



## **Master Thesis**

# Exploring Long-term International Mobility: Life Perspectives of Master students

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .....	1
1. LITERATURE REVIEW .....	3
1.1 International mobility .....	3
1.2 Benefits of international mobility .....	8
1.3 Challenges of international mobility .....	10
1.4 Life satisfaction as a whole .....	12
1.5 Research question.....	14
2. METHODOLOGY .....	15
2.1 Research paradigm .....	15
2.2 Research design.....	15
2.3 Research approach/method .....	15
2.4 Data collection method/instrument .....	16
2.5 Sampling.....	19
2.6 Data analysis method .....	21
2.7 Quality criteria.....	22
3. ANALYSIS .....	24
3.1 Benefits of long-term mobile life .....	24
3.2 Challenges of long-term mobile life.....	28
3.3 Adapting to mobile life .....	34
CONCLUSION.....	37
Realizations .....	37
Implications.....	38
Limitations .....	38
Suggestions for future research.....	39
REFERENCE LIST .....	41

## **LIST OF FIGURES**

Figure 1: Overview of themes.....	33
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## **APPENDICES**

Appendix A: Interview guide.....	i
Appendix B: Interview transcripts .....	v

# INTRODUCTION

One result of the increasing internationalization of the world economy has been the rising mobility of university-educated individuals who have moved abroad to enrich their studies or working experience (Castles & Miller, 2009; Cerdin, Diné & Brewster, 2013). Over the last two decades, we have witnessed that higher education institutions have promoted student exchange and more and more young people are travelling with the purpose of having an international studying and living experience (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2011). As Chang (2012) points out, “*a lot of countries currently view international academic mobility and educational exchange as critical components for sharing knowledge, building intellectual capital, and remaining competitive in a globalizing world*” (p. 583). In Europe for instance, the Erasmus educational exchange program and the ‘Bologna process’ played a very important role in making international education more attractive to students and promote cooperation, mobility and education. International student mobility has certainly played an important role in promoting cultural diversity and enriching individuals’ worldview and experiences.

A lot of those young people, after having such international experiences, tend to continue their mobile life through more programs, i.e. additional bachelor/master education, working internships, jobs, volunteering etc. Their motivation comes from either their fascination with exploring new countries, maybe out of necessity (e.g. financial/institutional problems in their country, limited opportunities, inequality etc.) or out of desire in building an international profile in hopes of increasing their chances of employment in the future. In some cases, these choices put the individuals on a continuous moving pattern, where they need to constantly adapt to a new environment (Cohen & Gössling, 2015). This change becomes even bigger once the adjustment occurs between countries, hence change in the whole social setting. This may lead to what Anderson (2015) calls ‘*disruptive conditions*’ as the individual changes regularly environment, which can result to a certain degree of life disorientation and fragmented identity. Anderson (2015) speaks of a disruption that is “*geographical, emotional, psychological as well as physical in nature*” and argues that “*our perception, understanding and positioning within the world changes all the time*” (p. 2). Bauman (2004) refers to these as vulnerable individuals who struggle for some legitimacy and stability. Youth is facing different dilemmas, especially in the face of unemployment and mobility of this kind serves as a temporary escape.

Considering both sides of the phenomenon, one could say that mobile life can greatly affect, among other factors, how satisfied and how mobile individuals evaluate their lives. Diener, Emmons, Larsen, and Griffin (1985) wrote that “*the judgment of how satisfied people are with their present state of affairs, is based on a comparison with a standard which each individual*

*sets for him or herself* (p. 71). It is of common sense that life satisfaction is influenced by different factors such as health, family bonds, friends, employment, self-esteem and so forth, but every individual regards and places different value on each of them (Diener et al., 1985). In this sense, this thesis seeks to understand how individuals perceive their lives as a whole. As being mobile influences the individual's life substantially, what role does it play in the life of a mobile youth? Is being regularly mobile improving the individual's life, is there a point where it is disorienting the individual?

Literature on international student or generally youth mobility is indeed, and also according to the work of Wells (2014), majorly concentrated in the scientific fields of Migration, Education and Sociology of Higher Education. There is, for instance, quite a number of studies on impacts of studying abroad with the Erasmus program (Engel, 2010; Nedelcu & Ulrich, 2014). However, as much as Erasmus/similar programs or bachelor/master programs abroad affect undoubtedly the lives of those students, they are representing a short amount of time in a youth's life comparing to an individual/student that leads a continuous mobile life for some years. On the other hand, immigration studies (Cerdin et al., 2013; Maydell-Stevens, Masgoret & Ward, 2007) are the other extreme, actually leaving your original living country/environment for another permanently. There are also studies on business travellers (Cohen & Gössling, 2015; Labrianidis, 2014) or studies on backpackers (Cohen, 2010). The interest of the author is to address what lies in between a short-term period abroad, such as a semester exchange program, and a permanent option, such as immigration. The gap addressed in this thesis refers to the life of the long-term mobile youth, the one who continuously changes living/studying/working environments abroad. The author focuses on what mobile youth believe for their current mobile lives as a whole, what are their thoughts, what are the benefits of this life, what are the challenges they face, and what they think of the life choices they make.

As the topic discussed is not widely researched, the thesis is characterized by an exploratory design and nature, seeking to provide some depth of understanding in the field. The author chose to follow a qualitative approach and the use of interviews to gather his data. To delimit his scope though and make the topic more approachable, he examines only young individuals that lead a mobile life. The author believes that a selection of mobile individuals of any age would broaden and jeopardize the implications of this thesis. As such, he draws his answers from a pool of highly mobile students coming from an international master program called European Master in Tourism Management. EMTM is a two-year master program in which each semester its students are required to move to a new country and university to complete their studies (EMTM, 2015). The thesis concentrates and relies on those individuals' contributions and tries to discover new aspects in the field, connect the patterns arising in their answers and identify key themes. In few words, the author tries to approach the topic by keeping in mind the following research question:

## **RQ: How does long-term international mobility affect youth's life as a whole?**

Having explained the rationale of the topic, here is the structure the thesis follows in the next chapters: a Literature review, presenting relevant works in the field and taking aspects of several topics; a Methodology section presenting the general strategy followed in the thesis, including paradigm, design, approach, data collection method, sampling, data analysis method and quality criteria; an Analysis section, where the data collected from the fieldwork are presented, drawing patterns and linking to any relevant literature and theory; and finally the Conclusion section with closing highlights and thoughts on real life implications, limitations of the study and suggestions for future research.

# **1. LITERATURE REVIEW**

## **1.1 International mobility**

The phenomenon of international mobility is diverse and many disciplines are interested in its implications. In this chapter, the author wants to describe different aspects of mobility, different classifications and various associations that have been made over the years with mobility, with emphasis naturally on international youth mobility. Aim is to identify different views that could be useful in realizing and understanding the topic during the analysis of the fieldwork. Consequently, what follows is a combination of different works to provide some substantial background and serve in apprehending the topic.

It is evident that international youth mobility is mostly captured in the **Student mobility field** and in this context there are different ways to describe it. To understand the whole extent of student mobility, one should step a bit back and see what the term is comprised of. Wells (2014) provides valuable insight on student mobility in its different identities and, along with other researchers, she agrees that various institutions or studies understand the phenomenon differently.

Firstly, the most apparent characteristic of student mobility is its geographical relocation from one place to another; it is also referred to as physical or spatial mobility (Wells, 2014). Wells divides this relocation into intra-national/inward mobility or international/transnational/outward mobility; the former simply means relocating within the same country while the later involves crossing borders of one's country.

Secondly, student mobility falls into academic mobility. Academic mobility would generally involve individuals of academia, students and professors alike, relocating for the purpose of



personal and professional development (Tremblay, 2005). Academic mobility is most commonly associated with student mobility. The European Parliament and Council (2006) for instance, in their report, describe international student mobility as a period of formal or non-formal learning abroad for personal or professional development. This definition is a bit broader and could include what King, Findlay and Ahrens (2010) refer to as either studying within a university, having an internship or taking a temporary teacher or language assistant job, as all these could be part of academic mobility. Within the realm of student mobility, the study of HEFCE (2004) identified another three types:

- the termed diploma mobility which is mobility for a whole program, known also as degree mobility (e.g. any Bachelor, Master, PhD program)
- the mobility for part of a program, known as credit mobility (e.g. Erasmus program)
- the voluntary mobility chosen for individual reasons (e.g. AIESEC volunteering)

King et al. (2010) specify it even more to which stage of education the mobility takes place, whether this is the undergraduate, postgraduate or doctorate level. This studying abroad opportunity offers a lot of undergraduate/post graduate students the chance to be hosted in partner universities, with a time length of one week to one year, and receive credits for their courses there (McKeown, 2009).

Moving on though from these first categorizations, Wells (2014) shows in her study that international student mobility is most importantly the interest of several academic fields. Most literature comes from Migration, Education and Sociology studies but as newer influences and contributions arise, studies come also from Psychology, Network research and Tourism fields. She points out that for that reason it is difficult to define mobility and researchers renegotiate their definitions according to each respective field of interest and their implications. This however, can be a valuable strength to a studied phenomenon, depicting diversity and different approaches taken in the research community.

Wells' (2014) research shows that the academic **field of Migration** provides the most input in international student mobility. She explains that research on the phenomenon from the view of Migration field wants to understand why and what influences student flows. Push and pull factors are traditionally used to explain what makes students to leave their countries (push) and what makes them want to move abroad (pull) (Li & Bray, 2007). Li and Bray (2007) refer also to the reverse push and pull factors meaning for instance that pull factors can apply to your home country in the sense that your home country may have activities that 'pull' you to stay there and so on.

Big part of the general and classical Migration research is centered in the economic and political reasons of peoples' relocation (King, 2002). As the world progresses though, King identifies an array of characteristics of migration. He (p. 90) begins with presenting an overall classification, taken after Jansen's work of 1969: the phenomenon of migration is geographical, with individuals moving across space, influencing the environment of both home and host country; it is demographic, changing the number of populations; it is economic, because of economic problems and imbalance; it is political, if countries want to restrict flows of individuals; it includes psychological parameters, as individuals have different reasons and problems leading to another country; and also sociological implications, as social structures are influenced by individuals leaving their home and living in a new society. This interdisciplinary nature of migration, makes challenging for a researcher to study the implications of the phenomenon at the full extent and it is logical to say that it requires time and combined efforts. It constitutes a dynamic process and it does not represent a single point in time; moreover, it is not only the moving abroad part one has to consider but more importantly the life-long process an individual goes through (Castles, 2000).

King (2002) captures a very good deal of these different perspectives. He distinguishes between:

- internal and international migration
- voluntary and forced migration
- temporary and permanent migration
- legal and illegal

In the sphere of voluntary/forced migration King (2002) points out some interesting branches. Individuals can be migrants out of "*free will*", meaning out of "*life-choice ambitions*" (p. 92) such as education, or retirement in a pleasant according to person country, or people who simply "*prioritize quality of life and aesthetic considerations over income*" (p. 100). They can be migrants for economic reasons, for instance for a better job, with higher earnings if unemployment is a problem in his/her country. They can also be migrants out of need or of reasons out of their control or forced to leave, such as war, poverty or simply when children are taken by their parents out of the country. King (2002) in his voluntary classification is talking about a shift also in that migration is becoming even a consumption product for people to 'buy'.

In the sphere of temporary/permanent migration it is important to make understood that by definition of the English language, migration is a temporary movement and it implies returning to the origin place, while the permanent relocation is attributed to the term immigration. Beine, Noël and Ragot (2014) for instance define students with no permanent residence (in a country in

which they study) as movers. Iglicka (2000) gives more categories of the (temporary) migration phenomenon. She distinguishes between:

- shuttle migrants, as the ones who never travelled for more than three months consecutively (could be more than one trip)
- the short-term migrants as the ones who travelled for more than three months and less than a year
- the long-term migrants as the ones who migrated for more than just a year

In the general sense, King (2002, p.95) refers also to the ‘brain waste’ phenomenon of Rhode (1993) meaning that educated migrants are attracted to lesser jobs because comparing to their countries the wage in the foreign country is considerably higher, most specifically in the case of immigration. This goes also in hand with the ‘brain drain’ phenomenon as other countries, usually the most developed ones, are benefiting from migrants’ skills (Labrianidis, 2014). These are also called highly-skilled migrants. Hunter, Oswald and Charlton (2009) say that the most developed countries manage to attract large numbers of highly-skilled migrants because they invest heavily in R&D. These migrants can also be paralleled to the ‘creative class’ of Florida (2002) as they are individuals with education, talent, they are broad-minded and they “*prefer places that are innovative, diverse and tolerant*” (p.8).

The increased travel opportunities and accelerating speeds in both transportation and information (internet) make these experiences very possible (Labrianidis, 2014). Moreover, the increasing competence of more people to speak more than their native language and especially of the lingua francas, with English the most predominant, is another fundamental reason of individuals taking these experiences (Wells, 2014). King (2002) even refers to ‘love migrations’ made possible by these two factors (transnational romantic relationships when individuals move to another country to be with their partners). And all this increased mobility is a derivative especially of the last two decades (Labrianidis, 2014).

Another important association of international mobility, owing more to **Sociology field**, comes from human and social capital theories:

Human capital, as defined by Becker (1964) and Schultz (1974), is the knowledge, skills and qualifications individuals gather through investing in education and training. It incorporates also the relationship of these competencies with their potential returns on the individual itself (through more earnings) and even more, it focuses on the importance of education levels as driver for economic growth in the market, in the country these individuals reside. Furthermore, Becker talks about time allocation which states that individuals try to maximize their utility over their lifetime by investing in their education. The combination now of this education and

international migration is a further extension of human capital investment. Linking human capital theory with motivations to move abroad, Sjaastad (1962) applied the concept of human capital investment to migration decisions; he saw migration costs as investment compared to the possible returns of moving abroad, similarly as human capital theory suggests. Human capital is also often related with highly-skilled individuals (referred earlier) in that the later are carriers of human capital.

Social capital, as defined by Bordieu (1986), is the benefits that an individual draws upon by constantly maintaining its social network and by fostering social bonds/interactions with organizations. The function, as Coleman (1988) states, is to bridge resources for individuals to achieve goals. The concept of social capital that Baum and Ziersch's (2003) glossary refers to, includes on its core social networks and civil society; social networks means keeping relationships on informal (e.g. family, friends, neighbors) or formal (e.g. organizations, associations) level, and civil society means the individual's contribution to changes in his community through non-formal activities (e.g. volunteering). Urry (2012) says that to truly retain this social capital (or 'network capital' as he specifically refers to), one must engage in physical travel. As Amit (2010) states, "*it is via social capital that individuals can more easily obtain economic and cultural resources, and ensure benefits via membership in organizations and social networks*" but that there is obviously a "*relative deficit of social capital*" of those people when going to a new country (p. 517). This can say even more about people that have to leave a country even before they can develop any social ties.

**Tourism field** is also interested in international student mobility, as students moving abroad represent a significant portion of a tourism income in a country. The phenomenon of individuals educating themselves abroad, according to that literature, is referred to as international academic tourism or educational tourism, and more explicitly is defined as stays and activities in higher education institutions, of individuals who move to a country outside of their own for less than a year (Bento, 2014; Ritchie, Carr, & Cooper, 2003; Rodriguez, Martinez-Roget, & Pawlowska, 2012). People have become more familiar with the way of life abroad and this is due to the advancement in transportation and telecommunications (especially through Internet) that facilitated the process of international mobility (as referred also earlier). People, first, have started to travel more, second, they get more chances in international exchange programs and third, the increased capacity of looking for career prospects abroad online, makes life outside their home countries' boundaries way more feasible than in the past (Labrianidis, 2014).

Referring to all these typologies is just to understand the extent the phenomenon of international mobility reaches. But it is important to distill and define what is needed in this thesis. At first, the author is interested in spatial mobility that is international and concentrates on young individuals. Secondly, the segment he is interested in is either students, interns, or young

people devoting time in volunteer programs and generally any voluntary temporary activity outside their own country (as King describes). Thirdly, the author thinks of these individuals as highly-skilled migrants and carriers of human and social capital (that is though yet to be found where they will put those to good use). Last and most important, it is of the highest interest to the author that these individuals are long-term migrants, as Iglicka (2000) describes, but who have changed different living/studying/working environments, in a number of countries, for more than just once or twice, while the stay in each one country should last more than three months and less than a year. This is what the author defines as **long-term international youth mobility** and consequently aims for the most mobile young people to get answers from and understand how they lead this life.

## 1.2 Benefits of international mobility

All the experiences gathered abroad have certainly a lot to give to an individual and a variety of studies have come up with extensive advantages of this life. Most of them come once more from the field of academic student mobility. For instance, Nedelcu and Ulrich (2014) in their study of the Erasmus exchange program, they identify positive effects of mobility generally connected to enhanced education and communication skills, autonomy, intercultural experiences exposure, enhanced employability and general adaptability to reality-based challenges. They mention, “*studying abroad is an academic, intellectual, cultural, and emotional journey, which offers opportunities for international interaction and personal growth - enriching experiences, gaining knowledge, and developing skills that benefit a student both professionally and personally*” (p. 91).

To put these under some framework, notable is the work of Kumpikaitė and Duoba (2013) who present different advantages, which they acknowledge as ‘core competencies’ of students’ mobility. They endorse mobility, as a student would come back in his country enriched in an educational, cultural and social sense. They divide them in three basic categories of competencies, namely:

- academic knowledge and skills
- cultural awareness and expression
- social and civic competencies

While the first point largely depends on the university to the thesis author’s opinion, there is acceptance in lots of survey analyses which study students who consider to go abroad, that education quality difference between home university and foreign one, is one of the main motivations to go abroad (Beine et al., 2014; Szelényi, 2006). Rosenzweig (2006) says that,

especially for developing and underdeveloped countries, one reason for migration is clearly the lack of educational facilities regardless of level of education; individuals go abroad to acquire human capital and then return home to put their education investment in good use. These, broadly speaking, would entail broadening of education and improving career prospects abroad.

For the second point of cultural competence, Kumpikaitė and Duoba (2013) identify foreign language proficiency, intercultural understanding and tolerance, and knowledge of other countries. These would refer to actual use of language on real settings, developing sensitivity to other cultures and challenging or acknowledging stereotypes.

For the third point of social competence, Kumpikaitė and Duoba (2013) combining the works of different researchers [Bracht et al. (2006), De Ville et al. (1996), Tett et al. (2000), Calaguas and Dizon, Paper of Mobility by ESIB], they compiled a list of different elements that reflect the social and civic competencies. They display at least 14 items, but to mention some: “*knowledge of social rules and social life*”, “*ability to understand social situations and act accordingly*”, “*social acceptance*”, “*ability to make changes and learn from experience*”, “*self-confidence*”, “*self-awareness, social awareness, responsible decision-making*” and so on (p. 831). All these items would project the open-mindedness, independence, freedom of expression, adaptability and general personal development of the individual during the mobility period. Interesting is the aspect Morais & Ogden (2011) present in their study of educational travel, global citizenry and sustainability: the global citizenship model. This is comprised of three dimensions namely:

- social responsibility
- global competence
- global civic engagement

What they mean with these three broadly would be: developing a sense of justice, altruism, empathy, personal responsibility for the first; self-awareness, intercultural communication and global knowledge for the second; and getting involved in civic/volunteer activities, having a political voice and general ‘thinking global/acting local’ attitudes for the third. Tarrant, Lyons, Stoner, Kyle, Wearing, & Poudyal (2014) talk of developing “*capacities to think and act with a global mindset*” (p. 406), while Schattle (2009) talks of “*being aware of responsibilities beyond one’s immediate communities*” (p. 12). These would entail escaping the mindset of only one’s own country and city, seeing a bigger world and having an understanding of what is important in a global scale.

Nedelcu and Ulrich (2014) claim that mobile students engaged in day-to-day interactions in a foreign country, do have a set of advantages comparatively to their non-mobile peers. This fact

is also supported by the findings of Engel (2010), on impact of Erasmus mobility on the professional career. In her study, Engel presents that mobile compared to non-mobile graduate students are more likely to be sent abroad for work assignments (45% vs 14%), do business trips to other countries (61% vs 30%), work with colleagues/clients from other countries (75% vs 36%) and use foreign languages in professional situations (86% vs 42%). What is more, McKeown (2009) and Chieffo and Griffiths (2004) propose that studying abroad, even for a short period is enough to have considerable impact on students' personal development. The author agrees with Donnelly-Smith's (2009) judgment that the degree to how globally engaged a student can become, because of an experience abroad, is unrelated to the duration of this experience, and the implications of even a short period abroad can be life-changing for an individual.

