at få det fodfæste, og der tror jeg, at sproget kunne bane vejen for meget af det." (Askehave 2015 Appendix 6, 65-66)

Therefore, in order to engage in social interaction on an equal footing with the "established" it is important to learn the Danish language. One can argue that by learning the language it is possible for the international students to move themselves from being an "outsider" to being an "established". If they do not choose to learn the Danish language they will be stuck in the "outsider" group and the general stigmatization towards immigrants might follow them. Furthermore, they may risk being continuously mistaken with other types of immigrants which may make it difficult for them to be included. For that reason, not making their best effort to learn the Danish language will most likely affect their integration process negatively and cause them to search for subcultures where communication on an equal footing will be possible for them.

Even if they need to make an effort to learn the Danish language and thus improve their integration process, one could argue that the society also needs to recognize their situation – at least to some extent. According to the 4 international students in the focus group interview, they keep receiving important documents in Danish. They stated:

> ”For example, when you call a doctor, you don't understand what she is saying. When we get bills, we don't understand them. We get so many papers and everything is written in Danish even from the doctor and she knows that I am not from Denmark. So when I got it I just threw it out, because I did not know what was written in there. So what should I do? Even the information that our water is being closed is in Danish, so all of the sudden we just had no water, and nobody told us why." (Sivaka, et al. 2015 Appendix 9, 91)

They have even experienced that their water supply was closed, as they did not understand the Danish documents that was send to them. In addition, they also receive important documents from the Doctor written in Danish. After the interview, we got a hold of a document that one of the students received from her Doctor. (document 2015 Appendix 11) The document is written in Danish and contains very important information. It says that it has been notified, that the student did not turn up at an examination at the Nuclear Medicine Department at Aalborg University Hospital. In the document, it is written that if she wishes to make a new appointment she will have to call a number within three working days. If she does not do that they will close her case. This example shows that the international student's case at the hospital risks to be closed if she does not react on the letter, which is arguably a very serious matter. By sending the students important documents in Danish the society does not recognize them and their situation, which, according to Honneth, can have a hampering effect on the integration process. He believes that an individual's need to be recognized, as a member of the society, is connected with his or her self-respect and that the person's self-respect can be violated if the person does not view oneself as legitimated to the same status and treatment as every other person. Worst case, the violated self-respect can cause them to lose heart in order to get well-integrated.

6.2.2 Accessibility

The second part of the analysis will be conducted on micro level; meaning that the focus will be on how personal network, language proficiency, and stigmatization on an individual level can affect the international students' access to the labor market in the NDR. Since this part of the analysis will be conducted on the micro level, Bourdieu's different forms of capital will come into play in order to describe how a person's access to the labor market can depend on the person's amount of capital. Additionally, Honneth's theory of recognition will be used to account for how the lack of access can be experienced as lack of recognition by the international students.

Language

According to the international students, the biggest challenge they face is the accessibility to the region's labor market. The collected data shows that there are different reasons to why this can be a challenge. The language not only plays a big role in order to break out of the "outsider" group and improve one's integration in the region, but also in order to get access to the region's labor market. All the stakeholders in STAY agree that language is one of the most important factors in order to become a part of the region's labor market. For instance Inger stated:

> "… hvis man vil være sikker på at få det første job her, så er det ikke nok at være god til dit fag og at du kan tale engelsk, men det kræver, at du har vilje til at lære dansk. Det er et vilkår at du kan begå dig i en dansk virksomhed." (Askehave 2015 Appendix 6, 66)

Furthermore, Birgitte stated:

> "De internationale, som jeg har med at gøre, der prædiker jeg "tag nu det dansk kursus". Hvis I vil have et job, så er det ved at kunne tale dansk. Selv om de får det at vide hele tiden, så tror jeg, der går meget længe, før det går op for dem, at de rent faktisk er sådan det er, og så er det ved at være for sent." (Nielsen 2015 Appendix 7, 74)

A lot of the students are studying at UCN or AAU for several years to get an education. After graduation, the international students have arguably achieved cultural capital consisting of their education and diploma. Bourdieu refers to cultural capital as the ways in which people would use cultural knowledge to undergird their place in the hierarchy. Cultural capital encompasses such things as educational credentials, technique expertise, general knowledge, verbal abilities, and artistic sensibilities.

Bourdieu pays attention to the fact that the forms of capital can be exchanged or translated into one another; meaning that conversion is often possible. This means that cultural capital, in form of for instance an education, enables the international students to reach economic capital. However, the cultural capital they have achieved through the completed education can be difficult to turn into economic capital, since certain forms of cultural capital are valued over others and can help or hinder one's social mobility just as much as income or wealth. In this case, many Danish employers value the ability to speak Danish as the most important cultural capital to be considered for a job. However, as mentioned earlier, 52 % of the respondents in the survey do not attend a Danish language course on a weekly basis. Also, 61 % of the respondents consider themselves to be bad or extremely bad at speaking and understanding Danish. This means that a lot of the international students do not possess the form of cultural capital that provides access to the region's labor market. They have achieved cultural capital in form of education but it is arguably difficult for them to turn the cultural capital into economic capital without the most important cultural capital, seen from the employers' perspective; the Danish language.

Again, it is important to have the context of the NDR in mind when it comes to accessibility to the region's labor market. In the survey, some people drew attention to the fact that the opportunity of accessing the Danish labor market highly depends on which of the Danish regions they are seeking employment in. Some of them stated:

> "The main reason is lack of interest from the companies to non-Danish speaking persons. Moreover they want us to speak it good, which means at least for me around 2 years more. I fully understand this and my aim was to find a company where to start as a trainee or just as a volunteer in the field that I studied and to learn in the same time Danish but I couldn't find a interested company here. I had a meeting with a company from Copenhagen where they told me that this options as a trainee might be possible after a few months which is exactly what I want to do, to study Danish and to have some experience." (Survey 2015 Appendix 13)

> "I believe the society in Copenhagen is way more open-minded towards foreigners and the labor market provides more opportunities for non-Danes, so basically my only option of staying in Denmark would be to move there, otherwise I would have to seek a career elsewhere." (Survey 2015 Appendix 13)

Mette tried to explain why employers in the NDR find it hard to hire international people who do not possess Danish language skills. She stated:

> "Hvis vi synes, vi kan få en dansker, som kan det samme, så tager vi ham/hende – det er jo nemmere. Hvis vi lige pludselig skal til at kommunikere alle opgaver, hvis møder skal foregå på engelsk, så kommer vi til at overarbejde. Hvis ikke man er vant til at bruge engelsk meget, så er man lidt på overarbejde, hvis man pludselig skal udtrykke sig og gøre sig forståelig samt forklare komplekse opgaver. Det kræver, at man selv vil udvikle sig, og udvikle sit sprog, udvikle sig ved at lære nye kulturer at kende, og hvis man ikke er parat til selv at flytte sig, så kan man ikke ansætte en international, for det bliver man udfordret på, og det kan man måske ikke overkomme." (Samuelsen 2015 Appendix 3, 44-45)

The statements show that the students find it easier to gain access to the labor market in Copenhagen. Again, one can argue that Copenhagen is more multicultural and internationalized than the NDR, which may be why they are more inclined to hire internationals who are not fluent in Danish. Of course, it can also be argued that the companies located in the capital are more internationally minded. Due to the homogeneity and homogeneous mindset in the NDR, the population arguably tends to find it harder to adjust themselves to new working conditions that differ from those they are used to. For that reason, employers and employees may prefer that future colleagues are able to speak Danish. Therefore, the key to the labor market in the NDR region is arguably cultural capital consisting of an access-giving education and having Danish language skills.

Network

Another reason why the international students find it hard to get access to the region's labor market may be the lack of social capital. According to Birgitte, social network is essential in order to enter the Danish labor market. She stated:

> ”Jeg mener faktisk vi har et ansvar og i endnu højere grad over for de internationale studerende, fordi de er mere sårbare socialt. De har ikke noget netværk, når de kommer herop. Vi har prøvet med mange studerende fra Østeuropa fx, at de kommer herop og tror de kan få et job med det samme, og at de nok skal klare sig, og det er bare op ad bakke og få et job, når man ikke taler dansk, og når man ikke har et netværk. Det er ikke nemt. Mange af de jobs man så ender med at få, det er sådan nogle i Jomfru Ane Gade, hvor man så bliver snydt og aldrig får sine penge. Virkelig forfærdeligt. Så det er i vores interesse, at de klarer sig godt, og hvis de har et socialt netværk, så er deres sandsynlighed for at klare sig godt også bedre.” (Nielsen 2015 Appendix 7, 74)

According to Bourdieu, social capital refers to networks in the sense of social relationships upon which one may draw to realize certain goals. Bourdieu believes that having good relations and contacts individuals may find it easier to get a good job. In this way, low social capital can, to some extent, compensate for the fact that you do not have a high economic and/or cultural capital. Therefore, social capital means to have a wide network and good social relations, which, in some cases, can create the opportunities for achieving economic and/or cultural capital.

As argued earlier, the international students belong to the "outsider" group and STAY's initiative of establishing an International House may cause that the distance between "us" and "them" becomes even bigger. The internationals in the region may stick together and create their own international subculture inside the house, which may result in limited or no interaction with Danes at all. This means that their network will consist of other internationals. When their network consist of other internationals who are in the same situation when it comes to entering the region's labor market, their network cannot be used positively to get access to the region's labor market. Therefore, a key challenge for many of the students is that they often have limited social capital in the labor market. This limited social capital arguably restricts their access to employment opportunities and can, in some cases, result in underemployment or no employment at all. If the international students had more social capital consisting of a Danish network, their chances of entering the labor market would probably be bigger. Additionally, without a social capital, consisting of a Danish network, they do not have the same opportunities of improving their cultural capital in form of their Danish language skills, which was just determined as another important factor to enter the region's labor market.

Stigmatization on an individual level

In the first part of the analysis, stigmatization is accounted for on a general level. However, stigmatization can also take place on an individual level if the person belongs to a stigmatized group. The stigmatization that international students experience on the individual level is another factor that can affect their chances of getting a job in the NDR. Both Leif and Dennis believe that many employers in the region involuntary hold prejudices against foreigners due to the general negative discourse towards immigrants that is taking place in the Danish society and especially the NDR. Those prejudices can affect which candidates they choose to call for a job interview and eventually who they choose to hire. Leif stated:

> ”Jeg tror, det er fordi, at der er en masse fordomme i den her region. Det må vi bare erkende. Man skal ikke ret langt udenfor Aalborg, så er de der med det samme. Men jeg tror, den er ved at vende i en eller anden form. Jeg tror også, at man har fundet ud af, de rent faktisk er dygtige mange af dem, men jeg har oplevet nogle gange, hvor jeg har haft nogle jobåbninger, hvor jeg har haft udlændinge, som har søgt, og de blev bare sorteret væk med det samme, selv om de var højt kvalificeret. Vi tror ikke, deres kultur passer ind i vores verden osv. Så der ligger en modstand mod udlændinge, men jeg tror, den vender og den ikke er så udpræget som den har været. Men det tager tid heroppe, og det er ikke som i København. Der er lidt mere modstand mod det. Jeg tror, det handler om, at man er skeptisk, fordi man ikke har mødt dem før, man har ikke set dem før, man har ikke været i dialog med dem og prøvet det af. Så finder de også ud af, de faktisk er lige så dygtige som de andre er. Hvis der er rigtig gode til det danske sprog, så tror jeg også, de vil få det langt nemmere.” (L. B. Jensen 2015 Appendix 5, 59)

Leif makes no secret of the fact that some employers in the North Denmark Region tend to discard well-educated foreigners, since they are skeptical when it comes to possible barriers. Dennis agreed with Leif and stated:

> ”Hvis bare man kommer til Jammerbugt eller Mors, der tror jeg at der er rigtig mange virksomheder, som slet ikke kan rumme at få en højtuddannet og slet ikke en højtuddannet med et underligt navn og et andet sprog og han har ikke spegepølse med på madpakken og sådan noget.

Der er mange ting, som gør at de her barrierer bare bliver mere forstærket jo længere man kommer væk." (D. Jensen 2015 Appendix 1, 7)

According to Dennis, employers and employees in the NDR arguably find it hard to welcome well-educated foreigners into their workplace because of culture and language barriers. Furthermore, he draws attention to the fact that a simple thing as a non-Danish name can affect how the candidate is perceived. Dennis is not alone with that assumption. When asking Aalborg Municipality's Integration Committee what they believe is the largest challenge when it comes to entering the region's labor market as a foreigner, the language skills share the first place together with one other factor. As mentioned earlier, a former conducted focus group interview with AMIC is a part of the thesis' secondary data. When asking the AMIC members whether they believe that a Dane and a foreigner, who has the same educational background and qualifications and are searching for the same job, have the same opportunities of getting it, their answer was:

> "Nej, det mener jeg ikke… Jeg tror som det er i dag, så påvirker det at man har et andet navn – desværre." (AMIC 2014 Appendix 10, 103)

> "Jeg kender mange som aldrig er kommet til samtale bare fordi de hedder noget som danskerne ikke kan udtale." (AMIC 2014 Appendix 10, 103)