The author wants essentially to understand how much these aspects grasp the acceptance of the mobile youth, and foremost which ones are the most important and affecting them in the long run. Accordingly, many of the features presented above helped in the building of the interview guide, discussed in the Methodology section.

### **1.3 Challenges of international mobility**

It is important to realize that international mobility is a significant opportunity but it is also a big challenge. Nedelcu and Ulrich (2014) on their study of international students, acknowledge that mobile students "*have to be prepared for such a challenging intercultural adventure*" (p. 91). Their respondents' answers communicated general mobility-related challenges such as problems of practical nature as in language barriers or accommodation/transportation related issues, or problems of personal nature, as in missing loved ones or specific activities, hobbies they had home or food etc. One might understand that the challenges for a long-term mobile youth can be even more extensive, when thinking of the moving and changing pattern he/she follows, from home to one country, then back, then going abroad again, or travelling straight to next country and so forth.

To put a framework once more, the author consults the work of Cohen and Gössling (2015), in which they address the topic of hyper-mobility from the standpoint of professionals, whose job requires them to be mobile. Professionals as such could be business executives, consultants, engineers and even athletes and entertainers (King, 2002). Cohen and Gössling (2015) identify costs of hyper-mobility in three levels:

- social consequences
- physiological consequences
- psychological/emotional consequences

For the first point, one of the most important consequences is that increasing mobility, even in the presence of advanced communication technologies (e.g. Skype), leads individuals to reduced time being present at home and limited actual social life (Bergström, 2010). To maintain a close contact with his family, friends or general network, an individual needs to visit them regularly, which means being even more mobile; in both cases relations are very prone to become weakened (Cohen & Gössling, 2015; Urry, 2012). This becomes especially apparent in the case of family life when one of the parents is absent due to mobility, meaning creating loss of parent role and also a home-responsibilities vacuum (Black & Jamieson, 2007). This mobility also leads to missing local life back home, whether it is a sport activity, a dancing group or any volunteering in community level (Cohen & Gössling, 2015). Another side is that study programs have started being commercialized and marketed to students through their universities (Lewin, 2009). The point here is that on one hand, these products want to create individuals with experience abroad, but on the other, many times they do not consider their effective management and learning outcomes (McLaughlin & Johnson, 2006; Tarrant et al., 2014). All these would envelop start losing contact with friends and family, stop committing to activities enjoyed back home, overall a loss of personal social capital at home and a loss in the social context of a country.

For the second point of physiological consequences, Cohen and Gössling (2015) stress that literature has rarely illustrated the “*accumulated physical tiredness that goes together with frequent travel*” (p. 20). Ivancevich, Konopaske and Defrank (2003) describe this as ‘frequent travel exhaustion’. Cohen and Gössling (2015) claim that this in certain cases can lead to ‘chronic exhaustion’, where even the constant anticipation, organizing and preparing for each trip departure can also have a toll in the individual in the long run. These entail raised levels of stress and intensity.

For the third point of psychological and emotional consequences, Cohen and Gössling (2015) identify this mobility as an often “*isolating and lonely experience*” (p. 22). This sense of isolation can have two meanings. Firstly, when an individual is missing contact with friends or family back home, this means that different interests and worldviews may arise during all this time, which can lead to isolation. Emotional distancing can result from this long mobility and even a sense of guilt may arise from these facts (Cohen & Gössling, 2015; Urry, 2012). Secondly, a lack of understanding of the local social life, values and norms may also lead to feelings of alienation and isolation (Maydell-Stevens et al., 2007). On the level of friendly or romantic relationships, Adler and Adler (1999) found that as much as new relations can definitely develop on this mobility patterns, they tend to be situational and short-lived and these individuals tend to search for relationships that are more durable. All the above, show the difficulty of fitting in, that people back home often cannot relate, it involves feelings of



loneliness and difficulty of keeping relationships, which make the mobile individuals experiencing a loss of sense of belonging as Maydell-Stevens et al. (2007) also conclude. Cohen (2010), in his work of backpackers' life, identifies confusion and personal identity issues stemming from mobile lifestyles and the feeling of being lost. Maydell-Stevens et al. (2007), from the point of view of immigrants, they describe the 'lost' feeling as a result of living in a new country but not feeling useful or important. Maydell-Stevens et al. also refer to starting a new life again, from the beginning or 'from scratch', is a significant challenge as revealed from their study respondents. They explain that a lot of the aforementioned make them nostalgic of their past life, family or friends back home, of their country, and that they are unable to "*create a new sense of belonging*" or "find their place in society" (p. 187).

The author once more wants to understand how these challenges, coming from different mobile groups, are reflecting the reality of the mobile youth he defines. Same as with the benefits of mobility, many of these aspects were used in the interview guide building, discussed in the Methodology section.

#### **1.4 Life satisfaction as a whole**

Studying both benefits and challenges of mobile life abroad, it is becoming evident that the phenomenon affects considerably how satisfied and how individuals evaluate their life. Life satisfaction is according to Andrews and Robinson (1991) the total evaluation of one's life, the 'global' wellbeing, happiness and satisfaction with life as a whole. Life satisfaction has been an object of studies for decades and some authors believe it is an overall evaluation of life, while others believe that it comes from the sum of different factors influencing life (Diener et al., 1985). Diener et al. realize that life satisfaction is affected by countless factors coming from the social to the personal level, but they stress that every individual places different value on each of them; "*it is based on a comparison with a standard which each individual sets for him or herself*" (p. 71) they say. Along with Tatarkiewicz (1976), both works emphasize that life satisfaction should be based on total satisfaction and summing up the different life aspects is not accurate enough. Shin and Johnson (1978) also support this view and define life satisfaction as an overall assessment of life of an individual "*according to his/her chosen criteria*" (p. 478). The thesis author agrees with these researchers and seeks to understand how his participants perceive their lives as a whole in their own subjective terms.

The investigation of life satisfaction or wellbeing literature in Mobility, Migration or Education disciplines has produced mixed results (Lönqvist, Leikas, Mähönen, & Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2015). For instance, in Migration studies the focus has been more into migrants' difficulty in adapting rather than life satisfaction (Berry, 2001). In Education studies, where occasionally education is associated with human capital, Helliwell (2003) understands that education is

related to life satisfaction (through higher earnings, higher perceived trust levels, and improved social relationships i.e. social capital) and that it might improve it but he states that this is not the norm. In other studies of immigration, results seem to be varied in wellbeing, as they seem to follow a ‘U-curve’ as Lönnqvist et al. (2015) elaborately describe: wellbeing seems at its highest in the beginning of settling, then it falls, and then it goes up again once the individual adapts. This is expected as the individual might be excited when reaching the destination but once being there he/she might start experiencing challenges (Berry, 2006). Lönnqvist et al. (2015), in conducting a longitudinal study on immigration, asking their respondents in three consecutive years, they realize that even in the depth of time it is difficult to make predictions and measure life satisfaction in the context of migration.

In the effort to measure life satisfaction as a whole, Diener et al. (1985) made use of a 5-item scale, the Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS), in which respondents evaluate on a 1-7 range their agreement with five statements about their life. Examples of these items are “*in most ways my life is close to ideal*” or “*I am satisfied with my life*” or “*if I could live my life over I would change almost nothing*” (p. 72). Pavot, Diener and Suh (1998), based on Diener et al.’s work, introduced a 15-item scale, the Temporal Satisfaction With Life Scale (TSWLS), distinguishing past, present and future-related questions on overall satisfaction e.g. “*I am satisfied with my life in the past*” to “*I am satisfied with my current life*” to “*I will be satisfied in my life in the future*” (p. 354). The purpose of this scale is to help the respondents understand the questions easier, relate to each part of their lives separately and answer as accurately as possible.

What the author wants to take from all this and the reason of referring to these two studies especially is because this ‘past-present-future’ logic of the latter was of significant help methodologically speaking in this thesis, in framing the interview guide, and make its questions more related to the life timeline of the participants of the author. The author tried to investigate the whole picture of the mobile life and still relate it but not frame it under the life satisfaction literature, and get a more exploratory approach on the topic.

**Note:** The author should point out a last important but sensitive matter: he refrains from including the economic part in the discussion. The whole topic of this thesis is centered in the voluntary decision of individuals to have a mobile life and as such this life may appear as highly advantageous comparing to a more global understanding of migration. No matter the migrating situation, this might range either as a major problem for a migrant or a problem of significant importance but of secondary nature. In the context of forced immigration for example, this would be most probably a very important matter; in the case where an individual chooses to settle somewhere out of simple pleasure it would be the opposite. As was shown in the previous sections, every mobile individual has different reasons to move abroad, but as Lönnqvist et al. (2015) explore, “*even privileged migrants will face many of the hardships that all migrants face,*

*such as leaving their friends, family, and familiar environment, and confronting many life changes and new challenges”* (p. 499). The author of course does not equate his study participants with affluent individuals but he assumes that they have the necessary means to support their life in any way and that their mobile life comes off a voluntary decision. The source of everyone’s income for a mobile life could be a result of personal work, parents’ help, granted scholarships and so forth. This does not interest the author. This is a personal sensitive matter and the author prefers it left out of the discussion.

## **1.5 Research question**

All the previous several works depict that the phenomenon of mobility crosses into various disciplines. This fact can also be reflected in the different academic journals used in the thesis to describe it. At this point, the author wants to emphasize that every mobile group has different motivations, skills and adaptability when moving abroad, e.g. a mobile student is different to an immigrant who is different from a business traveler, and these different contexts cannot be lightly compared. It may also be logical, in many cases above, that the classifications presented can merge into each other or split into different categories, but they are essentially more useful for heuristic reasons, so we can make sense of the different researchers’ views. As such, the author cannot, or differently, prefers not to make predictions on what really affects the life of his mobile participants at this point but rather let the fieldwork reveal the different aspects.

Consequently, this is what the author finds as a gap in the literature; individuals having neither a big one-time experience, nor a lot short experiences and not a permanent relocation. It is the long-term movement abroad the author is interested and its implications on the life of the youth. And if taken from the perspective of life satisfaction literature, it is understood that the life satisfaction and evaluation people convey is based on their subjective criteria and thus this would be a ‘perceived’ life satisfaction, which would also be exactly the interest of the author (what his participants believe of their life), which is also in accordance with the constructivism paradigm applied in the thesis (explained in the Methodology section). Consequently, the major research question arising is:

**RQ: How does long-term international mobility affect youth’s life as a whole?**

Funneling the topic down to the research question, next follows a detailed description of the methodology of the thesis so the reader can understand how the research was conducted.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1 Research paradigm**

Distinguishing from the different research paradigms, the one that the author takes after is social constructivism (referred to also in epistemological terms as interpretivism or anti-positivism). This paradigm suggests that reality is seen and interpreted by each person differently, and through experiences people create their own understanding of the world (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Schutz, 1932). The foundations of this concept were introduced by Husserl (1913), which he expressed as phenomenology, i.e. the study of a phenomenon and the subjective giving of meaning to experiences; each person reflects and gives different significance to a specific idea or experience. The author was precisely interested in how his participants perceive reality - their mobile life - on their own way and how they present it. He tried to empathize with the participants, apprehend their views and produce valuable output out of them. Taking this viewpoint, the author states that the representations of the studied topic are merely a possible version of the social reality. They are interpreted solely by him and the aim is a contextual understanding of the social reality studied, that may set a base for a later empirical research.

### **2.2 Research design**

Given the limited research done in what the author defined as long-term international youth mobility, the thesis naturally followed an exploratory research design. The exploratory design is used when a phenomenon has not been yet clearly defined and intends to explore research questions rather than provide definitive solutions (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012). It is used to form a basis for a later more conclusive research, it is flexible in nature and the researcher has to be willing to change the direction of the study if new and different data come along (Saunders et al., 2012). The increasing long-term youth mobility is a derivative of the last two decades and implications about it have not been made yet by a lot of studies, hence an exploratory framework was suitable to guide this thesis. The time horizon of the thesis is not without limits though, which means that the thesis is cross-sectional, i.e. studying a particular phenomenon at a set time (Saunders et al., 2012).

### **2.3 Research approach/method**

Being exploratory in nature, the approach this thesis took was inductive. Inductive research is the search for patterns from observations and making broader generalizations out of a studied phenomenon (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The researcher collects data related to the phenomenon and

tries to develop key themes and assumptions and possibly a theory to explain patterns in the studied phenomenon (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The inductive approach of this thesis came in accord with a qualitative method to collect findings. Qualitative methods are interpretative, they are based on perceptions, words and attitudes of knowledgeable studied subjects and aim to provide a depth of understanding rather than generalizable results (Bryman & Bell, 2011). This thesis looked for these perspectives and the patterns they create and relied on the mobile youths' opinions, as it regards them as individuals with considerable knowledge on the matter.

## **2.4 Data collection method/instrument**

### *Interviews*

The author collected his qualitative, primary data, through interviews. Interviews, in research terms, are conversations between two or more people with a distinctive purpose (Saunders et al., 2012). Their aim is to get a rich and deep understanding of the context studied and for that it requires of the interviewer to establish rapport with the interviewee; the questions have to be carefully formulated, and the interviewer needs to listen actively to the interviewee's answers to be able to explore them further (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Saunders et al., 2012). The thesis, as described above, looks for this depth of information and the close contact the interviews provide can reveal abundant insight into the complexity of mobile life. In addition, the author has followed the same pattern of mobility with the sample, and knows personally the interviewees as he attended the same two academic years with them (see also Sampling Technique/Sample section). This fact should have hopefully created a trusting and comfortable environment for the interviewees during the discussions, to open themselves to a constructive conversation with truthful statements.

### *Semi-structured interviews*

This means that a rather free framework of questions was employed so that interviewees would not feel limited and they could share and build on any related thought in the discussion. This was accomplished by the use of semi-structured interviews; the interviewer employs a set of different themes and questions that need to be addressed during the discussion, though omitting/adding questions and even the order can be flexible to change in the flow of the conversation (Saunders et al., 2012). This non-standardised type of interview guide helped this thesis to maintain a structure but let its subjects free to give any insight they saw relevant as the conversation went on. Indeed, in some of the interviews, the order of questions had to be altered and only a couple of times questions were omitted for the sake of continuity.

As far as the number of interviews is concerned, Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) say that it depends on the conditions of the research and when the interviewer senses saturation has been reached. However, they suggested with their experiment that 12 interviews of a homogenous group is what is required to reach saturation. Bryman and Bell (2011) report that a researcher needs a larger sample when dealing with a heterogeneous population in a study than in the case of a homogenous population. Saunders (2012) suggests that for semi-structured interviews of a heterogeneous group, 12-30 interviews should occur. The participants of this thesis definitely come from different backgrounds but the entire sample lived and studied to at least three of the same environments, hence the author might suggest some measure of homogeneity. Although homogeneity would give more generalizable results, the aim of the thesis was variation in the participants (see Sampling Technique/Sample section). This also means that the interviews should go on until there is nothing to gain from more interviews. Suggesting a choice in between homogeneity and heterogeneity, 20 interviews were originally planned. However, limitations in the time frame compelled the author to conduct less, and in essence 12 interviews were completed as bare minimum requirement, according also to the literature. The duration of each interview was approximately 30-40 minutes and the interviews were conducted in the beginning of June 2015.

### *Interview guide design*

The author, at a first stage, structured the interview guide contemplating on the different works read in the Literature review and of course based on the interests of the thesis. He took into account issues raised from previous researches and more specifically, he employed the past-present-future logic [as Pavot et al. (1998) used] the author described in the Literature review section. This was to help the participants think and produce their experiences individually for every part of their mobile lives. The guide incorporated questions about the participants' life abroad from the past till the present, subsequently asking them about what they think they gained or what were the challenges they faced/face in their life abroad, then asking them about their thoughts on their future, and in the end to make an overall evaluation of their long-term mobile life (see the interview questions in Appendix A). For that, open-ended questions were almost wholly employed, mainly interpreting, few hypothetical and certainly probing when needed.

Notably, to assist the interviewees in the questions on benefits and challenges of life abroad, two close-ended questions were used. In those, lists of perceived benefits and challenges respectively were shown to the interviewees and were asked to rate them according to the importance these ideas/items had for the lives. The ideas/items on the lists came first from the literature, second from the pre-testing period (where sharing thoughts and brainstorming contributed greatly) and thirdly from the personal experience of mobile life of the author. The items were presented in random order in the questions. The interviewees were also encouraged to

include additional input in the files if they thought their idea was not represented or if they wanted to express anything in their own words. These lists were two separate clickable files, sent online during the time of the interview. Their purpose was to assist the interviewees in contemplating and talking about something they might have wanted to talk but during the time of the interview would have maybe forgotten. The interviewees were asked though at first to think of benefits or challenges by themselves and share their thoughts without this aid and after that, the two close-ended question files were sent to them. Once the interviewees finished the rating, they were asked to send the two files back to the interviewer at the end of the interview. These files gave the author a further idea of how the ideas/items in them depict the lives of the participants as well as comparing them to what they chose to talk about.

Before each interview started, introductory remarks were made, welcoming the participant, introducing the topic, informing of the practicalities of the interview and asking once more for the permission to record. After each interview, the author explained the logic of the interview, thanked the participant and prompted him/her to contact him anytime if they wanted to add anything in their responses.

### *Pretesting*

Once the interview guide was drafted from the literature, the author had to ensure that it was field-ready. As such, preliminary test-interviews were conducted with five students of the EMTM generation 2014-2016 (see Population/Sampling Frame section for explanation of EMTM). This generation is comprised of mobile students that have also changed multiple living/studying environments (at least same three with the thesis' sample) and hence are ideal for the pilot interviews. The purpose of pretesting was twofold: first to identify elements/questions that could be included to make things clear, or excluded because they make the respondents feel uncomfortable, or reshaped/reordered to be understandable, and second to give the author some experience and confidence with the guide (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The role of the pretesting was instrumental; the comments and brainstorming of the pilot tests proved indeed very constructive and valuable and did certainly help the author achieve the purpose Bryman and Bell describe. It is indeed in this stage, for instance, that the author decided at first to employ the two close-ended questions in the interviews and at second to change the order of some questions to achieve continuity.

In addition, it is advisable to get the opinion of experts on gaining feedback and reviewing if the questions are suitable for the purpose of the research (Bryman & Bell, 2011). As such, the supervisor checked the guide, before and after the pilot tests, so it could be refined for the last time, and to give advice on how to conduct the interviews. In the meantime, the participants were sent two emails, a first informing them for the nature of the study, asking them if they want to

participate and subsequently setting a date for the interview, and a second, once they agreed, informing them about the practicalities of the interview and formalities of research conduct.

### *Internet-mediated interviewing*

Once the guide was adjusted, then the participants were reached on real-time internet-mediated interviews. This occurred because each participant of the sample resides at a different place from the one of the author. Although electronic interviews cannot achieve the highest levels of spontaneous communication compared to face-to-face ones, it has been suggested that they can facilitate more open and honest answers especially to more sensitive issues (Mann & Stewart, 2000). The author used the computer program Skype to communicate with the participants, as it is a widely used and free program, assuring of course that everyone has it installed to begin with. All the interviews were recorded so that the interviews can be transcribed and studied (see the transcripts in Appendix B). The computer program/application Pamela Pro for Skype was used to record those interviews. The participants were certainly informed in the initial email about the recording and gave their consent. Certainly, the internet connection failed sometimes and the recording had to be stopped and resumed but that was the case in only two times and no problems or discomfort occurred. The interviews were transcribed word-by-word to keep the integrity of each interviewee's answer. The anonymity of the interviewees is of course ensured, as research conduct dictates, and the interviewees were given the substitute abbreviations P1, P2 and likewise (as Participant 1, Participant 2) when referring to them in the Analysis section.

## **2.5 Sampling**

### *Population/Sampling Frame*

The author drew its answers from an international master program called European Master in Tourism Management (EMTM). EMTM is a two-year highly mobile program in which each semester students, selected from all over the world, are required to move to a new country and university to complete their studies; this mobility scheme engages its students both in terms of working with people from abroad (fellow students, professors) and in experiencing different country practices (EMTM, 2015). EMTM provided, in other words, an ideal sample frame for this thesis. Sample frame is simply a list of all the accessible units in the population from which the sample is selected; population is the universe of units on which a researcher aspires to generalize his/her results to (Bryman & Bell, 2011). However, this is a qualitative study and the use of population and sampling frame here is just to help the reader understand the bigger picture. If we were to define a wide population then it could be potentially individuals having or



about to have this long-term mobile life (or only EMTM students – see below though the Note about population in the Sampling Technique/Sample section) and sampling frame the enrolled EMTM students and alumni. But since it is a qualitative thesis and the sample is comprised only of individuals coming from EMTM, the results cannot and are not intended to be generalized to a wide population. It is for the reader to judge if the results are applicable to other settings. The author aims to provide a deep contextual understanding of the topic through individuals who have considerable knowledge on the matter and ultimately, provide an array of results for further empirical research.

**Note:** To be in accordance with the definition that was given in the Literature review section, i.e. ‘the stay in each country should last more than three months and less than a year’, the author should state here that the EMTM program surely lasts for more than two years, however the stay in each country is approximately five months, so the effect of the host country to the individual and vice versa is limited to less than a year, thus it would fall under the given definition. The stay should also have a minimum duration of three months to be of this thesis’ interests, as the settling in and out should have enough time to take effect on the individual. In addition, the aspect of individuals going abroad, returning back home and going again abroad is an important affecting factor to the life of mobile individuals and thus interests the author.

### *Sampling Technique/Sample*

A non-probability sample was employed, meaning a non-random selection of the sample (Saunders et al., 2012). Of this type of sampling, a purposive sampling technique was used to pick the interviewees and more specifically a heterogeneous sampling technique. This means that the respondents are selected according to the researcher and should have diverse characteristics to provide rich information and maximum variation in the data collected, in order to identify key themes in their answers (Patton, 2002). The author agrees with Patton’s view that this variation in the sample is a strength and any patterns that arise from their analysis can be of high interest and value. Another advantage of this non-random selection is that a researcher’s selecting of the interviewees can help avoid rather quiet, not cooperative or inarticulate individuals (Shenton, 2004).

The sample was comprised of the EMTM generation 2013-2015. As explained in the Interviews section, the author attended this generation as well and access and agreement of participants to be interviewed was easy. The unevenness though of the sample in providing students that could represent every continent, forced the author to limit his scope and thus choosing only between students that come from countries in the geographical area of Europe; specifically, around 20 out of the 33 students in the generation come from Europe. As such, among them, the author chose the people with the most mobile experience, but also chose them

according to where they come from, to provide both rich input and variation. The participants hence come from the following countries: Austria, Czech Republic, France, Germany (2), Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Netherlands, Slovakia, Slovenia and Ukraine.

**Note:** This limitation means that the population should change to European long-term mobile youth instead of general long-term mobile youth as mentioned before.

## **2.6 Data analysis method**

To analyze the data, the author followed the method of thematic analysis. Broadly defined, a researcher uses thematic analysis to identify, organize, analyze and describe patterns/themes occurring within his/her gathered data (Boyatzis, 1998). Themes emerge as part of a careful repeated reading of the data and capturing of important aspects of the studied phenomenon, related to the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). According to Braun and Clarke (2006), there are six phases of thematic analysis: ‘familiarization with the data’, ‘generation of initial codes’, ‘search for themes’, ‘review of these themes’, ‘definition and naming of the themes’ and ‘production of the report’.

After each interview was concluded the author tried to transcribe it as soon as possible (Word document format – See Appendix B) and read it once through to put down initial notes on what was interesting or important, while the data was still fresh in mind. That also helped in familiarizing with the data as well as understanding the data gathered as going forward with next interviews. With this process he tried to minimize the loss of context and fragmentation of the ideas that each participant wanted to convey at the time of the interview and not describe a version that he might have remembered had he done the transcribing after all interviews had been gathered. This entails the first phase of the thematic analysis.

Then the author followed a process of coding, in which a researcher creates codes i.e. gives names/labels to parts-paragraphs-sentences of the data according to his understanding of that data, and a process of comparison, in which he constantly contrasts the data to each other and maintains a close connection between data and the themes arising (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Sorting the different initial codes into themes, this went on until saturation had been reached, meaning the point when there is no reason to further review the data to see if they well-fit these themes (Bryman & Bell, 2011). These entail the second, third and fourth phases of the thematic analysis.

To assist the previous three steps of analysis, the author used the computer software called NVivo 10. NVivo is software designed to help qualitative research, enabling the user to organize and analyze non-numerical data (NVivo, 2015). Importing the transcribed interviews in the

software, different operations are available, among others, retrieving text with preferred words, creating tree-visualized schemes, examining word frequency in respondents' answers and employing summarized matrices (NVivo, 2015). Certainly, this tool helps researchers to systematize and analyze unstructured data faster and more efficiently, that would otherwise take considerable time to accomplish; however, it only serves as a supporting tool and interpretation and pattern drawing still has to be done by the researcher (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

The fifth phase entails the identification and definition of the essence of what is each theme is about and the detailed description of what is important about each one of them (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Lastly, in the sixth phase the researcher is called to provide a coherent, logical and interesting account of the story the data tell him/her, with sufficient evidence and make arguments in relation constantly to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The author aimed for a rich description of the entire data set rather than a detailed account of one particular theme. In this way, the reader can get a wider sense of the most important themes arising, especially in an under-researched area (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The author also followed a mostly inductive or data-driven approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to his thematic analysis rather than a theoretical, as the emerged themes were strongly linked to data themselves and were not bound to pre-existing theoretical background. Lastly, for the level and experience of the author in qualitative research, a semantic analysis was deemed more appropriate rather than a latent, meaning a researcher is looking to make sense of what the respondents have actually said and not looking far beyond, to their deepest underlying meanings (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

## **2.7 Quality criteria**

To ensure a rigorous work in research, the prominent criteria used have widely been reliability and validity. Generally speaking, reliability refers to whether the results of a study are consistent (internal consistency or external reliability), stable over time (stability) and repeatable (replicability); validity refers to whether a measure of a concept actually measures that concept (construct validity or internal validity), if it can be positively judged by experts/colleagues that it does (content/face validity), the ability of that measure to make accurate predictions (criterion validity) and whether the results can be generalized outside the specific context of the research (generalisability or external validity) (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Saunders et al., 2012). However, many researchers argue that their use in qualitative research is inapplicable (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; see also Kirk & Miller, 1986; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose alternative terms to assess the quality of qualitative research. The general term they use is trustworthiness and this is comprised of four criteria, i.e. credibility (internal validity and content validity), transferability (external validity), dependability (reliability) and confirmability (objectivity).

**Credibility:** The author tried to ensure the credibility of this thesis by firstly discussing the interview guide with supervisor and secondly by pre-testing it in a similar sample. The fact that the participants were co-students of the author shows a closer and empathic conversation towards one another at the time of the interview, with the goal to reveal truthful experiences. Furthermore, the author questioned only those who genuinely wanted to contribute and probed statements that were unclear, either during or after the interviews, to confirm what each respondent wanted to convey.

**Transferability:** As transferability refers mostly to the generalization of results, the only way to promote such a criterion is through rich description and sufficient contextual information of our data. In the end, it is the reader who determines in what different settings the results can be used. As such, the author states that the content presented is not generalizable but believes that it could be potentially used with mobile students of other programs (see also Suggestions for future research section).

**Dependability:** The author tries to ensure dependability by reporting each methodological step in detail, keeping records/references of every phase of the research process and justifying every choice. In this way, the reader is enabled to assess if proper research practices were used and allows a future researcher to repeat to some extent this work if needed.

**Confirmability:** Complete objectivity is a criterion that can hardly be assured in any research and this mostly has to do with researcher/participant bias; research entails the acceptance and acknowledgement of some bias by the researcher if one thinks of the personal interpretation of the results (Saunders et al., 2012), especially in qualitative methods. The topic at hand though comes as of genuine interest to the author as it literally represents his current life. He is indeed not predisposed in any direction and undoubtedly wants to find out what other individuals think of their mobile life. The aim is not to produce personal values and preferences on the topic but, as much as possible, a work that reflects the experiences and thoughts of the participants. What's more, the author certainly cannot control how the interviewees felt during the day of the interview or the specific period in their lives, which could temper with their answers, but this can be considered as part of an accepted bias of every research.

### 3. ANALYSIS

Goal of the analysis of the transcribed interviews was to identify different prevalent factors affecting the life of the mobile participants. The author at first aimed to show what are the most important topics arising from the discussion with the participants, from the perspective of both benefits and challenges of mobile life. Secondly, he wants to present what was surprisingly revealed as ‘advice’ on adapting to mobile life. As such, the author tries to convey and support all claims with examples from the transcribed interviews (see Appendix B) as well as referring and correlating them to literature works from other researchers whenever possible.

It became clear from the interviews that the participants could familiarize themselves with all the aspects presented to them, especially through the two close-ended questions, sometimes more, sometimes less. However, the author is interested in what the participants chose to talk about and what the whole interview indicated as a whole as to which aspects they found critical for their lives. The different aspects presented in this part, or alternatively codes, were classified under bigger themes as they represented a specific wider idea when combining all the interviews and thinking collectively. Certainly some aspects can be interpreted in several ways but the author tried to create mutually excludable themes in the most possible extent.

The themes that emerged and the author chose to address are represented by the big majority of the participants. There were certainly issues that were discussed by some of the participants but they were represented in two to four cases only. The author does not refer to those issues but rather classifies them under the theme ‘Miscellaneous’, wherever it was needed. He only refers to the issues that are highly represented within the 12 participants, and more specifically he analyzes the issues that at least eight of the participants talked about (for at least once in the whole interview).

For the sake of anonymity, as described in the Methodology section, the substitute abbreviations P1, P2 and so on were used, as well as the use of the female form when referring to their actions, e.g. ‘P6 has changed her views’, ‘P10 talks of how she’ etc. Next follow the different aspects and themes revealed by the interviews.

#### 3.1 Benefits of long-term mobile life

The themes revealed for the benefits of mobile life number in five and the given names are namely Open-mindedness, Independence, Self-acceptance, Profession-related skills and Miscellaneous (aspects that could not be put under any of the previous four categories). The author describes the first three as these are the most represented in the sample. The author

explains in the next parts from what aspects the themes are comprised of and how he justifies them.

### *Open-mindedness*

The theme of open-mindedness comes from the combination of different aspects. Broadly, these have to do with a sensitivity to other cultures and the tolerance gained, the fighting of stereotypes, the understanding and accepting that there is more than one way of doing things, the notion of learning from others, and the creation of interests in the problems of the world. These reflect the cultural and social competencies that Kumpikaitè and Duoba (2013) identify or the global citizenship traits of Morais and Ogden (2011). More specifically:

It has to do with **fighting stereotypes** and discover that sometimes stereotypes are just words and they have nothing to do with how people behave today as P4 mentions. P2 understands that *“it’s easy to talk trash about other cultures or other people until you actually live with them”*. This could bind with Kumpikaitè and Duoba’s (2013) understanding of social reality. As P10 has changed her ways in living this life, she says that she does not judge that much anymore according to the culture.

It is about **accepting the different** and **learning from others**. Kumpikaitè and Duoba (2013) describe this as tolerance, ability to accept other people's opinions and ability to learn from experience. P2 understands that the *“threshold for accepting things that you wouldn’t have accepted before gets higher”*. P4 describes that it is easier to accept the difference even if you do not agree with the other person but that you can see their point. P7, P9 and P12 agree that it is a lesson that teaches you to see things in a different way, and understand that different cultures deal differently with problems, and that this is a great chance to learn from others as P3 and P11 state. Interesting is the point P1 gives that *“if you are open-minded, it doesn’t mean that the others are, so this is part of open-mindedness, to understand that others might not be”*. In addition, P5 emphasized that the friends she had in school compared to her friends made abroad *“they just know you as you are and they accept you, but they don’t challenge your thoughts or they don’t make you think about yourself”*.

**It creates interests in other cultures and in the problems of the world.** This would match Morais & Ogden’s (2011) global knowledge and interests. Being mobile in different programs creates an empathy and interest to other cultures and as P6 says, it is *“making you aware of problems everywhere around the world”*. Illustrative are the examples some participants give, as P2 says that you come across people that *“come from a war zone, as Syria”* or people that *“come from a country that is widely manipulated by the media, as Russia”* and that you may read or watch facts about these countries in the media but you cannot understand until you meet people

from those countries in person. Another example comes from P6 as she describes how she has two friends from Ukraine while the war conflicts were in motion and by having these friends she explains “*you want to know about it more*” because the person “*gives you this personalized information from their home*” and you “*hear the other side of the story*” as P4 adds. P8 says you become more sensitive to the problems of other cultures and you see them from another point of view. This summarizes what Schattle (2009) presents as thinking beyond one’s immediate communities.

All these aspects form the open-mindedness theme. This theme largely emerges as a result and has to do with the interaction with other people, cultures and the world outside one’s country. It is about overcoming the known stereotypes, being empathic to different cultures, developing an interest to the problems of the world and make them more ‘real’ through the stories of friends. It is about social and global awareness, and tolerance and respect for others. It is also about learning from the experience of others and accepting more than just one way as an approach to a problem. The theme is represented by the whole sample.

### *Independence*

The theme of independence comes as a combination of the aspects of being strong enough to get out of your known world, dealing with difficulties of life abroad on your own and of building confidence. More specifically:

It has to do with **getting out of your comfort zone**. P5 says that in the past everyone thought of her as a shy girl but once abroad she was proudly doing everything by herself. P3 expressed that she had some problems with some of her friends in her country and the time abroad got her out of these issues. P1 similarly said that she did not favor her reality back home and for that reason she went abroad. P4 recounts that you “*overcome the fear of living in a new place*” and that in the end “*the benefits are going to be greater*”.

It involves **dealing with difficulties** and **taking care of yourself**. On that aspect, P11 expresses that when abroad you do not have the people who know you, to support you, and the language is different, so she says that you need to do things on your own. P8 says that you learn to take care on your own from the smallest to the biggest obligations. P2 asserts that you learn to deal with multiple different situations and that makes you more independent. This is what Kumpikaitė and Duoba (2013) identify as part of self-management.

It is about **confidence building**. P7 describes that the life abroad experience makes you stronger exactly because you are on your own. P12 feels more confident because as she describes “*you are in a situation that you would never be alone and that you are, it’s only you, you don’t*

*have any support from friends, from family...and you have to fight for what you want*". And that ultimately results in what P10 acknowledges *"I'm not that scared anymore to start something"*. Kumpikaitè and Duoba (2013) identify this in their list of competencies as self-confidence.

All these aspects form the independence theme. This theme has to do with the individual and the strength that a mobile person develops to be self-reliant. It is a result of being able to take the decision to go somewhere alone, make it on your own and in the process become more confident. It is a process of forming yourself as an autonomous individual. This theme is overall represented by 10 participants.

### *Self-acceptance*

The theme of self-acceptance results from the combination of the aspects of accepting yourself, of where you come from, and the appreciation of what one has back home as part of his overall culture. More specifically:

It is about **finding and accepting yourself**. The participants described this experience as a process of growing. P2 denotes that if you live in a place, even if things go wrong, the experiences one gets *"define you as a person, like everything you do in life defines you, every action you do, everything you see defines you later on in life"* and that even a person who goes abroad for a month or two months *"is going to come back a totally changed person"*. This is precisely what Donnelly-Smith (2009) proves in her work meaning that the effects of even a short-time program abroad can be life-changing for the individual. P6, P9 and P12 emphasize that you need to accept these changes and yourself. P6 says that you have to take all the good and the bad together while P2, P9 and P12 realize that everything that is happening to you at each of these moments is something you can learn to accept. P2 and P6 understand that things sometimes do not go as planned and can be frustrating, but that you learn to cope with them and that help you to use *"more out of the box thinking"*. P4 says it can sometimes help you understand what you want to become and sometimes you may even lose some friends but *"you become a better human"* because of the interaction. P7 and P12 both accept all this experience and realize that this is what made them what they are today. P7 feels very grateful for what happened and *"every episode had its learning moment, its joy and its sadness"*.

It also involves **appreciation of what one has back home**. Illustrative is what P10 says that *"before I never put value on my country, I was always like eh we have nothing, just this stereotype there's nothing special here, but after I was travelling more and more I feel that actually we have a lot"*. She also came to realize she knew more about the neighboring country than her own and that now she wants to discover her country's heritage even more. P4 says that you can appreciate all the small things that you had back home and you took for granted



sometimes. P2 realizes after all this time that the home culture, cuisine, people, and activities you do home start to take a higher value for the mobile person. P3 says you realize that what you have back home, even if you complained sometimes, is not that bad after all. Finally, P12 elaborately describes “*I’m broadening my horizons just to be even more happy to come home and to appreciate everything that I realized there is not abroad and all the things I missed when I’m not home*”.

These aspects form the self-acceptance theme. This theme has to do with appreciation and gratitude for your past life and acceptance of who you are and what you have achieved now. It is about how the mobile individual reflects and thinks of what he/she became. It emerges as a higher accomplishment, a transformation and self-fulfillment. This theme was overall represented by eight participants.

**Note:** The Profession-related skills and Miscellaneous themes and their aspects are summarized in Table 1. Profession-related skills accumulates, largely, aspects of human and social capital (like broadening education, developing language skills, building a network and so on), in sort of a way of more ‘tangible’ or ‘measurable’ skills gained than in the themes described before, while the Miscellaneous gathers all the rest leftover aspects identified in the interviews.

### **3.2 Challenges of long-term mobile life**

The themes identified for the challenges of mobile life are five and the given names are Miss parts of old life, Intensity and stress, Sense of belonging, Difficulty committing to activities, and the Miscellaneous. The author next explains the first three as the most represented in the sample, with their comprising aspects and the literature comparison.

#### *Miss parts of old life*

The theme of miss parts of old life comes as a combination of the aspects of missing friends, missing family and losing contact with people you enjoyed or wanted to be with because of this mobile life. It also includes missing places and even missing the language or food of one’s country. More specifically:

It is about **missing and losing contact with people**. P10 talks of how she started being distant with some of her friends and that even when she is back home she feels that the connection is not that strong anymore. Technology and especially Skype might have helped a bit dealing with this problem but still P3, P4 and P11 agree that this is not enough. This is relevant to Urry’s (2012) statement that individuals need to travel to keep these connections and

technology alone is not enough. P3 explains “*when I lived abroad, three of my best friends gave birth and I wasn’t there, I wanted to be there but I couldn’t because I was too far away and missed that*”. P11 says it is not the same anymore, and she expresses that “*I feel that I am really missing a lot sometimes from my friends’ life, they made new friends*”. P4 also understands that keeping in touch with friends is not that easy and even if possible she says “*you feel a little bit an outsider*” as they have a “*new inside joke*” or a story you were not part of. P1 explains that she misses to have deep conversations with her friends and that a lot of time with the people she meets for two or three months she cannot engage in more meaningful conversations. In addition, P10 says that it is difficult to keep a relationship going on when apart and being so far. This point is relevant to Adler and Adler’s (1999) realization about situational and short-lived relationships. P7 says she struggles to maintain these relations with her friends, she gives a lot of her energy and the effort is a lot of times one-sided. These statements represent part of the social and psychological consequences of Cohen and Gössling (2015).

It is about **missing elements of life back home**. For instance, P3 and P4 recognized that they miss the food of their countries. P3 said that when she lives abroad she always packs with her some of her local food ingredients to be able to feel a bit of the food culture abroad. P4 describes how happy she feels when she finds a food product of her country abroad. P4, P8 and P9 describe how they miss sometimes to express themselves in their own language. Interesting additional point for this aspect is what P1 explains the “*feeling I am missing something from back home in terms of initiatives, being active in participating in local life because in my city now there are suddenly a lot of young people that are doing something*” and she cannot be there because of her time abroad. This reflects also the loss of some social capital that Amit (2010) talks about.

These aspects form the missing parts of old life theme. This theme has to do mainly with people and missing the interaction with people that mobile individuals think as dear from their countries. It is also about missing ways of living back home, things people realize they miss once being mobile. This theme is represented by nine participants.

### *Intensity and stress*

The theme intensity and stress comes as a combination of aspects such the effort to start everything from the beginning, the fact that countless options can make decisions difficult and the restlessness effect of constant need of moving to somewhere else. More specifically:

It is about the **effort to start everything again**. P1 talks about “*how to pack again all your life in one suitcase*” and “*thinking again I have to meet new people, find my favorite supermarket, I have to find some food ingredients that I like*”. P2 talks exactly about the same

and how you have to arrange “*all these practicalities that are very much given when you already live in your city*”. P9 says that you have to “*build up new friends, build up everything new and then the moment when you manage to do that, then you’re already leaving again*”. P5 describes how you always have to put effort to meet new people and generally put effort to feel comfortable again in the new place. These facts can sometimes lead to the other side as to not have the willingness to meet people or start a relationship because you have to leave again as P10 describes. P11 expresses how she felt tired of moving after having moved four times in 1.5 years and how stressful it was. P12 talks of how she feels tired of having to move and how she desires now to have one place that she can live a less moving life; she explicitly reported “*I don’t want to live from a suitcase*”. These points entail both psychological as well as physiological consequences as identified in Cohen and Gössling’s (2015) work.