The statements show that the AMIC members are confused and skeptical about foreigners' opportunities at the region's labor market. All 4 members agree that the Dane's and the foreigner's opportunity of getting the same job is not equal. They strongly believe that the Dane has better chances. Furthermore, they believe that having a foreign name plays a big part when it comes to being summoned for a job interview. In this case, the foreign name is also a symbol that indicates that the jobseeker belongs to an outsider group. Even if a foreigner's job application is written in Danish, one can argue that an employer can hold prejudices against foreigners, which involuntarily may cause him or her to discard the job application. According to Elias and Scotson, a person can experience stigmatization on the individual level if the person belongs to a stigmatized group. In this case, the international students belong to the "outsider" group, which, as accounted for earlier, are stigmatized on the general level because of the different kinds of prejudices and stereotypes towards foreigners in Denmark, and especially in the NDR. When the international students are deselected in a job situation, even if they are equally qualified as a Danish job applicant, they are arguably experiencing stigmatization on the individual level. Honneth agrees with Elias and Scotson on the fact that members of denigrated groups have enormous difficulties being perceived in anything but stereotypical ways. In addition, Honneth believes that situations like the ones international students are experiencing when they are searching for a job can affect their self-esteem negatively. Self-esteem involves a sense of what makes a person special and unique and therefore what differentiates a person from others must be something valuable. In this case, what differentiates international job applicants from Danish job applicants are not exactly positive seen from the perspective of the employers. Therefore, the feeling of having nothing valuable to offer can often be linked to low self-esteem, which is not abnormal in the situation of the internationals. Also, it is difficult to maintain one's self-esteem if systematic denigration of one's "group" takes place. If the general stigmatization are increased, the individual stigmatization will increase as well, which will make it even more difficult for the international students to enter the region's labor market.

Opportunities

During the focus group interview with the four international students, it was obvious that they saw their job opportunities and their personal well-being as being better a lot better in their home countries. This might be the reason why 28 % of the respondents in the survey state that their stay in Aalborg was temporary from the beginning. For instance, they stated:

> ”In my home country I can find a really good job with this education and with a salary so I can buy a house and a nice car, having a lot of kids without any problem and give them what they want. And being where my family is very important for me. I just came here to get a good education. So it was nice with a free education, because it costs a lot of money in our home country, and also the education here is worth more in our home country. Also, if I choose to stay here I know that I'll have a lot of competitors – people who have the same education and knowledge like I do. But if I go home, the competition will be a lot smaller. The smartest guys in my opinion are the ones who are going back to their home countries with a really nice free education and there are no competitors. You have really good chances to get nice jobs with good salary. Because you took an education here, people back home will also help you to start your own business. I now have a lot of business ideas, which are easier to implement in my home country… Because it is impossible to find a good job here that is well paid, I would never stay here when I know that I only could get some bad job here that has nothing to do with my education. Then I would much rather go home and have a really nice job and make a nice life instead of living in Denmark and maybe earn below DKK 10,000 after tax each month. Also, the tax here is 48 % - in our country it's only 21 %. Also the price of cars, living costs etc. are insane in Denmark." (Sivaka, et al. 2015 Appendix 9, 91-93)

According to the students, the smartest people are those, who after graduation, are going back to their home countries with a free education and a Danish diploma which is of much greater value in their home countries. Back home, the international students will not have as many competitors at the labor market, as they do in Denmark. Instead, they will be desired due to their Danish education. Furthermore, the international students and their obtained qualifications will be recognized and employed. Also, they will be surrounded by like-minded people and their friends and family. Honneth believes, that in order to achieve recognition, it is necessary to live in communities where the individual is able to use and develop his or her skills and perceive themselves as valuable to the community. Honneth claims that recognition is important in an integration process, and since international students find it hard to be accepted and recognized by the population in the NDR and to even get the opportunity of employing their competences, one can argue that it is understandable that more than half the students wishes to leave the region after they graduate. Additionally, the international students emphasize that their economic capital will be better in their home countries. They have got cultural capital in form of a free, well-reputed education in Denmark but due to their extremely bad language proficiency skills, the international students find it hard to exchange the cultural capital into economic capital. However, they believe that the cultural capital they have obtained in Denmark can easily be exchanged to economic capital in their home countries because of very few competitors compared to Denmark. In addition, the international students will be on their own turf, which means that their social capital in terms of networks, which the international students can draw on in order to realize certain goals, is better than in Denmark. This means that in their home countries, their social and cultural capital can help them to easier obtain economic capital.

Bourdieu refers to cultural capital as the ways in which people would use cultural knowledge to undergird their place in the hierarchy. According to him, individuals can achieve a higher economic capital if they have high cultural capital in form of a high education. In this case, the international students have the opportunity of moving back home with a diploma from AAU or UCN, which are highly recognized in their home countries. Then, their chances of getting a good job are much higher because of fewer competitors.

According to Bourdieu, money means more opportunities for individuals, since high economic capital opens doors for a lot of possibilities. Therefore, economic capital can be used for getting a higher social capital, which is also one of the objectives for the students. The international students draw attention to the fact that by moving back to their home countries, their economic situation will be improved significantly and they will be able to settle down and make a family without having to worry about their ability to support it. Also, the symbolic capital is of great importance for the international students. They draw attention to the fact that they will get a higher salary in their home countries which will enable them to buy a nicer house and a nicer car than in Denmark. The house and car represent their economic capital and appears as status symbols. Symbolic capital emerges from the interplay of the economic, social, and cultural types of capital. All three types of ”original” capital lay the foundations for an individual's overall position, good reputation, and reputation and prestige in society, thus determining his or her place in the hierarchy. All the three capital forms can appear in the symbolic capital, which is the capital to which one's environment attributes value.

In Denmark it is not possible for them to create symbolic capital to the same extent as in their home countries. Instead, they believe that the symbolic capital they are able to obtain in Denmark will express a lower status and position in the hierarchy compared to the position they are able to attain in their home countries. Since people, according to Honneth, are dependent on different kinds of recognition in order to live a happy life, the symbolic capital is of great importance to the international students.

6.2.3 Summary

The second part of the analysis has shed light on some of the challenges that the international students face when living and studying in the NDR along with their struggle to enter the region's labor market. The overall challenges that international students are facing are mainly divided into 2 themes regarding integration and the accessibility to the labor market in the NDR. When it comes to integration the homogeneity in especially the NDR, and the negative discourse and stigmatization towards immigrants that takes place in the media and in the society, create an “us” vs. “them” relationship between the international students and the ethnic Danes. This hinders a positive integration process, and the international student's unwillingness to learn the Danish language helps to inhibit the integration process even more. When it comes to the accessibility to the region's labor market in the keys is the Danish language, since the homogeneity in the NDR makes employers and employees less willing to adapt to new conditions. Another key to the labor market in the NDR is network which the international students are short of especially when it comes to networking with Danes. The stigmatization the international students are experiencing on an individual level, when applying for a job, does not help their chances either. All these challenges imply that the international students find careers and future prospects to be a lot better in their home countries which may be the reason why more than half of the students want to leave the region after they graduate.

7.0 Discussion

Based on the organizational analysis of STAY and the identified challenges, we will now account for which concrete organizational changes that can be made. As argued in the analysis, STAY has not yet implemented significant initiatives targeted towards the international students which have had noticeable effect in terms of their desire to stay in the region after graduation. Therefore, it is fundamental for STAY to undergo certain organizational changes to be capable of producing appropriate initiatives that consist with the needs of the international students. Most of the stakeholders have appointed STAY to have the necessary potential to change and improve the current retention effort in the NDR. If STAY continues in its current organizational form, one can argue that the NDR will continue to be the worst at retaining international students in the future. Arguably, a well-functioning STAY organization consisting of the right people with the appropriate organizational frame and resources for producing and implementing concrete initiatives will have a positive, direct impact on those international students, who chose to study in the region in the future, as the current challenges will be solved as a result of the suggested organizational changes.

7.1 Organizational Changes in STAY

As we accounted for during the organizational analysis of STAY, there are recurring themes representing the most compelling organizational challenges which prevent STAY from achieving its objectives of retaining more international students in the NDR. The themes are divided into 2 parts:

- Organizational Cooperation & Resources
- Stakeholder Mismanagement & Lack of Vision

Now, the challenge(s) within each of these themes will be discussed to account for how STAY specifically can change its organization.

7.1.1Organizational Cooperation & Resources

In terms of cooperation between STAY's stakeholders, the challenge has been that representatives who do not have the necessary power or mandate from their own organizations, too often has participated in the STAY meetings. As a result hereof, none of the concrete initiatives have ever been set in motion. As we see it, the solution to this challenge is first of all to secure that only the right stakeholder representatives with the necessary power and mandate participate in the STAY activities. The reason for this challenge must be found in how STAY is currently constructed. So far, the STAY initiative has been built on a partnership/commitment and thereby a voluntary effort, where none of the stakeholders have been held accountable for their work in STAY. Therefore, it is necessary to change this constructional frame to one where the right stakeholder representatives have STAY incorporated in their own job descriptions. As a result, the stakeholder representatives will have the incentive to spend more time on STAY, as they will be evaluated on their performance and the results they achieve. Of course, such a change is not free and will definitely cost more than the DKK 500.000 which is available for STAY at the moment. Also, in general, it is a requirement that retention of international students is prioritized even more on a political level in the region's municipalities to raise the necessary public capital. As argued earlier, socio-economical analyses claim that the economical benefits of retaining more internationals are generally very positive. In the end, retaining and employing more international students in the region will arguably result in higher income taxes to the municipalities which could then finance the costs of having the right people implementing the necessary initiatives in STAY with the final purpose of improving the region's retention effort.

When speaking about the "right" people there is a broad unity among the stakeholders that it is a problem for STAY not having a full time Project Manager with leadership experience to ensure that necessary activities and initiatives are set in motion. One can argue than Dennis Jensen does not have the right prerequisites to facilitate a rewarding and result-oriented cooperation between the stakeholders, since the organizational frame in STAY is based on a voluntary effort. Therefore, in order to move forward, we believe that STAY has to employ a full time Project Manager with leadership experience to facilitate the future cooperation in STAY's organization.

Another big challenge for STAY is the internal disagreements concerning the project's objectives. Some stakeholders are familiar with the objectives, while others are under the impression that STAY does not even have any formulated objectives. The stakeholders all agree that they have not heard anything from the STAY project in a long time, and most of them are not even aware whether STAY is still active or not. Even the Mayor of Aalborg, Thomas Kastrup-Larsen, claims that STAY has no concrete objectives. Therefore, we can argue that communicating the very purpose of STAY and its objectives has not been clear enough. The stakeholders in STAY have arguably been unsure of what they specifically were working for, and why this work was important to the region. We believe that what needs to be changed in terms of this challenge is that STAY and Aalborg Municipality become more aware of the importance of efficient communication to their stakeholders and how to exercise it. Here, the change is relatively small but very significant in order to reach the full potential of their stakeholders.

Additionally, it is a problem that the North Denmark Region is not involved in STAY's organization. However, their vision is to internationalize the North Denmark Region and promote development and growth by supporting projects with an international focus such as STAY. The very purpose of STAY is that the project is a regional initiative that focuses on securing regional growth by retaining and employing more talents. Therefore, it is a paradox that the North Denmark Region is not even familiar or involved in the project. If a large and powerful institution such as the North Denmark Region became involved in the project, STAY's chances of spreading the initiative to the other municipalities in the region would arguably become bigger. Also, we believe that the region has a great interest of involving in STAY, as the objective of retaining more international students is very consistent with the region's vision of internationalization and to promote development and growth.

7.1.2 Stakeholder Mismanagement & Lack of Vision

A very essential aspect of STAY is the disagreement about whether the region's businesses should play an active role in the project. According to Aalborg Municipality and the STAY Masterplan, it is the intention that STAY is a partnership that includes the region's business community, as they are an important stakeholder in terms of providing jobs and thereby achieving the objective of retaining more talents in the future. However, Dennis Jensen and the Mayor do not agree with the STAY Masterplan. In their view, it is not the intention that the region's business community should play an active role in STAY, even though Dennis Jensen offered Dataproces to be a part of the initiative. The stakeholders in STAY agree it is a problem that the region's business community does not play a larger part in STAY's organization. However that may be, when STAY's objective of retaining and employing more international students is taken in consideration, we believe it is a paradox that participation of the actors who are supposed to provide the jobs are not a matter of course in the STAY organization. As Leif Bjerg Jensen points out, the solution to this challenge is not to approach every single business in the region with an invitation to become a part of STAY's organization. We agree that convincing the businesses that STAY is worth engaging in and that retention of internationals is important for developing and internationalizing the region further and create growth, the best solution would be to engage the large business organizations such as Dansk Industri and Dansk Service, where thousands of businesses are organized. In that way, it is easier to keep the matter on the agenda and reach out to a lot of businesses at once, increase visibility about STAY's purpose, and securing continuous awareness of the region's retention challenges. The advantages of establishing a larger cooperation with the region's business community are that more international students would get jobs, and STAY could increase the opportunities of external funding from businesses, as their advantage of recruiting internationals already educated in Aalborg instead of recruiting people from other universities is arguably bigger. For example, Dataproces recently recruited 6 graduates from a university in Tunisia, however Kjartan argued that recruiting internationals from Aalborg University would have been preferable, as their social- and integration-related prerequisites are a lot better. (K. Jensen 2015 Appendix 4, 51)