It has to do with **countless options creating confusion**. Sometimes the abundance of choices ahead for an individual has the opposite effect and creates confusion. P1 and P10 for instance say that they find themselves many times lost because they know they have a lot of options but they do not know which one to choose. P9 realizes that this would be even more challenging once you will have to choose a more stable job.

It is about the **restlessness and constant need to move**. P8 expresses how she is happy to return back home but when she does, after a couple of months she feels that has to leave again. P7 says that while she is doing her internship, after a few months having the same responsibilities, she needs to change, “*things have to change to keep my 100% motivation*” she says. P5 agrees and expresses that having to stay somewhere for more than two years could come to be soon dull. P2 says that the more you travel, the less likely it is to find a place that gathers all the attractive elements you have found spread in all the places you have lived.

These aspects form the intensity and stress theme. This theme is about the individual’s tiredness, both physical and emotional, that comes from the intense mobile life and the stress produced in several cases. Affluence of choices may result in confusion while the constant need of moving is getting some mobile individuals on a more intense track. This theme is represented by nine participants.

### *Sense of belonging*

The theme of sense of belonging comes as a combination of the aspects of identity questions such as where is home, where I belong or where do I go now, of difficulties fitting in with the people or locals abroad and the thoughts of mobile individuals when their people back home cannot relate and empathize to their lives. More specifically:

It is about the **where is home question**. P8 gives a good example of this by sharing that when she returned for a Christmas break back home from abroad, she felt like a visitor to the home that she spent 21 years. P9 says that this feeling that you do not have a place anymore and the feeling of belonging somewhere is a big challenge for her; she says “*the main difficulty I’m facing right now is this feeling that I was moving for 2.5 years now without like really living somewhere*”. P5 says that when people ask her where she is from, she sometimes does not know what to answer because she has moved so many times by now. P6 occasionally wonders where she should go back to having moved so many times as well. P10 says that when she goes back home she can feel that this is not her place anymore and she wonders where is home in the end.

It involves **identity issues**. P1 explains that when she was in school she thought that by the age of 25 she would know what she wants to be and what she wants to do, but now she feels kind of lost. P6 also has this feeling of being lost because of this constant change. She emphasized that you become more of a “*world citizen but at the same time you start losing your own cultural identity*”. This relates to Cohen’s (2010) realizations of personal identity issues.

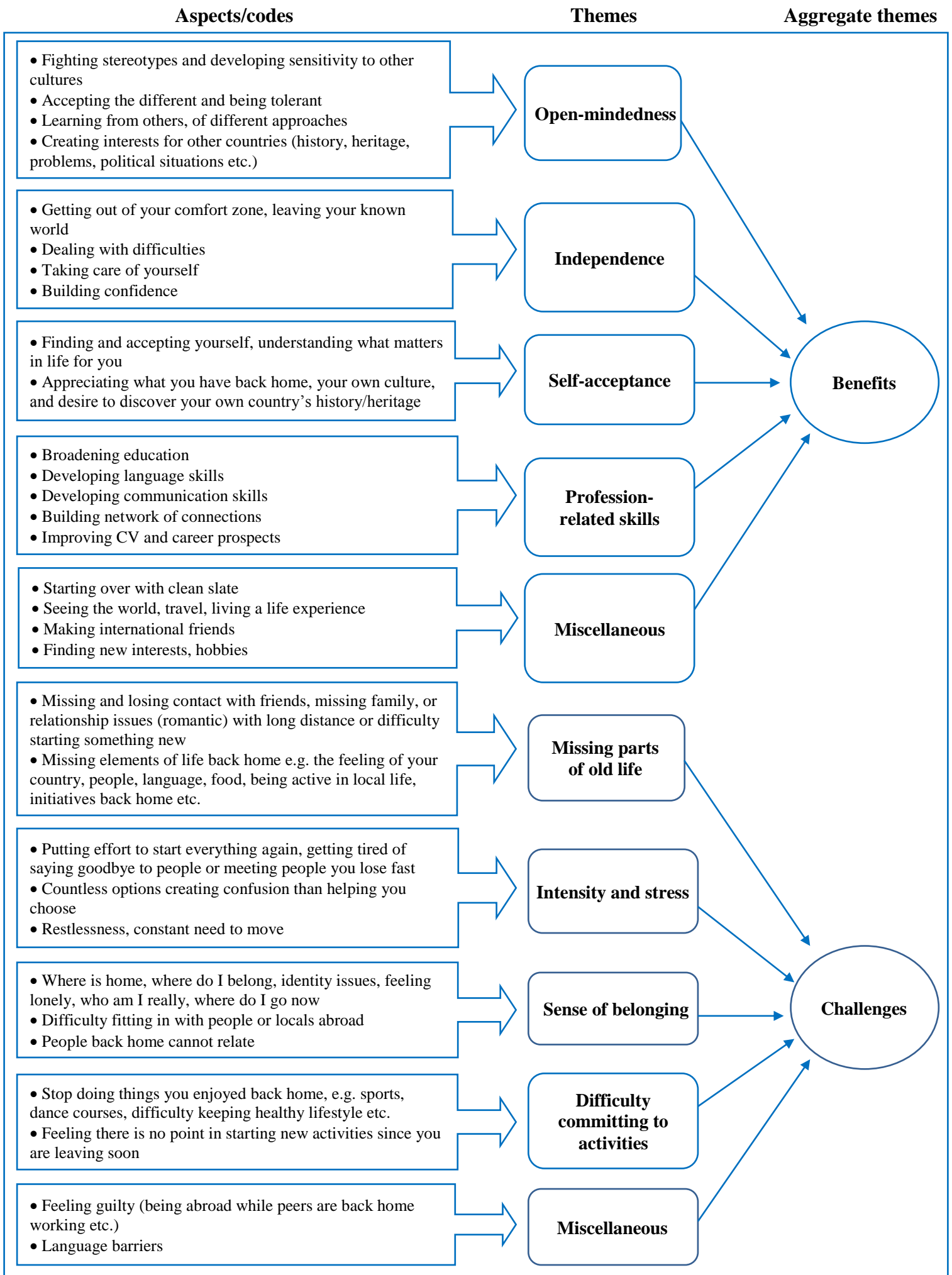
It is about the **difficulty of fitting in**. This is most prevalent when one goes to a new place where everybody already knows each other and tries to find people to hang out with as P12 says. P10 talks of how you have to find a way to get in touch with them and how challenging this can be sometimes. This matches with what Maydell-Stevens et al., (2007) write about the struggle of being part of a new place. P2 stressed that if “*you get in with the wrong people in the very beginning, it can mean that you are suddenly stuck alone later on*” and that this is a quite a challenge.

It is about the notion that **people back home cannot relate**. For this aspect, the participants replied that their friends back home sometimes do not understand them. P5 says that “*they cannot really relate to what you have experienced*” and that it makes her sad that even though they are happy to see her, they do not really know what to ask her. P6 says that when she starts to talk about her life to her friends back home, she believes that it must sound bad for them and she feels that they might not understand her. P7 says that people “*don’t always understand what I’m looking for, or why am I running away*”. P11 says it is still good with friends but she notices there is some distance sometimes.

These aspects form the sense of belonging theme. This theme has to do with big questions the mobile individual ask him/herself, like where do I fit in, where is my place, what am I doing now. It includes that on one hand it is difficult sometimes for the individual to merge with people in the place abroad, while on the other hand people from his/her own country cannot really understand him/her. All this results to some loneliness, identity issues and an overall loss of belonging. This theme is represented by 10 participants.

**Note:** The themes of Difficulty committing to activities and Miscellaneous and their aspects are summarized in Table 1. Difficulty committing to activities gathers aspects of stop doing activities e.g. sports, dance courses etc and of reluctance of starting a new activity because of the constant change (which could even be associated with loss of some social capital), while the Miscellaneous collects whatever remained from the identification of challenges.

The table on the next page presents all the different benefits and challenges of long-term mobile life that were revealed as a result of the interviews, and are classified according to the themes identified by the author.



*Figure 1: Overview of themes*

### **3.3 Adapting to mobile life**

In this part, the author presents the different adaptation elements or tactics that were revealed from the interviews. The participants either willingly or by the context they were talking about, they conveyed what the author could call ‘advice’ for mobile life and lessons gained through adapting to this life. The author next presents these adaptation gains by putting them under the themes identified in the previous sections.

**Related to open-mindedness**, P5 reported that you should forget any stereotype you know and try to accept it and see it from the foreign country’s point of view. P4 realizes that you might be in a place that you cannot identify even the letters but that the *“people and places have a common ground”*. Both show an understanding to the foreign culture and the effort of integrating and living smoothly in the new country.

**Related to independence**, P2 acknowledges that now that you have come out of your comfort zone, you realize that different ways are actually possible options, *“if you live somewhere you don’t like you just move”* or *“if things go array in this one role, one job you have, you’ve just have to move on and change with it”*. This life teaches you to handle different kinds of situations, P5 says, even when you do not understand the language. P3 realizes that you learn to react to problems faster, especially when comparing with friends back home who get maybe a bit more stressed with such problems, because you are simply more used to facing them. P7 feels more confident since she began these experiences and asserts that *“especially after a few extreme living conditions of different cultures...you realize you can do it”*. P2 takes it as a life attitude and says that if there is a problem you learn to adjust to it and that it is not the nature of the problem but your attitude about it. She justifies that by also saying that you may have not faced the specific problem at hand but *“you know you have encountered x, y, z other problems, so you know there is a solution to that problem even if it takes a while”*. P8 also talks of how truthful is that you learn to live with few things when you are abroad compared to what you have back home. All these points show a degree of overcoming problems and becoming more independent and building a stronger person.

**Related to self-acceptance**, a least half of the participants are taking a life attitude position. P9 says that it is always a process and that you have to accept yourself as you are at the present difficulty. P2 talks of embracing the challenge and accepting it while P6 says that these experiences can help you think more ‘out of the box’. P12 realizes that *“it’s up to you what you do with them, if you want to regret them, if you want to learn from them”*. P7 says that *“every episode had its learning moment and its joy and its sadness”* but this is what brought her and

made her to what she is today. P9 feels that sometimes she moved around quite a lot and that maybe she should have not done so that much, but then concludes that if she had not done that she would not be herself. She continues by saying that now she will not have regrets because this is what she felt at the time and pursued it. These points are all about accepting these experiences whether good or bad as lessons.

**Related to miss parts of old life,** P2 talks of how important it is to keep a periodical contact every few months with the people you want to keep in your life. P7 gives an example of how she tries to maintain the contact with her friends, *“when I’m travelling by train, and I travel weekly by train, I take my phone, I go through all my contacts, and I see to whom I can send a message”*. She uses basically this free, in-between activities, time to contact some of her friends from home or abroad. Interesting is the point P12 makes of how this process *“clears out who you should stay in touch with”* and realizes that is it a good way to see which are your true friends. In reference to places and situations, P5 realized especially after her first exchange how much she missed this first place she went abroad to and how she always compared it back to that. She advises that it is important to stop comparing between places and accept and see the new place as the new experience ahead with something new to gain. All these different points show how to handle missing people or elements of the old life.

**Related to intensity and stress,** the participants talk about how you learn to start over and how you know what to do faster each time. P1 talks of how she knows now once you arrive in a new place the top things you have to do, like finding the supermarket or places to eat and so on. P4 agrees and talks of how you learn to find alternatives once you cannot get what you had back home and live *“with only a handful of stuff with you”*. P10 talks of how intense was in the beginning to live with so many people in one house but how she successfully adapted in the end. Concerning the intensity of moving, participants talk of how now they would like to reduce moving that much. P9 says *“I don’t want to move every 5 months no, I think that’s enough for now”* while P6 and P11 agree that if they go somewhere now this has to be for at least some years. P5 and P9 talk of how important it is to take some time to reflect and digest what happened in your life. P5 explicitly said *“I actually told myself no, I have to rest, I have to process all these experiences and then I can go on to a new life and meet people”* expressing how important it is to rest in-between these experiences. P5 agrees *“I think it’s very important to take your time, how much ever you need, so I took this time”* and says that you if you need to take a break, you should take it, think and then move on. On the point of having a difficulty to choose among a lot of options, P1 says that while sometimes it is frustrating, at least she can *“dare to apply”* for some job positions or attend programs that her friends back home would not even consider and that she is grateful to have this ability. These points show the willingness of the participants to cope with the tensions that come together with this mobile life.



**Related to sense of belonging,** P3 strongly believes that sometimes you realize you get along more with people that come from abroad because you lived more similar lives with them than the people back home. In the past, this would confuse her or make her sad but now she has learned to accept it. P5 describes how one of her internships was not going well and she was feeling that she could not fit in with the people working there or the organizational culture but that it is important to make the best out of it no matter what since she was there already. P9 describes how having a sport or other activities help you socialize with people that have the same interests with you, especially when you are abroad in a program other than studies or where no other peers are with you. She says that it helps you to find a place for you within this new society and as P1 agrees *“in the end, it was a really good way to meet locals”*. These points reveal the willingness and efforts of the participants to be part of world they are living at each time.

**Related to the miscellaneous themes and aspects,** on the theme of difficulty in committing to activities, P1 has learned that *“once you arrive and you know that you have limited time, to find what you like and you want to do from the very beginning”*. She came to understand that since there is limited time, if she wants to do any activity she wants or learn a language, she has in the very beginning to find the appropriate place and start early. On the language barriers aspect, P4 says that nowadays this problem can be partly overcome by technology where the use of internet, Google translate function or even photos can help you find your way in a new country. P3 says that this can be even fun when you try to improvise with your hands. On this matter, P5 realized that maybe you cannot read and understand anything in this new country but by being nice, respectful and confident you can get through. On the profession-related skills theme, P2 says that in the professional level you can show that you have survived in multiple situations, can handle the stress and you are adaptable, and that *“if you picked a language here or there, a skill here or there, it’s useful for your career”*. P3 agrees and believes that companies need people who can move and adapt fast to changes. On the other hand, P12 believes that some companies might not appreciate that and brand her as instable, but she turns the argument over in that *“if someone thinks this is a negative thing, I don’t want to work for them, for me it’s also a way to see which company would fit my interests”*; she accepts her life as it was and wants to defend it. P4 and P6 talk about how these experiences *“activate you”* more, make you more creative and teach you to work with people quite different from you. All these points show the further opportunities the participants see for their mobile lives.

# CONCLUSION

## Realizations

As having an exploratory nature, aim of this thesis was to identify key themes of the long-term mobile life. The author attempted an organized documentation of the most prevalent factors affecting the life of the mobile youth, and to depict through them an overall evaluation the participants make for their lives. In addition, in the process of analyzing the data, he realized that the interviews had to give more than solely the themes but also adaptation advice from his participants. The author deemed this as a valuable aspect arising from the interviews, one not planned for, and decided to present them in addition to the overarching themes. As such, the author wants to make two important realizations after the analysis:

Firstly, it became apparent that between the themes of benefits and challenges there is a common ground: The themes of open-mindedness and missing parts of old life both have to do with interactions with other people and how the mobile person handles his/her encounters with people. The themes of independence and intensity and stress both have to do with the individual or differently the person him/herself and how he/she deals with different situations. The themes of self-acceptance and sense of belonging both have to do with the deeper self and how the mobile person feels and copes with his reality. This proves how much connected these themes are and the different levels the mobile person is affected in his/her life.

Secondly, it was made understood, both by the interviews and the revealed themes, that the factor of time plays a very important role in mobile life. For instance, in the case of Erasmus, or volunteering/internship abroad, but most importantly, in any one-time experience abroad or experiences having a long interval in between them, it is easy for the individual to sacrifice some aspects of his/her former life to live such an experience. However, sacrificing some aspects over and over seems to take a toll and the participants are not certain that they are willing to give up some of them in the long-run.

It is apparent that the participants show a will to adapt and an effort to accept the constant changes in their lives. These different choices do affect their future but it is yet to be seen how. For instance, one could look at the transcripts in light of the future perspectives and how the participants would think the experiences they had might help them specifically in their professional life. However, the author believed that the implications of this would seem too hypothetical. The author wanted to convey something more tangible, something that the participants have already experienced and continue to experience. Taking a perspective of pure life satisfaction one could imply that adapting is a natural way of improving one's life. But since

the thesis is not framed under the life satisfaction literature and has an a more exploratory nature the author tried to look the whole picture, the mobile life as a whole. From the interviews, the participants convey that these changes, both with the benefits and the challenges, were worth taking and that this life gave them a lot. The phenomenon of long-term mobility is diverse as revealed both from literature and fieldwork. The author aspired that this thesis takes one more step in exploring mobile life and shedding some more light in understanding its extent.

## **Implications**

This thesis aimed to add more insight into a less-studied part of the existing literature of international mobility, on a contemporary phenomenon characterizing more and more people. As explained, this in-between state of neither being a one-time abroad student, nor an immigrant, is not extensively explored and the thesis addresses this long-term mobility through the stories of individuals that lead this life.

The results of this thesis may inspire readers or the EMTM and other similar programs to find out which aspects mobile students value in their mobile lives, which they find challenging and how they can control institutional processes for the greater benefit of the student.

Finally, the author tried to accumulate all these perspectives and organize them in a manner that can help individuals who want to be mobile or have been mobile for a time, to reflect on the different aspects. The thesis aspires to prompt these individuals, to contemplate on the perspectives of other mobile people that have lived this life, and help them take decisions for their own lives.

## **Limitations**

Related to credibility, an important limitation of this thesis is that no other methods, except for the interviews, were used to gather data (triangulation). Other methods could be used to compensate for the inherent limitations of each of them. Unfortunately, time constraints dictated a mono-method approach. Also, as described, a non-probability sample was chosen for the needs of the study. In research, a probability sample is regarded as more objective because of its random nature. However, EMTM was too good an opportunity to miss, as the access and variety of the participants was ideal. In addition, the fact that the author knew them personally, gave him the opportunity to judge which participants would be most appropriate for the interviews and with a lot of experience on the matter, to provide the most input.

Related to dependability, time constraints also ended up in the author's doing the minimum of interviews required for qualitative method of a heterogeneous sample. The real consuming part of course was not that much the interviews themselves but more their full transcription time length. Every individual has a different story meaning a new or even small new aspect. However, much saturation had started to emerge in the answers of the 12 participants, which makes the author positive about the data gathered. Another fact is that the big majority of the interviewees were women. This is a limitation that could not be avoided as the EMTM generation of 2013-2015 has only few male students. In addition, the unevenness of the countries represented in the group as explained, hindered the author from taking an international sample and limited him in only European students. The participants also come from primarily business and tourism background, limiting the broadness of the professional origins of the sample.

Related to objectivity, as mentioned, interpretation in qualitative methods is quite subjective. This combined with a constructivism paradigm entails that the explanation of the results are based on the personal judgment of the author. The author hopes that the representation of the participants' views was conveyed as closely related as possible, avoiding researcher bias as much as possible by being just in the facts presented and with sufficient proof.

## **Suggestions for future research**

Research could take note on the views of those students and study/test them on similar programs of EMTM. As seen, there were a lot of similarities as to what benefits or challenges this life poses, regardless of country of origin, and these could prove useful to other prospect mobile students. Still though, this perspective comes only from one part of the world. Future research could interview students outside the geographical area of Europe, to simply grasp stories from all over the world and add/compare to students coming from Europe, adding valuable input in the field. In addition, more male participants should be added to the sample to have a more balanced gender opinion. The thesis results could be used as part of a longitudinal study to compare the students' beliefs from this point in time and one in the future.

Alternatively, research could also interview mobile professors to get another perspective on the topic or get maybe even a bit outside of this topic and interview individuals from other professions that require this lifestyle. Also, individuals from other disciplines outside business and tourism could offer more insight in this topic.

The author encourages future research to use also a control group; apart from interviewing mobile individuals as in this thesis, in the new research these mobile individuals could indicate one of their close friends that has not been abroad and answer related questions. The non-mobile friends that do know of the lives of their mobile friends, would talk about their lives home and

what they think/feel of life abroad. In this way, the researcher would have two pools of information, one from the mobile individuals and one from their non-mobile friends that are certainly aware of this life but have stayed in their country; and in the end compare them and establish any causal relations.

Finally, quantitative research could test the findings, the key themes, on larger samples on a more descriptive design. It could subject them to statistical analysis that could offer stronger proof of their reliability and validity, and ultimately be able to generalize its implications to wider populations.

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix A: Interview guide

### Before the interview

**Few words about my study** just to remind you, I am interested in how long-term international student mobility affects the life of students. What are the benefits/challenges and what are the students' thoughts about them. I am looking at different articles that have to do with student exchange programs, migration and implications, push and pull factors, brain drain, life satisfaction but it seems that there is not anything exactly that refers to this long-term mobility. And from people who have had quite some experience with mobility I think we can create something out of our experiences.