It is clear to us that one of the roots to STAY's challenges has been the project's lack of a clear and uncomplicated vision that is easy to understand in terms of developing the necessary strategic initiatives to finally achieve the vision. As stated before, there has been a general disagreement concerning the project's objectives but also its very purpose. One can argue that when members of the STAY organization are not even familiar with the purpose of the project and its vision, it is impossible for them to move in the right direction. In our opinion, the key to ensure that the stakeholders in STAY know exactly what the vision and the objectives for STAY are, it is essential that these are rewritten in cooperation between Aalborg Municipality, STAY's management, and the stakeholders in the organization. When examining the current STAY Masterplan it is too difficult to explain the vision and thereby what the project aims to do. The current vision is no less than 20 lines, whereas the optimum length of a good vision is arguably no more than 3-4 lines. If a new and spot on vision and overall objective is crafted collectively; there is a greater chance that the involved stakeholders get a deeper understanding of why the retention subject is important and hopefully also a greater urge to take ownership of the project.

We believe that all these concrete presented changes are necessary for STAY to undergo, since they are prerequisites to get a more professional and organizational structure that is able to meet the needs of the region's international students in form of producing and implementing concrete initiatives and activities that will improve the entire region's current retention effort.

STAY's only proposal to an improved retention effort in the NDR is the current plan of establishing an International House in Aalborg before 2016. Therefore, this proposal is now relevant to discuss.

7.2 An International House as a Solution?

As accounted for in section 2.2.3, "The EMBRACE initiative", the intention with the International House in Aalborg is that it should cover the entire NDR. Even though Lasse Frimand Jensen, the Mayor, and Mette Østergaard Samuelsen all advocate for the positive aspects of establishing an International House as a solution to the region's retention challenges, we do not believe that an International House placed in Aalborg will help the internationals who find employment in the peripheral areas of the region far away from Aalborg to get better integrated.

Of course, the majority of the students in the region are living and studying in Aalborg. For them, an international house could provide the opportunity to handle practicalities etc. However, when it comes to integration we highly doubt that the house will have a positive influence in the long run, since it may create a subculture in which the internationals find it easier to navigate in instead of encouraging them to become a part of the Danish society. Here, we find it appropriate to mention the Student House in Aalborg as a great example of an environment that attracts both Danish and international students where the house does not "belong" more to one group than another. We see no reason to separate the students by establishing and naming the new house "International House". In addition, one could argue that the one-stop-shop concept is to do internationals a disservice in the sense that they are not forced to seek that information on their own and thereby "learn by doing". Although, this is a double-edged sword and depends on who you are and how you see it. One could argue that very independent people would find great value in making their own experiences and seek information on their own, whereas people with a more dependent personality would take offense in not being helped and possibly feel unwelcome. One of the students from our focus group interview, Valeria Ambramova, is an excellent example of a dependent person, who took great offense in not receiving the type of help she felt entitled to when she first came to the NDR. She believes that her start in the region with no immediate accommodation, no internet, no TV, and no furniture was extremely hard, and this bad first impression of Aalborg, the region, and Denmark in general is still in the back of her mind. (Sivaka, et al. 2015 Appendix 9, 90)

Of course, it is debatable whether every single practicality that international students face should be taken care of, and if so, who should be responsible for it. Certainly, the municipality and the educational institutions could cooperate on setting the frames for giving all internationals a warm welcome, since the first impression is often the one people will always remember and take with them.

In the next section, "suggested solutions", we will make a more elaborative account for which initiatives that can be handled by the International House based on the knowledge we have acquired throughout this thesis. Furthermore, the section will include other suggested solutions to concrete initiatives that can be implemented in and by STAY with the purpose to change and improve the current retention effort in the NDR.

8.0 Suggested Solutions

Now, after discussing how STAY can make concrete organizational changes with the purpose to become capable of reaching its objective of retaining more international talents. Based on the survey and the focus group interview, we have found a wide range of factors that we believe influence the international students' inclination to stay in the NDR after graduation. As we see it, these factors can be divided in 2 parts, since some factors cannot be influenced by STAY and some can. First, we will account for the factors which cannot be influenced by STAY. Even though these are factors that cannot be affected by STAY, it does not mean that they are less significant due to their great influence and impact on the international students' opportunities of successful integration and accessibility to the labor market in the NDR.

8.1 Factors that STAY cannot influence

- *The negative discourse in the Danish media*
  - There is a broad unity among the stakeholders, the international students, and experts that there is a negative discourse in the Danish media towards foreigners in Denmark. The downsides to this are that Denmark appears to be a xenophobic country and thereby risks becoming a less attractive destination for international talents and highly qualified labor which we need now and even more in the future. Unfortunately, this is a situation that is impossible for STAY to change. Certainly, the media discourse is strongly affected by the Danish political agenda which will be accounted for next.
- *The Danish Political Agenda*
  - Some of the stakeholders in STAY believe that the political tone towards foreigners in general is very negative. In our view, the Danish immigration policy and the tone in that political discourse arguably has a great impact on the media. The Danish People's Party has the strongest immigration policy of all the political parties in Denmark. The party received more than 21 % of the votes at the Danish general election in June 2015 compared to 12.3 % in 2011. In the NDR, the party went from 12.1 % of the votes in 2011 to 22 % in 2015 and thereby doubled their mandates in the national parliament. (Ritzau 2015) In the Capital Region of Denmark, the party "only" received 16.2 % of the votes. (DST 2015) In addition, 17 % of the population in the Capital Region is immigrants or their descendants, whereas the number is only 9 %

in the NDR. (DST, 65 år i tal 2014) Nationally, the Danish People's Party witnessed an enormous boost in their share of votes. However, the boost in the Capital Region was half of what it was in the NDR. The party's much smaller boost in the Capital Region shows that Copenhagen is still a lot more multicultural and has a more positive attitude towards foreigners which proves our previous point that Copenhagen is to a certain degree more open-minded towards foreigners than in the NDR. Although, the party's remarkable national boost in votes bears witness of a general negative attitude in Denmark towards foreigners. Therefore, it is understandable that many international students feel unwelcome in Denmark.

8.2 Factors that STAY can influence

Now, we will provide suggested solutions to concrete activities and initiatives that STAY can implement with the purpose of changing and improving the retention effort in the NDR.

- *Preparing the students before they come to Denmark*
  - We believe that STAY could be responsible of producing written material containing information about the Danish society, the educational system, political conditions, Danish culture, regional culture, the importance of learning the Danish language, study environment, financial demands, living costs, cultural offers in the region, size of the city and the region, weather conditions, and opening hours in the public domain. Furthermore, it is important to inform the students that even if they will be studying in the fourth largest city in Denmark, it does not mean that the city is as internationalized and multicultural as Copenhagen. STAY has the right prerequisites to produce this type of material. Then, stakeholders such as AAU and UCN can send the material to the educational institutions or organizations that send the students. In that way, it is possible to match expectations beforehand so that the students are more familiar with what is expecting them.
- *Welcoming the international students*
  - We believe that STAY can make a step-by-step guide for the international students which must be available to the students from the day they receive their acceptance from UCN or AAU. Furthermore, it must be available in the International House and online at AAU and UCN's homepages. The aspects in this guide should be handled by the most relevant partners and stakeholders. Therefore, it is important

to mention that STAY's primary job is to facilitate cooperation. The guide must contain the following information:

1. **Instructions to find the International House**

- All practicalities are taken care of such as civil registration number, health insurance card, banking etc. This job could be delegated to employees at the citizen service centre.

2. **How to find accommodation?**

- It is relevant to set up some frames that rethink the idea of housing international students. It would be a great idea to offer people to choose which type of accommodation they prefer. For example, before the students arrive, they have to decide whether they wish to live alone, with someone else, or in a dormitory. If they prefer to live with someone else or in a dormitory, STAY can make a personality survey to match people with similar interests, degree of tidiness, and other personality features. The job of matching people and finding accommodation could be handled by an organization such as AKU which job is to assign dormitories and student apartments in Aalborg. Then, Danes and internationals that wish to live with each other can be assigned to dormitories. This requires that STAY establishes a partnership with AKU. The importance of having a Danish network needs to be evident for the internationals when they apply for accommodation. In that way, the optimum effort has been done to facilitate the opportunity of getting a Danish network from the beginning. Simultaneously, they are provided valuable help with accommodation.

3. **Where to find furniture?**

- Information about where to find IKEA, Bilka, Ide Møbler etc. and how to get there by various types of transportation.

4. **How to get internet and TV?**

- Information about STOFA, TDC, BOXER etc., how to get signed up, where to find it, and making sure a contract in English is available.

5. **How to find the different faculties and departments at AAU and UCN?**

- Provide a detailed map showing the different faculties and how to get there by public transportation, bicycle and on foot.

6. **Public services**

- Airport, bus and train transport, hospitals, pharmacies, language school, dentists etc.

7. **Activities in Aalborg and in the NDR**

- Information about and how to find grocery stores, cafes, cinemas, theatres, libraries, various sport activities, fitness centers, parks, concert places, bars etc.

We suggest that point 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 could be delegated to a student employee, since these tasks are not demanding a special effort from the stakeholders.

8. **Where to find a student job?**

- Here, the region's business community is a valuable stakeholder. The region's businesses have to get involved in providing relevant student jobs and internships for internationals. A great incitement would be that the municipality provides subsidies to the companies that establish student jobs and hire international students. Also, it is our clear impression that finding a relevant student job is a lot harder for international students than for the Danish students. When we investigated the online portals for student jobs in the NDR such as www.graduateland.com, www.so.dk, www.studiezone.dk, www.aalborgstudent.com, www.careerportal.dk, www.studiejob-danmark.dk, and www.studentum.dk we found that none of them can be translated into English. Therefore, it would be appropriate for STAY to form a partnership with one of the largest portals in order to ensure that the website and the job adverts can be translated to English to provide better opportunities for the internationals. As we know, it is extremely important for internationals to get relevant and study-related work experience in Danish companies for the purpose of getting a job after graduation.

We are aware that all of the steps in this guide cannot be handled by STAY alone. Therefore, STAY should continuously seek to establish partnerships with relevant stakeholders. For example, STAY's counterpart in the Central Denmark Region, "International Community" (IC), was established in 2008 with the exact same purpose as STAY in the NDR; to strengthen the retention effort of internationals in the region through a partnership between the region's business community, Aarhus University, and the Municipality of Aarhus. The differences between STAY and IC are that IC has managed to engage the region's largest businesses from the beginning and engage more than 3,000 members including international students and employees, businesses, and international minded Danes. Also, contrary to STAY, IC has formed very clear and understandable mission and vision statements: (Community 2015)

> "Mission: We promote growth for businesses and strengthen the international profile of the area by improving the conditions to attract, welcome and retain global talents and their families." (Community 2015)

> "Vision: As Denmark's leading knowledge hub on global mobility we strengthen the competitiveness of internationally minded companies in Denmark." (Community 2015)

Basically, IC acts as an extended HR function to the region's businesses and was established by Erhverv Aarhus on a strong initiative by the business community, Aarhus University, and the Municipality of Aarhus which are the same stakeholders as STAY aims to engage. On the contrary to the NDR, the effort in the Central Denmark Region works across the municipal borders and involves the relevant stakeholders from all the region's 19 municipalities. The region has the overall responsibility and is represented by a Project Manager that works with Project Managers from each of the region's municipalities. (blivmidt.dk 2015) The organizational construction in the Central Denmark Region substantiates that it is possible to facilitate cooperation between relevant regional stakeholders with the purpose of improve the retention effort of internationals.

- *Promote the good integration stories through campaigns*
    - As stated in the analysis, stigmatization can inhibit the integration process and the accessibility to the region's labor market. Therefore, it would be a good idea to make informational campaigns aimed at the business community and the population to highlight successful integration stories about international students that have chosen to stay in the region to live and work after graduation. The purpose of these campaigns should be to show ideal examples of well-integrated students that can act as role models. Also, companies with good experiences of employing international students can step forward and share how they have benefitted from the resources that the internationals have contributed with to their organization. The overall goal with these campaigns is to affect the often negative mindset and mentality there is towards foreigners especially in the NDR. The sender of the campaign should be

STAY so it appears that the campaign is supported by the North Denmark Region, the business community, the municipalities, the international students, and the educational institutions to emphasize the importance and increase validity. According to our research, no campaign of this sort has been published in the NDR, whereas 4 campaigns called "Talent Attraction Denmark" were launched in June 2014 as an interregional cooperation between the Capital Region of Denmark, the South Denmark Region, and the Central Denmark Region. (Denmark 2014) The purpose of the campaigns was to increase awareness of Denmark as an attractive place to live and study. According to the independent analysis institute, Oxford Research, the campaigns have had a great effect and meant that 150 international talents have been employed in businesses in the participating regions and have created positive media coverage of Denmark as a study destination in 26 countries. (Capacity 2014) Given the fact that almost all Danish regions besides the North Denmark Region have participated in these campaigns emphasizes that the region's lack of involvement in such initiatives might be the reason why the region is the worst at retaining international talents.