So you can say anything you want, there is **not right or wrong here**, even the smallest thing like "I don't like staying in dorms" is ok, I will not judge it of course and can totally understand it. Each story is exciting and sensitive sometimes so you can really share only the things you feel comfortable with.

So let's have this talk, I hope you can feel comfortable with me and share your thoughts right? **You don't have to answer a question** if you don't want to and we can stop the interview if needed. If we have problems with **internet quality** we can do it later or reschedule. Can I ask you to **mute your cell phone** and **close any other internet activity** (not to take internet resources from Skype)? If you have also a **pair of earphones** that would be ideal too. I will ask you once more, are you **ok with the recording** right?

So let's start?

### Interview questions

1. **How many times** have you studied/lived **abroad**? Can you **briefly describe each experience** (how long was it, what did you do, etc)? I just want you to give me a little bit of background. For each experience the living period at a place should be more than two months and less than a year to be of this thesis interests.
2. How much **time was there between the different times abroad**? After e.g. your first or second exchange etc, did you go home or continued straight to the next exchange period?

3. Can you tell me what made you, each of these times, to go abroad, what was **your motivation each time**?
4. Very broadly, what do you think these experiences have given you till now? What were the **benefits of this life**? What is important to you from all this. Whatever comes to mind first.
5. I will give you now a clickable doc file with a list of perceived **benefits of mobility/life abroad**. A) I want you to **rate each of its items/ideas**, by ticking only one box from the options and according to how much the item is most related and most important to your life. The idea is that I want you to see all these ideas, contemplate/prioritize on them and even add a new aspect in your own words if you need to or you feel you want to express in your own words. Please take some time to fill it and once you finish please save it. B) I want you to **pick 2-3** of them or more if you feel like, and **tell me how they affect/affected you**, maybe give an example.
6. Ok now I want you again to tell me, very broadly, what are the **challenges/difficulties** you have faced in this mobile life till now, e.g. personally or practically, whatever comes to mind first.
7. Ok now I will give you a clickable doc file with a list of perceived **challenges-difficulties of mobility/life abroad**, you know the drill now and I want you to do the same process you did for the benefits. A) **Rate them** all and contemplate/prioritize them or add any new you feel is missing or you want to express in your own words. Take some time to fill it and once you finish please save it. B) **Choose 3-4, and tell me how they influence your life**, why was it difficult for you, maybe give example.
8. **Would you change anything** in your mobile life if you could? Is there anything you maybe regret and would change?
9. Having talked about the benefits and challenges of mobile life, do you believe that having these experiences will be **important for your future**? You can think in frames of academic, professional, personal life etc to answer.
10. Being, if I may say, in this kind of turning point in life, do you think you have **accomplished what you expected** till now with this mobility? For instance, did you travel as much as you wanted, met as much as people you wanted, did you become the person you hoped for etc.
11. Do you still see yourself moving around **in the next 5 years**?

12. And one last question for you, **are you happy with the mobile life you lived**, you have chosen? Did it or does it still make you full?

### **After the interview**

To complete this I would only ask you to **send me back the two files** with your answers. Thank you for your participation and time. If you feel that there is something you forget now and you really want me to include it in your responses later on, you can contact me and send me your missing thought.

And just to **explain the flow of this interview**, I tried to use a past-present-future approach when asking you, because according to literature we (people) can relate better when thinking of different periods of our lives when thinking and answering questions about them.

So, I think this was a **really constructive talk** and hope by combining it with the other participants' stories we can have something valuable. **Thank you** for your contribution!

### **List of perceived benefits of life abroad**

1. Broaden education
2. Develop communication skills
3. Develop language skills
4. Improve CV and career prospects
5. Find new interests, hobbies
6. Make international friends
7. Develop sensitivity to other cultures, tolerance
8. Fight, challenge stereotypes of your country or other countries
9. Want to discover your country's history/heritage and theirs
10. Open-mindedness
11. Personal development
12. Adaptability
13. Independence
14. Live a life experience
15. Escape your bubble, city
16. See the world, travel
17. Be yourself, freedom
18. Anything is possible from now on
19. Understand what matters in life for you

## **List of perceived challenges of life abroad**

1. Miss (the feeling of) your country (people, language, food etc)
2. Miss home
3. Miss family
4. Lose contact with friends back home or the ones made in your life abroad
5. Stop doing things you enjoyed back home
6. Commitment issues to activities, hobbies, to people
7. Feel lonely
8. Difficulty fitting in, merging with locals
9. Relationship issues (romantic), long distance or difficulty starting something new
10. Where is home?
11. Loss of sense of belonging, where do I belong?
12. Identity issues, who am I, where do I go now?
13. People back home cannot relate
14. Intensity, stress
15. Countless options create more confusion than helping you choose
16. Restlessness, constant need for something new
17. Starting over again (emotionally or in practicalities, bureaucracy, accommodation etc)
18. Language barriers
19. Difficulty keeping healthy lifestyle (food, sports etc)



## **Appendix B: Interview transcripts**

### **Participant 1 (P1)**

0.27

1. Until now I had three major international experiences and first one was exchange program in the USA, it was for post USSR countries and they brought us for one academic year, in my case was 8.5 months to one of the universities, we couldn't choose, they chose university for us, so I stayed in a very small town in Ohio and I studied Hospitality Management there while back home in Ukraine I was studying Tourism in general. We had to take course subjects in our major but then we could also take other courses, which was really nice because we could expand our world view. The second experience was Erasmus in Portugal, it was a 10-month exchange, I also studied Tourism Management and the last experience I had and still have is EMTM...for the last semester I am in London doing an internship in WTTC.

2.53

2. After the USA, I came back home in May 2009, and then 4 months later I applied for Erasmus, but since we have some more bureaucracy as a non-EU country we have to, we have to apply in advance, so I applied and 3 months later they gave us the results. But then, with all the visa procedures it took quite a while so I went to Portugal in the beginning of March 2010, so it was 10 months between USA and Portugal back home. I returned from Portugal in April 2011 and EMTM started 2013 so that was almost 2.5 years.

4.43

3. Actually my first exchange was inspired by my mother haha, she just kicked me to apply because she found out about this program and it seemed so exciting. It's not that I didn't want to go, I was excited as well, but I think my mom was more excited than me haha, because she grew up in USSR and they didn't have these opportunities very often. Actually I applied twice. The second year, because I had more volunteering experience, I got accepted and I was actually very excited, so even though it did not come from myself in the beginning, in the end I thought it was my achievement to get the scholarship so I was very happy. For Portugal, it was because when I came first from the USA I was really excited to be back home but when the academic year started, I saw again my classmates and my professors whom I didn't like everyone there obviously and I was haha, I have to go somewhere again haha! I didn't really like reality too much but then I actually wanted to go more to Germany rather than Portugal cause we have only 15 universities that we could apply for exchange with and Portugal was the only country offering Tourism. In Germany they had Economics and it was very competitive to get there. Our Erasmus coordinator she was giving us tips and she said also Portugal will be easier to get to.

**So you mostly wanted to escape your city kind of but you were kind of limited by the choices.**

Yes yes, in the USA I didn't choose university, in Erasmus the choices were limited, I went to Portugal not because I always wanted to go there, honestly I didn't know this country except that Lisbon is its capital and they have good wine, that's it. But in the end it was really nice, I think it's really interesting to go to a country you have no clue about because you don't have any stereotypes.

**So this one was one of your motivations?**

No I didn't know how good it would be to go in such a country.

**I mean to discover?**

No my motivation was to go abroad again, to have some international experience because also in general people in Ukraine always tend to say "oooh European, sth European" and automatically implies it's sth better than Ukrainian haha! And for EMTM by the time I applied for the program I have been working for 1 year and after 1 year of working I felt I would like to go somewhere next. And also in my workplace there were not so many options of career development so I was a bit bored at my work and I wanted to have again sth really exciting in my life and sth really exciting in my mind happens abroad. And then I applied for EMTM and even my boss she gave reference letter for me so it was really nice of her cause she saw I wanted to go somewhere beyond, and then I got accepted.

9.13

4. Ok each experience gave me sth different you know? For example USA, it was the first time for me living without my parents so it made me stronger in terms of being alone, in another continent coming to place where you know no one, literally no one, so it was a big challenge for me and also when I was leaving my city I was crying like a baby haha, because I was so anxious I didn't know was waiting for me out there on the other side of the ocean and I was only 18 back then. You can imagine how scared I was and 18 year old without any experience living without parents, going to other continent, it was pretty challenging, then it gave me also understanding of friendship because I got two best friends there and we were all the time together and my understanding of friendship changed a lot. Being more supportive to each other, spending more time together, not meeting only once for a cup of coffee. And obviously improve my English skills. In the end, it was one of the best things you gained, when I was going there I didn't know so many words so being for one year in English speaking environment was really nice. It also helped me to break some stereotypes, to break stereotypes about Americans and also to create stereotypes about Ukraine. In the USA, kind of annoying, everybody was asking me "where are you from" and "how do you like it here", the same questions everywhere but then when I came back to Ukraine people were asking me the same questions. So I realized that in each country people are still really similar and they have really standard questions to ask so they are all the same people.

Then Portuguese experience gave me, eeh, it gave me just more appreciation of life cause we didn't have serious classes, classes were in Portuguese which I didn't speak, so professors gave us individual tasks. I had very flexible schedule and what I learned from Portuguese people, even if you have a lot of work, you still have to find time for your friends and family, if you are running to work but suddenly meet your friend you haven't seen for 5 years it's normal just to say ok let's go for a cup of coffee. So my sense of time and values changed a bit so it was nice. And also, yeah, having all the European friends was really nice because then, I don't know, you keep in touch with some, I haven't met with a lot of them afterwards, but it's really nice to meet them afterwards.

And for EMTM it gave me probably a bit more knowledge because in Portugal I didn't learn too much but in current program I feel that I am actually studying haha, which is nice. Also in the USA I studied quite a lot, but I think in the end, to sum up, all the experiences are more about expanding your world view, because now I am in the moment where I studied so much abroad and I am looking for a job, what are the actual knowledge and skills I can implement in your workplace? And I can't point out any at the moment but it's more that I am more open-minded and more international in my perceptions.

20.26

5. Yeah as I mentioned for example language skills, I think the best way to learn a language is live in the environment and to be forced to speak it all the time. And besides developing English language skills, when I was in the USA I also took Spanish course there and then when I was in Portugal I took a lot of foreign classes, I had Portuguese, Spanish, German and English, so this was really nice in terms of learning languages, in the end I am not fluent in any of them but at least I have basic understanding of these languages and I think it is really nice, otherwise I am not sure if back home I would be able to take 4 languages courses. I think it would be very big challenge time-wise, also very expensive if I would do it private school, so this was really nice.

The point of open-mindedness, I think it really depends on the people you meet along the way because I am really bored with history classes, I didn't like history classes in school, but then when you meet people from different European countries and you can hear the stories of their grandparents you know, how it was, you understand the history was alive, than back then people were actually living their lives, that it's not just boring facts from the books. So we were joking about each other, we created kind of our friend's stereotypes about each other but then we realized that personality matters more sometimes than the country so this was really nice. But then you have to make sure people around you also have to understand your jokes and nobody gets offended because if you are open-minded, it doesn't mean that the others are, so this is part of open-mindedness to understand that others might not be haha!

It could be also adaptability but after these two years of mobility haha, I definitely learned when you just arrive, you already know, the top things that you have to do, that you have to go to the supermarket, find the nearest shops, doctor, you know these little things so this you learn a lot but I think I would be more prepared by now moving my suitcases around that I would have less stuff, I will finally see what I need but it didn't really happen haha!

24.12

6. My personal difficulty was even just to go and talk to people and say “hi, how are you, what’s your name”, I was very shy and sometimes I still am haha! And in the beginning I was trying to force it a bit, I was trying to be cool but if it’s not natural, people feel it and you also don’t feel very comfortable about it, so yeah for example when I started the Master program I wasn’t pushing it, I already learned to let it go and eventually you will find friends, there will be definitely someone around you that you will find sth in common with and enjoy your time together. And a difficulty was the confidence and easiness of talking to people that you don’t know.

Also sometimes I feel homesick quite strong, because at some point you realize all these people around me, you know them for only 2-3 months so they are not my real friends and you start feeling that everything is fake and you sometimes you want to have sth more deep, not just conversations “how are you, what are you studying here”, you want to have depth with people and that’s when you start thinking about your home and at these moments I would listen to Ukrainian songs or play them on the guitar and sing them and cry.

### **Was this the same in USA and now that you are in EMTM?**

No it is definitely different. The USA was my first international experience so it was more challenging and also it was much farther, so I knew for 9 months I am not going home at all. After USA, studying in Europe, psychologically is much easier because I know whatever happens I can just catch a flight or a bus and go home, so I feel much closer. So this relative closeness helped a lot and also now I am 7 years older so I am also a bit stronger, I still cry sometimes but not because of homesickness. I feel homesick as well, and also now I have more connections to people who organize different projects and initiatives back home in Ukraine and I feel quite often that I am missing sth there, in terms of being present and be you know in the wave of people who are doing sth because here I don’t feel that much attached to society while back home I am, to NGO world or to Local City Council so I feel more important there. Here, in London especially, I feel as an ant.

31.40

7. Of the examples that are definitely important for me are difficulty keeping healthy lifestyle because first of all back home I usually try to walk around 2 hours a day, while when I came to new places with new people sometimes I didn’t have friends that would go for a walk with me, because people would rather do sports or rather stay home and watch a movie, so I didn’t have the social component because sometimes I wanted to go for a walk sometimes at 10pm, kind of late and so you would rather do it with someone but for me walking is one of the pillars of being healthy. Also I had health issues and every time we changed places, for example in this current Master program I went to a new doctor and you have to explain from zero, what did the previous doctor said, what the treatment was, but then this doctor will give you the same treatment with the previous doctor because he wanted to test if it works and then once you do all the tests and finally finding out what’s going on, next country. So this is a problem when you change every semester, you don’t have your personal doctor that you trust and you know he’s professional and also each country has different health care system, so for example in UK is very complicated with registration etc but at least now I learned how to use insurance because before the master I never used insurance before. And in USA and Portugal I didn’t have any health issues.

Other challenge, as I told you is feeling I am missing sth from back home in terms of initiatives being active in participating in local life because in my city now there are suddenly a lot of young people that are doing sth and I feel I want to be there, because also I care about my city more than the one I live in now. I don’t want really to contribute to London’s development for instance because it’s not my city, I don’t care that much and also I know in 2 months I am leaving so I don’t want to attach too much to people. So I am not even trying to get involved in local initiatives. So it’s the feeling that back home things mean to me more than here, and it’s also in other experiences, in Portugal. In the USA I was involved but it was compulsory in our exchange to do 20 hours of volunteer work and in the end it was a really good way to meet locals, American students, and to communicate with them.

And the starting over again, honestly the last time when I had to move from Spain to UK, it was again, first of all how to pack again all your life in one suitcase or two suitcases haha, again, I think in the end it gets a bit tiring and thinking again I have to meet new people, find my favorite supermarket, I have to find some food ingredients that I like, so annoying. You are like, ok it develops your adaptability skills but thinking again “uuuf, starting from zero”, cause now honestly after all this experience I just want to settle down somewhere, again the idea of settling down is

different, cause when I tell my friends back home I want to settle down it means I want to stay somewhere for 2-3 years not for all my life haha!

36.25

8. Yes, I think I should have been more proactive right up on arrival, because I wanted to take more language courses or dance courses, but then first month you learn the town, find stuff, and then you find some nice courses in the end of semester and you are like, “oooh I wish I would have found it in the beginning” and next semester same mistake, so I think I should learn this more, once you arrive and you know that you have limited time to find what you like and you want to do from the very beginning.

And I would also explore the countries I stayed a bit more because in the beginning we did not travel that much then the end of semester was usually stressful, more assignments to do so. If I could go back in time I would travel around the countries more in the beginning of semester. But then sometimes it is psychologically difficult because you have just arrived and you still don't even know where to go and how to go and then the practicalities of getting train tickets and discounts are also a bit difficult.

And also, I would try to meet more people, even in my class, to spend more time with my classmates because now the time is over and I feel like I don't even know my classmates, feels kind of strange because there were the only people I could go deeper in conversations with, because we moved all together and I didn't take advantage of it.

38.27

9. It would be easier for me to answer if I knew what my future has to be like haha! For example, for some people if they know that they want to work for the UN and they know it for sure, then obviously they know that international experience is crucial, it's great but now I am in stage in life where I have no idea what I want to do even in half a year, so it's difficult to say if these experiences are contributing or not in my future cause I don't have a clue what I'm doing in my life haha!

**I see this is more the professional part, what about the personal aspect? Or academically?**

Yes and no, I think academically it is good, I think in these exchanges I met some really important people in Tourism, you know, which I would never have reached if I have stayed home. Some of the researchers we had were some of the top researchers in Tourism, it feels like wow, you get kind of shortcuts to important people and also I even met some Ukrainians who know important Ukrainians, so now if I really need to reach our Prime Minister I can do it through like two connections. Now I got shortcuts. I am not sure if I can actually use these contacts but if it would be crucial, I feel kind of good that I have shortcuts and I think I wouldn't get these shortcuts if I would have stayed in Ukraine. But for me it would be easier to answer if I could have lived two lives, life without going abroad and life as I have now and then compare, because sometimes I see my friends that sometimes never studied abroad and they are completely happy and you know they don't regret and just go abroad to travel.

**Maybe they think the same, “what if I was in a mobile life too” right?**

Yeah, probably it is but I think I am happy with my choices. Until now, I don't regret that I went abroad but I would be curious to see how my life would be if I had never gone abroad. Who would I be now?

41.30

10. Ok, the answer is no, haha! I think I haven't accomplished what I wanted even in this Master program. I was so sure that by the end of this Master I would be a cool researcher, would know actually how to do research, never happened, I thought I would have a clear idea what I want to do in my life, I got even more lost, because I saw so many other opportunities, I see where all my classmates are now and they are in different countries doing different things, starting from organic farming ending up with some startups, so it got me even more lost haha! And when I was, let's say teenager, I thought that at the age of 25-26 I would be like a confident woman, who knows what she is doing and being like professional and cool and in the end I am in this constant student status which makes me feel you know, not taken seriously by others as well, because student is student. Even when I go to different conferences, when I meet people I don't know how to do networking because I don't know what I want from them, cause when you represent a company you know the interests of your company, you go you give your business card and you can start a conversation while I don't know what I want from people. And also in terms of travelling I think we should

have concentrated sometimes less on studying and travel more haha! And everywhere, in the USA I was studying so much and I didn't explore the country enough and also if I would go back now I would definitely travel more to countryside than to the city. But this is now, cause now I am bored of cities, I prefer nature.

43.30

11. Yeah sure, because as I told you even if I settle down it's going to be 3 years haha! I think but again it really depends ha, what I see now, who knows maybe next year I will meet the guy of my life and we will start family and I'm going to settle down until my children grow up haha! Because once you have family it's more difficult to move, it is possible, I know people who move with babies but I think it is too challenging for me and I think I want to go somewhere, even now. Part of me really wants to go back in Ukraine but still I am applying for jobs and internships abroad, I'm applying here in EU and also in South-East Asia because I think if I don't go there now when? So you always have this feeling that you have to do it while you are young. Even though our professors who are 50-60 years old and they still go abroad to do some research or meet their friends but I always have feeling that I have to do it while I am young because I have idea once I have job and family I will not be able to move so I have to take advantage of the time now.

45.10

12. It's yes and no. 50-50. Because I feel happy that I tried living in different countries and I really enjoyed it and also I learned cooking better, you know some little things and also the shortcuts, I feel cool now, but at the same time sometimes I feel so frustrated that I am like "damn I should have stayed home". But when I talk to my friends back home, who stayed home, never studied abroad some of them are also like "where am I now, where should I go", because for me at least now, I know I have a choice, I have more connections worldwide so I can dare apply for some positions that my friends in Ukraine wouldn't do. But at the same time it brings me more frustration cause when you have more choices it's difficult to choose you know? If you have only two options it would be easier to choose and now it's even more difficult and it gives me happiness cause I am free to choose right, but at the same time brings frustration cause I don't know what to do haha! But I see people who didn't go abroad, yesterday I received email from my friend who works for local government and she is so much overloaded by work and we have really similar background, she is like "damn, I want to go somewhere", but when you make decisions to stay within the same city then your choices are limited as well. So yeah, I am happy and unhappy at the same time.