- *Extend the opportunity of learning Danish online before arrival and emphasize the importance of learning the language from an early start.*
    - As we know from the analysis, all stakeholders perceive the language barrier as the biggest challenge in terms of successful integration, accessibility to the labor market, and thereby whether they choose to stay in the region after graduation. Now, internationals living in the NDR have three years to complete a Danish language course from the day they are offered the course. (Aalborg 2015) The only opportunity to qualify for an online course is with a referral from your municipality of residence. (Aalborg 2015) In our opinion, the students that know in advance they are going to live and study in Denmark should have the opportunity to initiate an online Danish language course in their home country as soon as possible. If the students are willing to make an extra effort to learn Danish, the time should not be deducted from their limited time period of the three years. In general, we believe that the students that show a willingness to do an extra effort and succeed in terms of learning the language should be rewarded in form of student grants or other benefits. This initiative should be implemented through a partnership between STAY and

Sprogcenter Aalborg (Language Centre Aalborg). Then, AAU and UCN must be responsible for informing the students of the online language course opportunities immediately after they are enrolled in either of the institutions. Again, this means that STAY should be responsible of establishing this partnership. Furthermore, STAY needs to communicate and emphasize the importance of learning the language when it comes to integration and accessibility to the labor market especially in the NDR. Even if most people in the region are capable of speaking English, it does not mean that we are willing to show consideration when interacting with internationals.

- *AAU and UCN must incite a more internationalized study environment to promote the integration*
  - The students from the focus group interview are all enrolled in international educations at UCN where all courses, projects, and exams are in English. However, it is not required that group work must be international as well which could be viewed as being a paradox. As students who have studied our bachelors' degrees and now our masters' degrees, we find it remarkable that mixing Danes and internationals when forming groups is not a requirement. As we know from the focus group and the survey, it is important for the internationals to feel included. By implementing such a rule, the existing challenge of exclusion will arguably help to be defeated. This is a relatively small initiative to implement by AAU and UCN which can prove to have a significant impact on internationals' ability to expand their academic and social network which can arguably have a positive effect on the integration process. The other way around, this can also have a positive effect on Danes, since we are forced to communicate in English and thereby improve our language proficiency and gain new perspectives.
- *The public sector must acknowledge internationals and ensure attractive peripheral areas*
  - The North Denmark Region's vision is to become a globalized region and attract international resources with the purpose to strengthen its international profile. Therefore, it is essential that the region's public sectors that are closer to the citizens act according to that vision every day. One can argue that the objective of being a globalized and attractive region for internationals does not consists with the fact that internationals receive important letters such as doctor documents and rental contracts

written in Danish. STAY can make an effort to change issues like these by making the public sector and housing associations aware of them. In general, it is highly relevant to strengthen the interregional and inter-municipal cooperation and thus enabling municipalities to exchange their experiences with the overall objective of becoming a better and more attractive place to live and work in for internationals. Arguably, it is vital for the region's growth and further development to make the peripheral areas more attractive to live in and thereby prevent urbanization. Of course, preventing urbanization in the region is a more complex matter to go into. However, for example, closing small schools in peripheral areas and centralizing state jobs in the largest cities have a great impact on developing the smaller cities in the region, which eventually has great relevance in terms of being able to strengthen the retention effort in the entire region.

9.0 Conclusion

Now, at the end of this thesis, we can ascertain that there has been a lot of new knowledge to obtain on how the NDR can change and improve its current effort of retaining international talents after they graduate. Through our exploratory approach, we have acquired new and important knowledge on how STAY's organization must undergo various organizational changes to be able to develop and implement concrete initiatives that will contribute to an improved retention effort and ensure growth, development, and internationalization in the region.

The purpose of this thesis was to answer the following problem formulation:

How can relevant stakeholders in the North Denmark Region change and improve the current effort of retaining more well-educated internationals students in the region after they graduate?

In order to answer the problem formulation, we have chosen to take on a phenomenological scientific approach. This approach made us capable to understand and interpret the statements and attitudes of the respondents. We chose to apply Axel Artke's theory, "6 Pitfalls of why Organizations Fail at Conducting Change", Steen Hildebrandt and Søren Brandi's theory, "Stakeholder Management and Communication during a Change Process", and John Kotter's theory, "8-Step Model for Leading Change" as the theoretical foundation in the first organizational part of the analysis, as they made us capable of identifying the internal, organizational problems and challenges that STAY has faced through the eyes of the stakeholders. Afterwards, based on the information we got from the stakeholders, the theories made us capable of suggesting concrete organizational changes which purpose were to enable STAY to produce and implement concrete initiatives that would consist with the specific needs of the international students.

Then, we chose to apply Norbert Elias and John L. Scotson's theory, "The Established and the Outsiders", Axel Honneth's theory, "The Struggle for Recognition", and Pierre Bourdieu's 4 concepts "Social, Cultural, Economic and Symbolic Capital" as the theoretical foundation in the second part of the analysis. Based on the information provided by the international students in the focus group interview and in the survey, these theories made us capable to explain which challenges international students in the NDR experience and why they are experiencing them. On that basis, we have been capable of suggesting concrete initiatives than can change and improve the current retention effort in the region.

In order to answer our problem formulation, it was essential to acquire the necessary knowledge. We have conducted interviews with a wide range of stakeholder- and system representatives in STAY's organization. Additionally, we have made a qualitative focus group interview with 4 international students from UCN and a quantitative survey of 130 international students in the NDR. Our empirical data has been the foundation for new knowledge where the aim has been to provide an objective picture of the participants' subjective stories.

In the analysis of STAY's organization, we found that there are recurring factors that represent the most compelling organizational challenges which prevent STAY from achieving its objective of retaining more international talents in the region. These factors are organizational cooperation & resources and stakeholder mismanagement & lack of vision. In terms of organizational cooperation among STAY's stakeholders, the challenges has been that representatives who do not have the necessary power or mandate from their own organizations, too often have participated in the STAY meetings. The solution is to secure that only the right stakeholder representatives are a part of STAY's organization. This is caused by the fact that STAY is a voluntary effort where none of the stakeholders are held accountable for their work. In addition, we believe that STAY must be incorporated in the job descriptions of the organizational members. Also, the analysis revealed that STAY needs a full time Project Manager with leadership experience that is able to facilitate the future cooperation in STAY's organization. Moreover, Aalborg Municipality has to improve its communication of STAY's objectives, since this has been a subject of great uncertainty and disagreement among the stakeholders. Furthermore, based on our empirical data, we can conclude that the North Denmark Region has chosen not to be a part of the STAY initiative or the interregional "Talent Attraction" campaigns. Paradoxically, STAY and the interregional campaigns consist with the North Denmark Region's vision of becoming internationalized and create growth and development in the region.