## **Participant 2 (P2)**

1. So, when I was 17 I spent one year abroad in Philadelphia, USA as part of a high school exchange, a year later I spent a month or two, not sure, it's been a while, in Philadelphia also in internship, then same year after 3 months in San Diego, also internship, work exchange, then in 2011-2012 around that time, I spent half a year in Hong Kong Bachelor exchange, right after that I spent 6 months in Barcelona on a work exchange and then I started EMTM. You know the drill, we started off in Denmark, went down to Ljubljana then Girona and now travelling through Asia for the last semester. I started in Guangzhou and now I travelled through multiple states on the way back home.

### **Alright so quite the travel, you define as 6-7 maybe different programs?**

Definitely a lot of different stays. One of them 2 months, the other 3 months, definitely not long-term stay but still more than just a holiday.

**Yeah it qualifies for the time period I want, three months and less than a year that I have defined so it is perfect.**

Ok maybe we should go back, the one year in Philadelphia was privately exchanged, so not supported by the school, you could do it but it wasn't encouraged by the school, you would pay an organization to place you in the USA. And also the same with internships in Philadelphia and San Diego also had to do on my own, not with my school, there wasn't any study support there. As for Hong Kong and Barcelona, Hong Kong was mandatory for my school, and Barcelona we were encouraged to do a work exchange in the 4<sup>th</sup> semester of 6 semesters, so 3<sup>rd</sup> semester was Hong Kong, 4<sup>th</sup> Barcelona work exchange, but you would have to find the work yourself and if you didn't want to do work you had to attend a normal semester.

2. I was 17 going on 18 for one year, so one year in Philadelphia and then a year later, so I lived my next to last year in Philadelphia then I came home did my last year of high school at home and then I did my internships in the USA. So there was a year in between.

Hong Kong Barcelona was in eem, eem, so the 2<sup>nd</sup> half on 2011, September to January of 2011 was Hong Kong and then after that, so beginning of 2012 until summer of 2012 was Barcelona.

Barcelona and EMTM, Then one year in Austria, semester 5 and 6 I finished my Bachelor and then I went to Kolding. One year yeah.

3. You know, in the beginning you just want to do sth different right?! So I started out with high school exchange, I always had pretty good English, my English was pretty good so I just thought it would be nice to go on exchange and my parents encouraged it obviously, cause you know, at the time was still new for students to do exchanges, you know, at the time, almost ten years ago now, more than 10 years ago actually, so that was just a good idea at the time, when I was 17, just go 1 year abroad. For the internships they were, eeh, the first internship I had through a family connection, the one in Philadelphia and the second one, eem, on a job board kind of thing, so you know, you would just apply, see what you could get basically and those I did cause I thought they would look nice on my resume. The exchanges to Hong Kong and Barcelona were fixed part of my Bachelor program, so in my 3<sup>rd</sup> semester of my Bachelor program, eeh, basically the first 2 semesters of my Bachelor program you would work hard to get good grades, that would place you high up on the list, there were 60 people in my class, a lot of different countries you can go to and only a certain number of places, like for example Hong Kong had only 3 places for exchange and the higher your grade average was, the better your grade was the better you could choose basically. So you put down your preferences then you would be assigned to cities based on your grades, so let's say you had bad grades you couldn't get into the first choice, it's a natural system right?

#### **So yeah, so already made that choice by choosing this Bachelor?**

Yeah and this university is famous for sending people everywhere, I think it has about a 150 cooperations with different universities, so it's very well known in Austria for being an international Bachelor you know, with the exchanges, we also had people in our class from other countries like Israel ok, so usually, out of the 60 people at least 45 went abroad went to other countries in the 3<sup>rd</sup> semester and then in the 4<sup>th</sup> semester I think everybody, yeah, everybody had to do a work exchange.

#### **Which takes us to EMTM right? So, this Hong Kong Barcelona part**

Yeah the Barcelona part was mandatory, you had to look on your own, I didn't really want to but you had to look for your own work, and then you had to work for I think 5 months at least, in a tourism-related field, abroad, so I did that, part of the program, then I started EMTM.

#### **Alright, and why EMTM?**

I think EMTM looks really good on paper, you know, there are lots of issues afterwards of course about the quality of education, and about the, some costs, eem the perspective of "I have sunk my time and money into EMTM, was it a good decision", you can't really change it anymore, you have done it, but still in paper looks good, so and you attend multiple universities and at least one of them in Ljubljana is highly rated so you know it still looks good on paper. At the time, I really thought it would be really nice, you know, the international background, meeting lots of new people, also like the travelling around, I liked the idea of not having to spend more than one semester in one university, cause you know like for me you never know if you like your school, so with this there was always a good way to change, get to a new school even if it's not ok right, so you just finish your Master and then you move on.

4. I think perspective, definitely, like eeh, you know like eeh, I think it's a process of growing like as a person, you meet so many new people, from so many different walks of life, and with it comes, you don't even have a choice, you have to learn about other people right. Like you learn about Roula and how she comes from a war zone, and you learn about Anna and how she comes from a country that is widely manipulated by the media and those things, like here as well but Russia is a very extreme example and you read these things in the paper about how Syria is or Russia is but you never really understand these other places in the world until you meet people that actually come

from there. So I think that the first thing that I learned in EMTM is perspective, more than our natural cultural perspective.

**Not only EMTM right, I mean I am interested in general the whole mobile life of yours.**

Yeah definitely, yeah general, all the experiences I would say, the first thing that comes to you is just like a new way to look at things, you know.

5. Ok so we already talked about this one thing, sensitivity to other cultures and tolerance, you know, just the fact that, eem, it's easy to talk trash about other cultures other people until you actually live with them, I mean it often doesn't change, you think before that maybe the Chinese are annoying if there are a lot of them and if you live among them, but when you live there...it actually is annoying haha! You know, but you gain a certain tolerance, you know you learn how to adapt eeh, it's eeh, there is no point, eeh, if you lived there, there is no point in fighting it right, like it's eeh, like we said in the EMTM program "embrace the challenge", haha! You know if there's a problem you just have to live with it. That binds nicely into the other thing like independence or be yourself, you know like, after all these experiences, you kind of know that you can pretty much, eeh...**Connection shortly fails...**

So your threshold for accepting things that you wouldn't have accepted before gets higher and higher, you just learn how to live with things. So as a second, I would say the whole independence thing like now you know you can basically deal with almost everything. If you live somewhere you don't like you just move, if you don't like your job, you find a new job, you know, those things, and a lot of people they just stay in one city or in one job, because they say they can't find a better city, they have a girlfriend there, they don't want to move or they say they can't find a better job, you know. I get the whole girlfriend thing if it's real love but let's be honest, out of 50 people, there's maybe only 1 or 2 relationships that are really worth saving for those things, it's ok but it's not like that this is your soul mate for the end of your life, for the rest of your life. So, the independence levels were definitely influenced by these experiences.

And let's, what else I would also say, eem with the tolerance thing to cultures, also comes an appreciation for your own culture you know, like the more you learn about other people and the more you learn about other people and their cultures the more you start to appreciate the small things, maybe not everything, you know. It's difficult to appreciate everything about your own country, it's just that there are small things you start to appreciate about your home town, your home culture, your cuisine, your people, stuff you do at home, or just small things like good air haha! Those kind of things. So those come hand in hand with the whole appreciation and the tolerance thing. And also with independence comes adaptability, so let's repeat again, you learn how to adapt to an ever-changing world, cause the world always change you've got to adapt, you can't just always stick to one job, to one country, if things go array in this one role, one job you have, you just have to move on and change with it.

And for a final note, it's also good for the CV and career prospects, it looks good, you know, you can show you have been to different places you can show you have eeh, basically survived in multiple roles, and maybe if you picked eeh a language here or there, a skill here or there it's useful for your career.

6. So I think the challenges come with, mostly with housing, just eeh, like if you change too often you gotta adapt to this pain period, you know, this period that you have to use to find all these new things like stuff that you had home, where to get the best food, how to get an apartment, how to get internet, how to get a job if you need to.

### **Practicalities.**

Yeah like all these practicalities, that are very much given when you already live in your city, you already know, if you know in a city long enough you know where to go for good food, you know which places to avoid if there's crime and all those things you know, so that's basically the big negative thing about too much change.

7. The fitting in part like, sometimes it's really hard to fit in, especially when you don't look like the locals, if you have a different skin color, or different body type or if you just like talk or interact differently in your home country, some countries are very distant in communication, others are very close, like a lot of touching, others are not. It's just very different, very hard and in some countries it can also depend on, it can be also in the same country in the

same city, it just happens to be like a bad luck situation, right?! Like if you talk to the wrong people, get in with the wrong people in the very beginning, it can mean that you are suddenly stuck alone later on, it's always a very big challenge with a certain luck factor, if you find your own crowd to fit in with. Everybody wants to belong somewhere, right, it's a human need basically, to not be alone. There's a philosopher that says that "no man is an island" and everybody needs somebody or something I guess.

So the second one would be, let's see, the starting over again, we talked about this, bureaucracy, accommodation, all these things, it's a very essential, I would say starting over and language all these things together, like every time you move you got to pick up certain ways to say some things and if you don't speak the language you got to pick up "please", "thank you", other words you might need to be able to get around etc.

And what else, eemm, the restlessness, like you come to a new city, you feel that it is awesome and you enjoy it there but you're not sure if you can stay there forever, right?! That's a certain issue, I don't know what it is called, the psychological phenomenon and that, the more you travel the less likely you are to find the perfect city for you right?! Because the more you travel the more you find like certain aspects of the places that you like. Like for example, you like to, eeh, let's say you like the beaches of Sardinia, and you like the night life of Hong Kong and you like the business mingling and all the business deals of London, and let's say you like the parks of Philadelphia, like the more you travel the more you find these little parts that you wish you would have in your dream city right?! And maybe the beautiful girls of Helsinki haha! You want together all these things, together in one place and the more you travel the more you find it is less likely to have all these things together so, there's a big issue with always looking to find a new place to not be stuck in one city you know? That's one of the big challenges.

**Is there any other challenge you want to talk about or that's enough?**

I think those three challenges are plenty, there are not a lot of challenges for me, I have a few good relationships but I don't have any problems with picking up these relationships. I can be gone for a while and back and still have like the best of my friends, my family always going to be there, you just got to keep a periodical contact like every few months make sure they know you're still alive, those things you know haha, probably more often with your family. But with your friends like everybody is really busy, now that we're older time goes so fast, there's sometimes people that they don't even notice that you're gone, sometimes I'm gone for 6 months and come back and some of us didn't know that I was gone, so haha! You know, c'est la vie!

13.39

8. If you wanted like a perfect life you would probably have a business that you could run and all those things, maybe a girlfriend that could travel with you, those things but this is like a perfect thing right?

**It is just hypothetical, I am just interested in your thoughts.**

I don't think that the things I would change are in my power to change, like successful business ok you could work on that, but you know it's 50-50 shot or like a girlfriend that would travel with you is like a eehh, the likelihood, you can try, it's sth I would like to have but depends on luck some times, the work ethic if it's gonna happen or not. And also once you have these things maybe you don't want these things anymore, you know, as a human you develop over time and if you get older maybe you want to settle down, have a family somewhere you know, like find a place where you can start a family, you never know right? So I don't think I have an answer for that.

15.18

9. I think these experiences will be very influential for anybody that has them just because they define you as a person, like everything you do in life defines you, like every action you do, everything you see defines you later on in life. So I would say that even somebody who only goes abroad for two months, a person who has never been out of his own country and suddenly goes abroad, is going to come back a totally changed person right? Maybe not for the better, maybe that person hates everybody else, goes to China and comes back and never goes abroad again but it is definitely going to influence you as a person. So I would say, personally, it definitely fostered my independence, my adaptability, I think I can deal, back in the past, there would be a problem and you would stress about the problem but if you think about it, the issue is not the problem itself but your attitude about the problem right? So if you look at the problem, how do I solve it, it's going to be less stress about the problem, it is a very different attitude and I think it helps a lot if you encounter all of these things in your life. The more things you encounter these



problems the less you worry about these problems. If there's a new problem and you haven't dealt with it yet but you know you have encountered x, y, z other problems, so you know there is a solution to that problem even if it takes a while, so I think that's a big development and a big pro, a good thing for sth that speaks for doing these exchanges. It forms your personality.

Ok let's go for social, basically who you are is the 5 people you had to act with the most in your life, every person is a collection of everything seen done or heard or interacted with and I think on the one hand all these exchanges are very good for your tolerance and how you perceive life to be and on the other hand it enables you to meet new people with new life experiences. So let's go back to extreme examples you meet Roula from a war zone and Anna from a dictatorship, basically you have a certain perspective on, all these people have perspective and all these people define who you are and you meet new friends and they just define, even if you don't like it, they define your personality, so that's why I think socially is going to be a big difference if you stay in your own country so meet just with your countrymen and for me that I meet other people, so that socially defines you.

Academically I would say there are pros and cons, the good thing is that you can change university very often or you see a lot of perspectives, you see good and bad teachers, you learn a lot about, like for example in Philadelphia I learned they teach History very differently, Europe you have a very European centric history teaching, like WWII and stuff and the USA is more like how the people settled the USA, how the English people and the Irish, Germans spread over the continent and then the Civil War in the USA or the Pacific war you know those things more USA centric so totally different educational perspectives. And then you go to China or to an Asian country and you see how much more important is to actually deliver a paper instead of the paper being good, it's much more important that you actually hand in the paper and that you don't say anything against how the class is taught than actually learning good in class, than actually writing a good paper, it's a very different social concept, we see this thing wrong, for them is just how the system works.

For the career part is obviously to have different things on your resume, on your CV, just to show that you can deal with multiple different situations, your adaptability, you're good on the stress, all those things. Obviously some countries prefer you to be on a very straight line of education, like stay in one country, have certain, you know stability, if you stay in one country you're able to get in better schools, for example in the USA there's a certain ranking of schools and if you get into a good high school, you get into a good Bachelor's program and then to a good Master's program all those things. So, those are very different from what we have in Europe. Also obviously, they have very different approach to academia, for us academia is an extension of high school, Bachelor, Master, for them they pay a lot of money up to 100,000 dollars per year to be able to go to university so it's a lot different there but that also results in a lot of different jobs but if you make this climb on the ladder you're going to end up with a good job which is different to what we have in Europe. So career-wise that's very different approaches.

**I understand this is a life attitude for you, the whole thing, important for your future, it makes you stronger, adaptable and so being in this turning point in life kind of, tell me are you interested in pursuing more education?**

I think so, I don't think like a PhD or Doctorat is good for me, the way I see PhD is more for academia right, people that do PhD they should do research and teach and stuff, so I'm not sure that's good for me but I think looking at employment levels and the compensation and how much money you get from a job I think it could be nice to do a MBA later on or a Master in Finance because these things can help in your career right? So if I will be in the right situation, I would be interested in more education but not for the sake of education but more for the sake of getting a better job after.

10. I don't think everybody ever accomplishes enough, it's a life perspective, you always have these experiences and then you have your dreams of what could be and you just got to make sure you don't crazy about of what could have been. Life can always be better, right? It's not a bad perspective cause if you always strive for sth better, then you never settle for sth bad and if you don't care you're gonna have an average life so you've got to care at least a bit. If you care too much is going to be also stressful, I guess with age you're going to settle somewhere in the middle, between not caring too much and caring too much.

11. Sure, why not? Nowadays with globalization, with easy transportation somewhere all these things I think it is not unreasonable to take a job or found a family anywhere in the world right? Usually back in the day you would often

work abroad for a while then come back home and found a family back home, continue your career back at home. Why not have a family somewhere else right? If you like the place there, if you like the people there, why not? I can definitely see myself moving in the next 5 years, maybe moving multiple times.

12. I would say, eem, with the choices I made I am satisfied 50% on a happiness level probably like around 65-70% ok? So choices, maybe happiness a little more but I am one of those people who likes to look up, I want to be better, I want to do better, all those things, I don't know, you always want more right? I guess right now I am 70% happy but with age I'm gonna be more happy because you get used to these things and you understand what you did is actually a good thing.

**Yeah, I just want to know if there are any regrets in your mobile life.**

I have a damn lot of regrets haha! It's always about like where do you go on your mobile life, which internships you take, which exchanges do you do, but if you meet the right people, if you do the right activities while you take this program or other, there's a lot of these things. Especially looking back at the level of education I experienced, in Philadelphia it was ok, in Hong Kong the experience was fine but the education level wasn't that great, same in EMTM, so it's all a matter of perspective I guess and sure there are regrets but you know it's not a bad life so that's ok for me.

**Participant 3 (P3)**

0.51

1. The first time I was 19 and I moved for 3 months to Spain, Canary Islands, then I moved for 9 months to London, 1 year to Australia, then 8 months to Barcelona and then EMTM...and then 4<sup>th</sup> semester 3 months in Brazil. Either for studying or for working, to improve my language skills for example and I think because I was, not that I wasn't satisfied with the life I had in Italy, in my hometown, but I think I just wanted to discover new places, to meet new people to see what was out there, to challenge myself, I think every destination has a different reason. So in Canary island it was for work, London for work, Australia for education, Barcelona for work and the EMTM for education.

2.52

2. From Spain to London it was 2 weeks, London to Australia 2 years, Australia to Barcelona less than 1 year, Barcelona to EMTM I think 4 years. In the meantime I was in Italy either studying or working.

3.50

3. In Canary Islands it was a summer job to, I don't know, to have fun in an island. In London it was because I wanted to improve my English and because I didn't want to study straight away, I couldn't choose which university to go to. So then I just took a year off. In Australia I did my exchange program and I chose Australia because I didn't want to be in Europe I wanted to improve English and I love the beach and the sun and I had some issues here with my best friends, so I wanted to leave and go as far as I could from Italy. And it was the best year of my life haha! Then Barcelona because I was always in love with the city, I went there to do an internship after my graduation and then I got a job contract so I stayed there and I really liked the city. And then EMTM I couldn't choose the location, so I chose the program and Brazil, I don't know, I've never been to South America before so I wanted to choose a country in a place I've never been before, I never visited, and the city of Sao Paolo it was because of the university and because it has business tourism, this is what I'm interested in.

5.41

4. The people I met in some of these places, the experiences I had, the places I visited, I did a lot of tourism experience and also I think I learned how to be, you know, a little bit more independent, to challenge myself, to deal with loneliness, cause sometimes you miss your family, you miss your own friends, like the ones you know from childhood. This is what I learned. And a full passport, with a lot of stamps haha!

10.00

5. See the world, travel, then live a life experience and eem, all are interesting, then make international friends.

See the world and travel I think it is really important and after I travelled a lot you can actually appreciate what you have back home, because first you live in your own world, and everything is you know the way you've always seen

it and you discover there are so many places around the world, so many people who are so different to you and actually I think when we live in one place we always complain about it. It seems that now it's the national sport, complaining about the place and the people with you're born. But then when you travel so much you can start to understand and to appreciate what you used to have back home is not that bad in the end. There are better things abroad and there are worse things.

About making international friends, I really like it, it's great, you can talk to different people, you can learn from each other, you can understand with which people you want to be with and which people you don't want to be with, you can't be with, because it's too different too complicated to get used to each other and also what I really like is that most of the time or maybe sometimes, it's easier to be with international people than with your own countrymen. Cause it doesn't really matter, you know, you can't really say we're all Italian, we're all Greek, we all have the same culture, sometimes I have a similar culture to you based on what we did in our lives than maybe you with your friend from primary school or me and my friend who never left, you know, the village, so I think this is really, really important.

And about life experience, you know, we have one life haha! We just have one, we don't know what's going to happen after, I don't know. And I think that is really good that we live the most out of it, we do everything we want to, everything we can and if I look back in my past and say I'm happy, I did a lot of stuff and I'm satisfied.

13.35

6. It still depends on the destination, in some of them the challenges was money, for example at the beginning in London or in Barcelona, some other in Australia in the beginning maybe it was time differences or, I was there 9 years ago, Skype didn't work, there were no smart-phones, there was no Facebook, no Whatsapp, no anything, so to talk to your family you had to write them email and maybe wait 2 days you know to get the reply. So it looks so far away, the perception that I was so far and the feeling that if sth happens it will take a while to go home, that was the issue in Australia. I think for the EMTM program it was all about the moving, after a while I was tired, because we were all together all the time, always busy doing sth and in the end I didn't enjoy it anymore, yeah that's it.

15.36

7. Wow yeah, miss the Italian food, ooh this is all good, haha the identity issue is really good. Well missing the food for an Italian is a really big issue haha!

### **You can say anything!**

When I travel I take coffee with me, I take pasta with me, I like to try new food, on holiday of course I don't take Italian food with me, I love to try the local food but if I have to live in one place I miss my homemade food like from Italy.