One of the greatest challenges for STAY is that the intention of establishing a strong partnership with the region's business community has not been realized. We consider the region's business community to be one of the most important stakeholders to engage in terms of retaining more international talents, since they are the ones providing the actual jobs. A realizable solution would be to engage the large business organizations such as Dansk Industri and Dansk Service where thousands of businesses are organized.

Finally, the lack of a clear and uncomplicated vision has been a great challenge for STAY, and some of the stakeholders have even been unsure of and unfamiliar with the project's vision and objectives. We can conclude that a sense of urgency to change and improve the organization and the retention effort has not been created among the stakeholders which might be one of the reasons why the NDR is the worst region in the Denmark when it comes to retaining international talents.

In the second part of the analysis, we found that the homogeneity in the NDR and in Denmark in general makes the people skeptical and hesitant by nature especially when it comes to foreigners that often lead to prejudices, stereotyping, and stigmatization held against them. Stigmatization affects the integration process and the accessibility to the region's labor market. The language also plays a big role when it comes to engage in social interaction with Danes, become integrated, and get access to the region's labor market. Networks consisting of Danes also prove to be important in terms of accessibility.

In terms of establishing an International House in Aalborg as the solution to the region's retention challenges, we consider it a great help for internationals when it comes to handling practicalities. However, we do not believe that the house will have a positive influence on integration, because it may create a subculture in which the internationals find it easier to navigate instead of encouraging them to become a part of the Danish society. By establishing an International House, which is also meant to be a social epicenter, the risk is that the distance between "us" and "them" becomes bigger which may prevent the internationals from building a Danish network. Also, this does not improve their prerequisites for learning the Danish language. This will have a negative effect on the integration process and their opportunity of gaining access to the labor market. In the short run, establishing an International House will most likely be well received by the internationals. However, in the long run, the house is not a good solution due to impaired opportunities of integration and thereby accessibility to the region's labor market. Therefore, we can conclude that an International House might not be the right initiative in order to meet the specific needs of the internationals.

We have found a wide range of factors that we consider influencing the international students' inclination to stay in the NDR after graduation. Some of the factors cannot be influenced, while others can. The factors that cannot be influenced by STAY are the negative discourse towards foreigners in the media and the Danish political agenda which cause a sometimes stigmatizing image of foreigners in general. The discourse and attitude regarding foreigners in the Danish media have arguably affected the Danish political landscape, as we saw recently with the success of the Danish People's Party which key issue is a very strict immigration policy. On the other hand, the Danish political agenda also affects what topics that receive most media attention, which is relatively easy to conclude that the Danish immigration debate has had for several years.

There are a wide range of factors which we believe that STAY can influence. STAY could be responsible of preparing the students before they come to the region by producing some written material containing basic information on what is expecting them when living and studying in Denmark and in the NDR. Also, STAY can make a step-by-step guide containing practical information about International House, accommodation, public services, regional activities etc. with the purpose to give international students a better start. Additionally, STAY can produce and launch informational campaigns aimed at the business community and the population to highlight successful integration stories about international students that have chosen to stay in the region to live and work after graduation. The overall goal with these campaigns must be to affect the often negative mindset and mentality there is towards foreigners especially in the NDR. Moreover, in our opinion, STAY should make sure to facilitate the opportunity of leaning the Danish language online before the students arrive and, to a greater extent, emphasize the importance of learning the language from an early start. Furthermore, we believe that AAU and UCN as STAY stakeholders with advantage can incite a more internationalized study environment to promote the academic and social integration. For example, this could be done by consequently mixing Danes and internationals when working in groups on international educations. Finally, in order to change and improve the framework conditions for making a better retention effort in the entire NDR, it is necessary that the region acknowledges the internationals and ensure attractive peripheral living areas in the region. Ultimately, the North Denmark Region's vision of becoming a globalized region and attract international resources to strengthen its international profile will be difficult to achieve, if the region and its municipalities do not act according to the vision.

Finally, we can conclude that it is a joint responsibility to ensure the retention of international talents. This is a responsibility that companies cannot do on their own, even if they are the ones demanding international resources. An improved retention effort in the NDR is of great national interest, and a responsibility not only limited to the reception of internationals, but does also call for various long-term initiatives implemented by relevant stakeholders that comply with the specific needs of the internationals.

10.0 Reflections

First of all, it is relevant to reflect on the reliability of this thesis. Arguably, the strength of our conclusions may be challenged by the fact that our study is arguably relatively small compared to other studies of this type. This is reflected in the 130 international students who answered our quantitative survey, the 4 students who participated in our qualitative focus group interview, and the 8 STAY stakeholders who participated in individual interviews and thereby all contributed to the empirical foundation of this thesis.

In correlation with the retention effort of international talents in the NDR, we have continuously been aware that each of the interviewed stakeholders holds dissimilar interests based on what organization they represent, which naturally influences their attitudes and statements.

To represent the international students we conducted a focus group interview with 4 international students from UCN. Throughout the process, we have been aware that 4 students cannot represent the full number of international students in the region. However, they were able to qualitatively elaborate on the quantitative findings in the survey. Additionally, it might affect our conclusion that none of the interviewees are from AAU.

We are aware that people from different parts of the world and with different cultural backgrounds have dissimilar needs. However, we chose to view all international students as one group. The people in our focus group interview consist of international student from Eastern European countries, but if we had had the resources to conduct focus group interviews consisting of students from different parts of the world, the results would arguably differ a lot. As we accounted for in the introduction, the intake of European students at the Danish universities has exploded since an EU sentence from 2013 decided that all EU citizens have the right to receive Danish State Education Grant, if they work 11 hours per week besides their studies years. In 2012, 442 international EU students received Danish State Education Grant (SU), and in 2014 the number was multiplied by ten to 4,141 people. Our survey showed that almost 30 % of the students knew from the beginning that their stay in Aalborg was only temporary. When we asked the focus group the same question all of them stated that their stay in Aalborg is only temporary. In fact, one of them stated:

> "The smartest guys in my opinion are the ones who are going back to their home countries with a really nice, free education…" (Sivaka, et al. 2015 Appendix 9, 91)

This indicates that there might be a problem with welfare tourism in Denmark in form of students from Eastern Europe who choose to study in Denmark because of free education and the possibility to receive State Education Grant with the only purpose to leave immediately after graduation, as debated by several experts. (Møller 2014)

Therefore, these reflections above can all form the basis of future studies, where especially welfare tourism would be interesting and relevant to further investigation.

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