And of course I miss my family and my friends, now it's easier with like technology, you know Skype or Whatsapp or, but it's different and what you miss is like birthday parties or celebrations. When I was travelling for work for example, even when I lived abroad, three of my best friends gave birth and I wasn't there, I wanted to be there but I couldn't because I was too far away and missed that.

And then I think identity, because the more you see the more you want to see, so it's difficult to arrive at this point where you actually realize that you have to stop somehow, sometime, somewhere but until you reach that point I think it's a challenge, because I wanted to see more and I didn't know where I will feel happy to be.

### **Any other issue that you feel you had or still have with this mobility?**

Hmm maybe language barrier, maybe not really, I think it's also fun when you don't really understand each other you can improvise you know with hands haha!

The difficulties of keeping healthy lifestyle, especially you know you always travel around it's very difficult to have a healthy lifestyle.

**You talked about loneliness before do you want to talk to me more about that or not? I just picked sth that you said.**

No I think I never had this big challenge. Compared to some other stuff it wasn't an issue.

19.40

8. No I don't regret anything and I would do everything again.

20.07

9. Yes I really think so. I think they have already been important in terms of for example professional life, because since I live abroad I improve my English and compared to the average Italian speakers haha, I am better than the others, so I think I have better job opportunities. And I think companies appreciate now, you know, people who can move to one place or the other one because they learn how to adjust, how to survive in different situations, so I think also my professional career it gave me advantage on this in this moving around situation. And about academics as well, for example I believe that I won the scholarship for EMTM, I was high in the ranking due to my previous experience, both life experience like moving abroad and working experience so they were all connected.

**Personally?**

Personally, hmm, I think I learned a lot of stuff I didn't know. You know like our professor says, we do learn a lot of things from EMTM, not just about academic, we learn how to adjust, we learn how to react to the problem immediately, like if we compare us with our maybe, with our friends who never did this experience I think they all get stressed for so many little things while for us is not even a problem. Because we are used to face real problem you know? If there is one thing I didn't learn is about packing haha, I think that's it.

22.50

10. I think it's time to go back to work. Well you can't really know you know, if I met everyone that I could because probably I didn't, but I don't know about that. But if I can tell you I am satisfied, if I think "am I a happy person about what I did so far", yes because I visited so many places, I lived in so many places, which is different from travelling for holidays and I've met a lot of people in all the places, and each of them gave me good and bad stuff, so from the bad ones I learned how to avoid, you know, bad situations or this kind of things, so I think yes I am satisfied with the people I met, with the places I visited.

23.55

11. No.

**Which tells me sth about your feeling of accomplishment?**

Now I have, my gosh, now haha, now it's getting difficult, the thing is I am satisfied with what I did so I decided to stop. But I think that is related to another person, so with my personal life. If I didn't have this person I don't know if I would stop or if I would continue moving. Probably I would keep moving but I don't know, I can't tell you, probably if I know myself I would keep moving. Now I decided to stop and if I look back I'm feeling happy about it, now I can finally say "ok, I can stop" because I did a lot in the past so I am satisfied and I kind of had enough you know haha!

**And especially if I understand after EMTM, you want to be stable for a time?**

Yes, yes exactly, exactly. So in the next 5 years it's not in the plan about moving, but you never know what happens in life haha.

25.36

12. Yes, these have been great things of my life.

**Did it make you full?**

Yes yes definitely, sometimes I look at people and I think “my gosh, you have such a boring life” or such an empty life haha! Not to be arrogant but you did the same, for example in the last two years or in the year of your Erasmus, for you it was a great year, you will always have sth to talk about, the people you meet, what you did and people who don’t do that will never understand you. So I think yes, of course I am happy about my mobile life, I suggest it to everyone, to do it. I don’t regret it at all and if I would come back I would do it exactly the same haha!

#### **Participant 4 (P4)**

1. I had two experiences in the past, one came from Erasmus.... I chose to go in Netherlands, in the Hague, for 6 months and the second time was later on when I did my Master in EMTM... and the last semester was supposed to be Guangzhou China but for me it was a trip around Asia to do a research. That would be 2.5 years in total of all these experiences living and studying abroad.

2. The Erasmus experience finished in 2009 while EMTM started in 2013 so that would be 4.5 years.

3. When I went in Erasmus in 2008, Erasmus was not that much of a big deal in my university. To be honest I pushed my friends to apply to go to Erasmus. How I knew though was from my sister, she’s older than me and she has done already her Erasmus in France 3 years before me so I already knew we are talking about a unique opportunity that you would live abroad, especially from someone in Greece where universities don’t really have an exchange program apart from the one of EU, so it’s a new mentality. It was of course a very good chance to travel a lot, to see another country another, culture, moreover a chance to see another education system which was more important as in Greece we consider the Dutch education system as of higher quality one, to improve my English skills and, to have fun because I have heard so many good stories about how enjoyable is to be in this life, to meet all these people, from all over the world, to make friendships and in general to live the Erasmus experience.

#### **The reputation of Erasmus experience was enough to persuade you?**

Yes that I should overcome my fear of living in a new place, in a new environment and to go for this experience that the benefits are going to be greater.

In the EMTM, it was both that I had a very good experience on the first time abroad, so that also made me more comfortable to go for this two years’ challenge and of course the value and type of the Master itself, the fact that I really wanted to participate in the Master. I would go in this Master even if it was in Greece, or even if it was in one country, another country but I thought it added value that we had this combination of 4 semesters in different countries.

4. This question has been asked by many friends by now so I kind of already thought over what this experience has offered me. To begin with, to get to know the world, to get to know people, to get to know their mentalities from other countries about specific issues, see different perspectives, see different stereotypes how they are based or how they are just stereotypes they have nothing to do with how people behave today. For me, I think that was the biggest experience, the biggest gain I had from both of these experiences as far as living abroad because the academic part it’s not that different even if it is abroad or back home. However, also the academic part had different perspective, the regard that each country had a different focus and education system, for example in Greece we have more theoretical background, we do a lot of things by the books, in Netherlands they had a more practical background, doing many assignments and a lot of group work that we also lack in Greece, so I learned to work in a completely different way. Moreover, presentations, we didn’t have any presentations the first years of university, while it was a common practice in Netherlands. To work with an international team which was quite challenging in the beginning, to learn how to behave differently, to respect different aspects, how to behave on a Muslim girl, on an Italian guy who is always late, how to motivate them to participate, do their job, to a Swedish guy that was always punctual, things like that, so to work in a multinational, multicultural environment that was also one of the biggest gains I had from this experience. And of course being in a well-connected country, I am still talking about Netherlands. It was a great chance I had for the first time in my life to travel a lot with the same money that I would probably go for one trip from Greece, I had there the chance to visit neighboring countries, it was quite interesting, like France, Belgium, Germany, England, Switzerland and stuff, so it was quite easy to do these trips which was a school by itself.

On the second experience, again we had the same things, the multi-culturality, international environment that the Master itself offered, from 24 nationalities. Just imagine how colorful this environment was. And also the 3 universities, we had a completely different experience from Denmark that they had more, eem, thinking out of the box, industrial thinking perspective, to see problems not in the classical perspective but in a more, let's say, playful, so as to find more solutions. In Slovenia to work in a very competitive and time-restrained environment which I hadn't had before, so it seems that they want to make their students effective when working under pressure. Then in Spain, where the focus was more in projects again. So in a way you see universities that have different focus and of course every semester you get trained on a different attribute of yours.

5. The ones I consider the most relevant to me are open-mindedness and adaptability.

Starting with adaptability, it's a unique experience I think that you cannot understand until you live it, to be in a completely different country, on a young age because when I did it I was 20 which is pretty much the age that most people choose to go for Erasmus. So landing on an airport, going to a different country, one with let's say different way of doing things, transportation system and anything else, with only a handful of stuff with you, eehh, in a situation you have to find your way, find your house, find the things that you take for granted back home, where are you going to eat, where is the supermarket, how are you going to save money, how to socialize.

### **All these practicalities?**

Exactly, that you don't even think, it's like breathing, when you are home, it's sth when you don't think about when you are home and then it becomes so vital when you find yourself underwater suddenly breathing becomes so vital, so it is kind of the same situation. So you learn to adapt, you learn to find alternatives of what you were used to, you learn that you can't have exactly what you were used to and the more you travel, the more you do this thing, you find yourself adapting more easily in new situations. In the beginning it might take you a month, the next one might take you two weeks, then next like a week. I can safely say, because right now I am doing a 6-month trip, that let's say pretty much every 3-4 days I change place and you find yourself that you don't really care anymore, of course it's also on your character but you know how to adapt. You understand that things, even if let's say the outer layer is different, the letters, the language, if these are different, people and places have a common ground. These things you acquire through travelling and putting yourself in this situation.

About the open-mindedness, it has more to do, eem, adaptability has to do more with places, open-mindedness more to do with people, the communication, the interaction you have with foreigners. Again I told you before, you find yourself talking to people that normally you wouldn't let's say dare, have the surrounding or environment, you wouldn't choose maybe, like let's say you are from a middle-class... **Connection shortly fails...**

So you find yourself socializing with people that normally you wouldn't, they're outside let's say your friend zone or social cycle so then you have the chance to actually talk all about these things that you have heard, just seen on TV, have read about, just knew about it theoretically. My personal experience, especially in Netherlands, one of the first things, was gay people, homosexual. As Netherlands is quite famous of being more open to gay people there were a lot of students that chose the country for their exchange, they were choosing that, cause we're talking about 20 years old people, they didn't have the chance before to freely coexist with other students, to freely interact in their society back in 2008. So that was for me a very good lesson to see, to challenge myself on accepting that, talking to these people, their habits, their feelings, their thoughts, their struggle, in a working environment, studying environment, so you become more open-minded, you understand that these people are people. The same goes for people from other countries, African countries, Middle-East countries, that for the first time you have time to do the same project together, you eat on the same restaurant, you're sitting on the same desk, you have time to actually see their normal daily behavior on a constant base, you have to ask them about things you, let's say the same day you hear sth happening in Syria and you have a classmate from Syria, but of course she knows what's going on much better than the rest, so you really have a chance to talk to her about the war, different factions about what's going on and then you understand you become more open-minded, it's not just the media, you are more easy to accept again. It's also connected with adaptability, you're more easy to accept the difference, it's a different perspective in sth that I don't really want to do, maybe one I don't even agree with but I can see their point why they do what they do. Hear the other side of the story you know? So these two are, I think, the most challenging and useful to me.

6. Uncertainty. That would be the first you have to deal with and then to miss your friends family, I think these two are the most important, miss your food you know, travelling alone and used to specific things, so miss what you had, what you loved because you cannot find it and you are in a constant uncertainty.

**And if I understand you kind of appreciate some things?**

Yes, yes when you miss sth you realize is sth that you took for granted, I got to understand how much I love feta when I was abroad, the local Greek cheese and I can't find it and when I find it I am super happy haha! I am happy like I won 1 million dollars haha! Just sth that people consider me crazy behaving like that in Greece!

7. I choose miss the feeling of your country, lose contact with friends back home and the language barrier.

So I haven't realized actually that the language could be a problem until I travelled to Spain because Netherlands, Denmark, even Slovenia to my surprise they speak English, and thankfully I speak quite fluently English so it never occurred to me that would be a problem. But, then on my 4<sup>th</sup> semester abroad, that at least I had some experience already so I could deal with problems, I found myself not able to communicate with the locals eem.

**It was quite the challenge then?**

Yeah to actually ask for a supermarket or the hospital or explaining to a doctor what problem you have, of course you just have to make sure that you go to a doctor that knows English is or thankfully you can barely, use internet, you can use Google, translate you can use images to point out what you want so it's not that much difficult as it probably was 30 years ago. But it still is a different thing and it's not just the situation that the other doesn't speak English or you don't speak the native language but also two people from different environments, countries speak English, they have different context of what they say, so sometimes this creates misunderstandings, problems, you cannot realize how people make jokes or when people are ironic. It's even funnier that most problems are caused with native English speakers, because you use some, eehh, for them some expressions have a different meaning, than from you that it's not your native language, or even for swearing for you it means nothing to say a word, because in your own language it would mean sth but in a different language it doesn't, so for them it's quite important when you do that. That creates misinterpretation and sometimes conflicts, so that is quite a challenge but as we move on, as society understands that we need, as global citizen, we need one language, you see more and more people speaking fluently English or at least understanding them and also the common culture helps to overcome these misinterpretations. So that's a good thing.

The second one comes from missing home after a bit of time, the excitement of the new goes away, fades away, so then you start thinking of things that you miss, that you enjoy, the easiness, sometimes you are tired, the easiness speaking in your own language even if you're constantly speaking English, don't even think in your own language anymore, still you are tired, it's easier to speak to make a joke in your own language, you miss that. You miss your food, personally I am a food person, that's one of my biggest problems abroad, you know Greek food is so exceptional haha! And maybe you miss the people, maybe I would say that people are polite and hospital all around the world and also open-minded and accepting, so I don't think I miss that much people of my country.

Most importantly the disconnection that is created with your friends, your associates, even your family, even if you talk to them through Skype, keeping in touch, and even if they are good friends and the friends you talk three years afterwards and you continue the conversation from when you left it, but still, still you see that you go with your friends they are joking about sth you didn't participate or a new inside joke you don't really know about even if they told you the story, it's not the same as living with them, of course they are your friends but you feel a little bit an outsider, maybe for a time that you need to adjust. This is part that makes you sad, people you consider brother or sister continuing their lives, some of them having a new girlfriend/boyfriend, some of them have a baby, some of them have a new job, some of them have a new house etc etc. So these are the most important challenges I face these years.

8. I was thinking, that the last part of my education, my travel to Asia, not connected to educational purposes, I regret the fact that we don't have the mentality after being 18 years old, being an adult in some ways, but before you choose your university, before you choose where you're going to go in your life, I regret that we don't have a mentality in Greece to encourage people to do this travel, to at least take 6 months or a gap year, to travel, see the

world, because now I am 26, I'm not that old, but with all these experiences, I carry all my experiences, all my perceptions, all my beliefs, I carry them with me being heavier than actually the backpack that I have with me, so I experience the world in a closer way. I am trying to be open-minded but with the years you become more close-minded so I would recommend if I could, that people should, even in a compulsory way, that's how much I believe in it, take a gap year and travel around the world. **Connection shortly fails...**

Quite important and helpful for 18 years old person of that age to travel, it can help you find yourself, it can help you understand the world better, it can help you understand what you want to become and it makes you a global citizen. You may lose contact with your friends but you become a better human. So that's the only thing I regret that I haven't done it before and I am talking about long-term travel but I don't think short-term travelling, it's also good, most people don't have the chance to do a long-term travel, but I consider only long-term travel can have real benefit to influence you deeply as a person. Short-term is often for vacation, leisure or even education, it cannot really alter your character as the long-term travelling.

9. Oh yeah, yeah, yeah definitely. As a human being, as a citizen.

### **Professionally maybe?**

Professionally as well, I told you before that one of the biggest benefits is that now I know I can understand different cultures, I know how to adjust, I know how to work with people that are different from me. I wouldn't have this chance if I have stayed in Greece. Now I can work in an international company, I wouldn't be able to do so if I didn't have this opportunity to travel and integrate with other people, so yeah professionally, I believe that a company that respects itself they understand that, especially in Hospitality. That's my industry field, especially there the benefits are unique because you are probably going to work in an international hotel having more than domestic travellers so you know your clients much better, you know their sensitivities or how they behave, what they misinterpret, what they tell you. Also with your coworkers you understand them better, actually have a better connection. So I believe one of the best benefits is also the professional way.

10. I crave to go back to working now.

Yes yes yes, and I say it deep from my heart and before I started and this process of travelling for two years, I felt that Greece is not enough for me that I haven't done things as I wanted and now I am comfortable of proceeding in a career outside of Greece but both also in Greece because I feel complete. I think that I have fulfilled a lot of things that were in my tick list. So now I feel that in way I can settle both in a way that is useful for me and for the company I am going to work for, you know, not being in my office and thinking "oooh why I am not in the" **Connection fails...**

I have done the things that I want to do and I can move on a different chapter in my life.

11. Bad connection...it's not that I feel that...but I feel open... **Connections and audio recording really bad...**

12. **Bad connection.....** Yes yes I can't think of sth different for myself... **Connections and audio recording really bad...**

### **Participant 5 (P5)**

0.42

1. After high school I lived 1,5 years in California, USA as an aupair, then I lived 10 months in the Netherlands for studying, then I moved to Istanbul, Turkey for my Erasmus around 4-5 months , from there I moved to Sydney, Australia for my internship that was for 7 months, then I moved back to the Netherlands for another 4-5 months for the second to last semester, then I was writing my Bachelor thesis, then I went to Ecuador, I lived in there for 5 month, I was doing internship and learning Spanish and then EMTM and the last semester I was in Germany for an internship.

3.33



2. Ok maybe backwards EMTM Ecuador, maybe one week haha or 10 days and then went to Denmark. Ecuador Netherlands about 10 months, Netherlands Sydney about two weeks. Emm.

**Ok I see it is a little difficult to remember for all these experiences, you are most certainly the most mobile person I have haha! I will skip this question.**

**3. Ok I will skip this question because you have so many experiences and would be so broad, it is ok, let's go to the next.**

5.48

4. Eem, I don't know, I changed personally, to the positive I guess cause I learned many things from other people from different countries, I think I am more patient, I know what responsibility is, I guess I am more open-minded because I've met so many people from different places, interacted with them. Ok there could be a lot but I can't think of them now! I just know it has given a lot to me. Staying always at home, is always different to go out in the world and meet people and different places

12.57

5. Can I pick one that I added?

**Yes of course.**

I added learning from others about oneself and what I mean by this is that the friends that you had at home for an entire life, until I was 19 maybe, they just know you as you are and they accept you, but they don't challenge your thoughts or they don't make you think about yourself, because maybe, emm probably because we are too young or sth. But then when I went travelling and I stayed in places for quite a while then I met people that they didn't know before, they got to know me in my 20s and they have no prejudice or anything and they challenge who I am as well, I can give you an example, maybe Denise, like she would never not tell me anything if she thought that I was wrong or she thought that was being stupid or sth. She would tell me and I would actually think about it and this is sth people back home would never do because they would just accept who I was I guess.

Then maybe develop sensitivity to other cultures and tolerance, for example before, when I went to the USA to live, I had the same stereotype on my mind as everyone else about the USA, that they are superficial and yeah nice but not real. And then, when I lived there I still experienced this that people were kind of superficial but then by just living with them I forgot about this kind of stereotypes and I was just seeing them as being friendly. Like I was accepting this and I was not seeing it as a negative thing. So I would just be happy if I run on them to the store and people would say "hi, it's amazing to meet you" haha, I would just appreciate that, like it's better than at home, in Germany for example going in some store and people don't even look at you and say "hi" and there in USA I let them be superficial, I don't care if they don't mean it at least there are being nice. So that is an example.

**What about Istanbul, that was quite different right?**

Yeah yeah, as well, because in Germany we have a lot of, you probably have the same in Greece, we have a lot of Turkish people and then when you grow up and you just, the only thing you here is that Turkish people are making trouble and you see them in their Turkish groups and then you think all of them are like this. Then when I was living there I've experienced totally different Turkish people, educated, nice, welcoming, not at all like the Turkish people in Germany, like I don't know, they proved me wrong. Not that I had this big stereotype in my mind but if you grow up like this you think oh that Turkish people are like this and then you go there and I only had positive experiences.

And third, eem, it could be all of them! Maybe let's say independence because I think all by making the decision to go abroad and stay there like the first time maybe after high school, everyone knew me as the shy girl that would never speak to anyone. Like everyone was surprised that I was going to the USA to live there and it was the best decision because there I was just doing my own thing, didn't ask for like advice from home or anything, I had my friends and I was talking to them, I was doing everything by myself. And the same thing when I was going to Ecuador, I barely spoke Spanish, I just made the decision I should go there because I want to, I want to learn Spanish, I want to do an internship and I always realized that everything just works out, it's not only about language, like you can go anywhere and you just get along. For example when I was travelling to Cambodia I think between

Slovenia and Spain and no one spoke English, so no language that we knew but we were just being nice, you couldn't read anything, you couldn't understand them, they wouldn't understand us, but then by having this self-confidence everything worked out. And the same in Bosnia, when I was with Denise in Bosnia, and no one understood us and we wouldn't understand them but just like knowing that you have to trust people, cause we were hitchhiking you know haha, you just have to trust people and feel that you can do it and you learn to handle different situations, even though you don't speak the language, you don't know where you are and so far everything has worked out. So I think these are good lessons and I feel a lot more independent than I was with my life few years ago I guess.

20.46

6. When I left for the first time it was of course just leaving home for a long time and also a continent, yes. I changed everything, a different family I had to look after their kids, it was two weeks maybe that I was having a hard time maybe because of the language. That could be one challenge, which I had in Ecuador as well cause I didn't speak Spanish, not really, the same like in Bosnia or Cambodia, Vietnam, you just don't speak the language and you still get along, I think language is one challenge.

And then one challenge of this moving I think is that you usually start feeling comfortable somewhere after a few weeks or, I adapt quickly, then you feel comfortable after a few weeks, after a month or two months and then it's almost time to leave because it's only short-term usually, most of the time it was 3-4-5 months and then you pack your things again and at some point I think that I was tired. Before starting EMTM I wasn't sure if I should do it and I was deciding if I should do the program or not because they accepted me but then I was thinking I am tired of moving, I don't want to move every semester, I just want to stay in one place to have my friends there, to do what I like, to play at a soccer team, to just settle somehow, somewhere but then I think I was weighing off the benefits and the challenges, the negative things so I thought the benefits were bigger haha! And then I was telling myself that it's like, going with the same people to 3 different places and having always to adapt to a new environment, to new people, I think that's another challenge, when you move that often then you always, not in EMTM, there we always move together, but when I moved from the Netherlands to Germany and from there to Istanbul to Sydney I always had to make new friends even though you don't feel like it. Sometimes I wanted to stay home and I didn't want to talk but then I said "I should, I should mingle, I should socialize cause I don't know anyone", that's hard. Always feel the pressure that you have to socialize and you have to do sth yourself to make yourself feel comfortable in a new place and yeah once you are comfortable you have to leave again so haha. So I think this is the hard thing about and, plus sometimes I feel that I, people ask me "where I am from", I say "Bremen" but then in the end both of my parents have moved from where I grew up so it's not really and then I feel home in so many places, sometimes I don't know what to say and feel a bit weird, where is home? So could be anywhere. I think that is sad but on the other hand is not that bad haha, there are worse things.

25.29

Maybe while the file is opening I can give you another example. When I went to Denmark, I was home for a week, I was in Ecuador, then I was travelling and then I went to the USA and then I came home for like a week or 10 days and that in total was 10 months I was going to different places, living in different places, meeting people. And then I came home and I had 10 days to like arrange stuff, wash my things, meet all my friends, so I had to see them all at once and when I got to Denmark I was just tired of it and I felt like I hadn't digested what I have experienced because I was home and then I had to go to a new group of people and I had to get to know them, sometimes I didn't want to. And I think the first two weeks I managed pretty well, I didn't want to and I didn't do it, just stayed in my room and I didn't talk to some people haha, I know I was really quiet because I didn't feel like meeting people and I think that was the first time that I actually told myself "no, I have to rest, I have to process all these experiences" and then I can go on to a new life and meet people. And then I had to meet all of you haha!

30.13

7. People back home cannot relate. I think that's a big issue because when I came home after a year and a half from the USA and I wasn't happy going home but I had to because I felt like this was my life and not home anymore, as back home wasn't my life anymore but in the USA. And when I went home I was happy to see my friends, they were happy to see me but they did not know what to ask me and I was asking about their job and general things but they were always saying "aaa, not much has happened" and in my life so many things happened that they didn't know what to ask so the only question they would ask was "ooh, how was it". And that made me sad, I think I felt a bit depressed because what do you answer after 1,5 year "ooh, was good" haha. So I think this is what it says, that

people like at home they cannot really relate to what you have experienced. If they stay home after school or maybe go somewhere once and then they go back to Germany again or wherever, then it is not the same as if you talk to people that have done the same. They can relate, they know what to ask, they are interested but people home are, they are hmm, I don't know, sometimes I feel like they are maybe a bit jealous because they would think "I would do the same but I don't know how, I don't have the courage to do it" and "I wonder how she does it, she's experiencing all this" and I think sometimes they want the same but they don't know how I guess and sometimes they are just, yeah, they say "great, great what you have experienced" but they have no understanding of what it feels like. I think only people that did the same or like similar things they can understand how it feels like to be in different places all the time, having to socialize, having to meet new people. And sometimes, for me, eeh, often times that's been easier to talk to my friends from the USA, who are also German, like talking to them, I was more relaxed and like they knew me as a different person I think, we have experienced the same, so it was more relaxed, easier to talk to them as compared to people that stayed back home.

33.28

8. Mmm, no no, I think even sometimes it was hard I think to make the next step and actually commit to sth new, I think it was always worth it looking back and sometimes I had a hard time I guess yeah, like for example in Sydney I didn't like the people at my internship, they didn't like me I think, I didn't like the work, I didn't like the workplace but I was still trying to make the most of it. I think like looking back it was good anyway no matter what I did, no matter who I was, it was still a good experience I think, from my experience. I think I am more self-confident I guess, more like open to new things.

34.37

9. Yes, emm, I feel like I am someone else now than I was after high school 8 years ago, more independent, patient, understanding, open-minded.

**All these probably will do help you in your life I guess?**

I hope, even though I am not sure. For me personally it will help in the future I think but then when you look at an employer I don't know how they see it, let's see.

10. No, maybe for myself like language things but no doing a Doctorate's degree or sth.

36.15

Yes, yeah, well not the feeling of accomplishment because I feel that I am not ready to settle anywhere yet for too long, but now that we are almost done I feel I need to get a job and then already the thought that having to stay somewhere for maybe a year or two, that bores me already haha. I think it's kind of scary.

**After so much travelling it still bothers you, you still feel that it would be boring to stay in one place?**

Yeah, not boring but at the same time I feel I might be bored after a few months. At the same time I think it might have some positive effect. I think for example what I said before, if I stay somewhere for 1 year or 2, I could actually be in a team, playing soccer or this one of the reasons I wouldn't mind staying in a place for a bit longer and just having my friends around, like having one place, like when I go to different places I can't imagine but I'm not thinking any longer than 1-2 years I think.

38.36

11. Yeah, yes but 5 years is a long time, yes.

38.52

12. Yes yes totally, yes yes, sometimes yeah I was sad that I had to leave a place that I liked or that I wanted to stay a bit longer but then in the end I always went to a new place and I had new experiences. And I think one thing maybe I think it's important that you don't compare between places, between friends, between I don't know the feeling you had in one place and the feeling you have in a new place, cause I did that for a long time after the USA, I was comparing everything back to the USA and that wouldn't make me happy cause I felt like everything was not as good as the life I had before. And then when I stopped thinking that, it took me a year or two, I don't know I stopped that and then I was just looking at every new experience as a new. As a new kind of experience where I learned from

myself, where I learned from others, I met new people and I was just more open to new experiences and that made me I think happy, I think that it is important that you don't compare. When I started doing it, I was always happy with every move I made even though it was sad to leave places and hard to adapt to new places.

### **Participant 6 (P6)**

0.50

1. So the first time when I was 16, I lived in Germany, it was program of EU, that was 1 school year, then I went to Berlin for Erasmus and I stayed there 6 months. After that it was 2 months in Italy where I worked. And then I went to Vienna, Austria that was half studying, ok after finishing university there is a program which is called Leonardo and was for improving employability of young graduates, so they gave the option to get a small grant monthly and you could find a company and this is where I worked in this company in Vienna and afterwards finishing it I found a job and I stayed there another half year in Vienna, altogether 1 year if you think about it but half a year was from this program and half of work. And afterwards I started to study our program, the EMTM and in its 4<sup>th</sup> semester Brazil, for sure 6 months and maybe longer.

0.40

2. Between the two times in Germany it was 6 years, yeah I was 16 and then 22, Germany to Italy maybe 1.5 month, from Italy to Austria it was directly, I was 24 in Vienna, and Vienna to EMTM I went directly, I never came back.

**3. Ok I will skip this question because you have many experiences to explain everything and let's go to the next.**

6.39

4. I think, yeah, I have many things you know haha, but I think it opens you, you are a new person, a different world you know, like you grew up in this family in a small village somewhere in Czech Republic, especially when Czech Republic was a country many years locked, like a bit afraid of foreigners, they don't know how to speak different language and now you are outside and you're meeting people of international environment, it pushes you to recognize, reconsider all the values you have from your country, teach you to be more open, teach you to be more independent. And you know, yeah you reconsider all the values and start being more perceptive you know? And it also helps you to learn new languages, it helps you to, yeah hmmm, I don't know, like, you know what I mean right haha! After this experience I think it changed you completely, not only the values but also the way of your thinking about the world and completely your lifestyle.

5. I am not sure if this compared to another education I would get if I did not do exchange, I am not sure if this education should be highly rated than the one I would get in my country, this is what I am kind of struggling with, you know.

**For me for example, it was way better in Sweden and then better or equal than in Greece.**

Yes it teaches you to think differently. And also develop sensitivity to other cultures but also create interests I would say towards other countries and their problems you know.

20.01

Challenge stereotypes of your country or other countries, the one I added interests in other countries and their problems. You know this program, even though you wouldn't be the super smartest, it wouldn't be of highest evaluation compared to Cambridge or Oxford but it's really important it is kind of, especially this creating of understanding, the empathy to other culture you know and I think it's kind of like a voice somehow your way of involvement in sth that would happen, like I'm going to fight in Vietnam, no you wouldn't do it because your friend is there you know and you really care about those kind of people so this interconnectivity which those programs are creating it's kind of making aware of problems everywhere around the world. And you take it personally, you don't put it on the side, you don't put it away, like I remember all my classmates, I was having some presentation and I was talking about some problems in China and they told me "yeah it's far, it's there, why should I care" and this is exactly the thing, this is changing, I have to find the word, wait, the un-concernedness, you know about sth that is not part of your life is just disappearing exactly because of this attitude. So this is what I feel the strongest, when there was war in Ukraine and now I have two friends from there, you want to know about it more, or if I hear sth

about in Armenia I have a friend there or about Syria now and you think about refugees and everything completely different because you can have a closer look and also overcome this barrier of media which gives you the information but the person gives you this personalized information from their home.

And about challenge the stereotypes, you know when I was 16 I really loved this process when you're getting to the culture, to a new culture and first you are just wondering like "they do it weird you know", and then "well maybe is not that bad" and then "damn how did we do it so far like this" haha, women you know, this is what makes you think sth from a completely different perspective and also the third time, you know my country was under Germany and under Russia and always created some kind of not bad relations, some tensions and prejudice and stereotypes and this prejudice is kind of decreased by the travelling or to know somebody closer, and the stereotypes, yeah, it changed completely or a lot my way of thinking, you know caring more.

And about adaptability, especially now, you have to be very adaptable and a bit crazy, nothing works and you just have to get used to it and it's sometimes frustrating and sometimes annoying but it helps you to be more out of the box thinking.

25.08

6. The one I kind of wrote, like becoming the world citizen but at the same time you start losing your own cultural identity which is kind of it's not only your cultural identity but kind of your own personality and also the way you are always used to speak in your language which is for me, I have lived many years abroad and rarely speak my own language and the way you express yourself in your own language is the more natural way right, and by speaking in other languages is kind of reprogram my brain and sometimes I am thinking who am I but I think my own language exactly in my mind, my jokes, my expressions, so this is one of the challenges.

Also the feeling that you discover so many places, and you're going somewhere and you go there and you have forgotten why you actually went there.

Also this feeling of being lost sometimes because you have so many options and you kind of forget, like where I will live in the future, you know, this question wasn't here few generations ago, you know, if you asked someone they would say "why, of course I will stay in the city where I grew up" and this is kind of for me the challenge for us, to settle down actually haha and choose where you want to be.

And also relationship haha, it's trouble because of this, you create always international relationship and you know it by yourself it's always hard to keep it alive.

Sometimes you have to accept it, you have to take all the good and bad but sometimes is like "aaaah", and also missing your family of course because living so long time abroad you just man, sometimes that stinks.

7. People back home cannot relate, oh yeah yeah, they don't understand, I just laugh when I talk about my life and in Czech Republic the most funny thing is that people are not used that travelling, I start to speak about my life in my language and I know already how terrible it sounds for them, I just say it and I know it and it sounds weird for me and for them even worse because it's so weird for them.

34.22

I think where is home is the biggest problem for me and where do I belong because home I realized in the last 6 years, I think I lived more than 6 years abroad, when I count all the stays and travelling I think, it's pretty a lot and I don't know any more where is my home, where should I go back to because home is where did I, where I was supposed to grow up with my family? When I came from Spain and I went home I didn't want to go back from Spain home and now this feeling like you loved and you somehow came back to childhood you're in this romantic world like "oh yeah, like it was" with your family and everything around and the Christmas tree and all and then I supposed to go to my ex-boyfriend to Vienna and I was like ooh I'm feeling sorry, I would like to stay here and exchange much more this Christmas atmosphere with family and the belonging. And then going to Vienna, on the way I always realize that I'm moving and going somewhere else and then I came to the house and we lived together and this is completely different world this is my home right cause this is the person you love. And then you spend a Christmas, it's supposed to be in Spain and I know I like you guys EMTM, it will be a lot of fun and now I kind of miss you by this feeling of leaving your family and now leaving your boyfriend, your second home kind of and then

going to Spain, I get out on a bus station you know and there's like it's terrible to be here... **Connection shortly fails**... and on the way I'm passing the people on the street and it's like "hey Eva, how are you", you know you are the... **Connection shortly fails**... you know this feeling they... **Connection shortly fails**... they miss you and then this belonging and feeling of home, like already on third home so where the hell home is?! Haha! This is my struggle and for the future also I have no idea where will I create my home, I think lately it's not about where you grow up, but more what kind of culture you adhere to much easier and what kind of mentality you want, what are your preferences. For example here in Brazil you meet people so amazing with so much energy, the nature is so beautiful, at the same time you want to be in Europe where they have a safety system, insurance and those kinds of things where you can easily have a family, you know?

38.08

8. It's hard to say, even though you see these problems, it's kind of helps you to find yourself you know and it's like broaden your horizon and find who you really are, even if the price is bigger the results afterwards make you smarter, stronger, more adaptable, more independent and more knowing, the knowing I want to work in this company, I want to implement this idea here.

### **So you kind of embrace what has happened and you wouldn't change anything?**

I think it was amazing what I have done and what I have been through, I think in the future I know there is a limit you know. I know there is a limit and as far as I reach the limit, I find this place where I want to live, the person I want to be with and to create your life, it doesn't mean that you stop travelling you know haha, more like vacationing but I know that I will reach my limit.

40.10

9. Oh yeah definitely, I think professionally for sure, we are more creative in order to survive you know, we are more adaptable, we are more aware of everything, I think it also activates your brain capacity more, it challenges you more, you always turn on, I think we are a different species in this sense you know haha!

41.20

10. I definitely feel that what I have learned so far I need to take advantage and use it and finally use it for the real life and implement it. At the same time, I think if I will continue this mobile life which is also close possibility I will do both and use the knowledge to implement it for real problems, more tangible you know.

42.29

I think I'm at this moment when I stopped, finally I stopped for a while and reflecting now and reflecting on myself so this stability kind of helps me to absorb all the experience and knowledge I got which I can reuse. It also helps me to develop not only personally but also in the work but I am not sure if this phase of stability is sth which would be stable forever haha, you know what I mean?

44.32

11. I think not that fast, moving not that fast, maybe 6 months there, 6 months there but maybe stay somewhere for few years and then again move somewhere else, yeah that's possible, so intensity, I would decrease the intensity and the speed.

12. If it's satisfaction with the past, of course, you're life was really intense and full of experience, you're feeling like this was a good choice. Of course I am feeling happy with the choices I made.

### **Participant 7 (P7)**

0.46

1. I am from the Netherlands, and I have lived outside the Netherlands when I was 18 for one year in Argentina and it was a high school program, exchange program staying in an Argentinean family to learn the culture, the language and become one of them so that was one year. Then in my 2<sup>nd</sup> year of Bachelor, I was living in Saint Lucia, which is a Caribbean island, for about 6 months and it was a practical internship so I was working for a very large resort as an all-round trainee. And then I was living in Nicaragua for around 6 months for a management internship working at a

non-profit hotel as assistant general management in my 4<sup>th</sup> year of Bachelor studies. Then for 8 consecutive months I was travelling from Mexico to Argentina as a backpacker and then EMTM and the 4<sup>th</sup> semester in the Netherlands.

2.47

2. Argentina to Caribbean it was 1 year, Caribbean to Nicaragua it was 2 years, Nicaragua and EMTM it was this 8 month travelling.

4.28

3. For Argentina, I was very eager of getting to know a new culture, I wanted to leave the Netherlands and as I was too young, well my parents thought I was too young, they wanted me to go somewhere and while they knew I was in good hands. And I wanted to really live like a local so that's how I decided to be with a host family and become part of the family and also another reason for learning the language. But this decision was made when I was 15, it was just waiting for it but I wasn't able to go haha.

Then the Caribbean and Nicaragua, both of them are part of the university, it was just that I chose the destinations but it was required to go half a year abroad but I chose locations.

And then EMTM the reason is to continue studies and I thought it was a challenging, interesting program.

6.03

4. So the first thing that immediately pops up in my mind is independence, you can drop me anywhere in the world and I know I'll be fine, I don't have fear for the world, I believe I really believe in people, I'm positive, I'm positive that people are nice cause so far I have really met people around the world that are nice so I have faith. Then, patience in culture, I recognize the cultural differences, so I deal with them easier than for instance the colleagues I have right now. And also knowledge.

12.44

5. Ok I will start with independence cause it is also the one I mentioned before, because you are on your own and you experience on your own, you grow on your own, so it gives you independence and strength you know you can do it, have faith in yourself, confidence, knowing that I can deal with cultural differences, I can deal with language barriers, I can make friends with people I cannot communicate with, so that's one, independence, belief in yourself.

The second one, I would say open-mindedness, you look further than the current situation, your ability to think outside of your knowledge, like think outside of the box, knowing that there are also alternatives, there are also other ways of approaching or dealing with situations because every persons acts differently but also cultures and nationalities deal different with situations, you know that it's not just one way, so that's open-mindedness.

And then the third, adaptability, especially after a few extreme living conditions of different cultures and after living it, you realize you can do it. So this also has to do with independence and confidence but also adaptability within companies, within friendships, within relationships and in the end it comes back to security, confidence.

16.13

6. First that came to my mind is friendship. It's a challenge to maintain a friendship when you travel abroad and I've been doing quite well but it does take a lot of energy. One of the tactics I have when I'm travelling by train, and I travel weekly by train, I take my phone, I go through all my Whatsup contacts and I see to whom I can send a message, so it could range from Franzi and how she's doing in Nicaragua, to Eva and how she's doing with the boys in Brazil, to Lydia asking how she's working on her camp, to Caroline asking how the boat is going, to Carol asking how is her internship. So I really think with everyone what could I say, what comes up in my mind, what have they been doing and try to really have a thoughtful question to get the conversation started, so I remind them that I think of them. So the challenges, almost every time I realize that the conversation dies afterwards and I'm always the one that always starts it again. So I keep on pumping energy in it and knowing if I would stop pumping energy it would go dead. It's one-sided, yeah majority of situations, so I struggle, with family I don't need to cause I know family is there, but with friends you do need to maintain it somehow. But funny enough I was at my brother's in Amsterdam and we were talking and I was mentioning my friends, so like "a guy who lives in Israel" and "a guy who lives in Amsterdam", "a girl who lives in the USA", Lydia, and he will say how come you are in contact with all of them,

how do you manage to have friends all over the world and you still keep in touch. But yeah that takes a lot of time and energy.

For the rest I can go anywhere, it takes me a day and then I am fine.

22.00

7. So, I have restlessness, for instance within the internship I am doing right now I passed few months and I start being itchy, things have to change to keep my 100% motivation, I'm not made for a 40h a week job, office, computer work, constant doing the same. Then I will be brain dead after a while, so I need change and projects, yeah. And that's not only for work but also for living conditions, for now, I do believe I relate it to my age, I assume that with few years I will not have that problem anymore.

People back home cannot relate, emm, they don't always understand what I'm looking for, or why am I running away or why am I not satisfied with being in the Netherlands and being surrounded with friends and family and that makes me guilty, like them not understanding how I feel gives me a certain guilt, yeah, then I start wondering what I want or why, the reason, so yeah.

24.35

8. No I'm very grateful for the opportunities I received and I really and every episode had its learning moment and its joy and its sadness, you know rollercoaster up and down, I wouldn't change. Also I really recognize that all these experiences made me how I am now, and even stronger than others.

25.19

9. Yes, because they truly made me who I am now. For instance, Argentina changed me as such as I came home more confident, I was quite shy, insecure beforehand, also it gave me new language skills and a new family. And then professionally, academically I mean the two experiences I had during Bachelor they gave a lot of working knowledge, practical and managerial and also how is management in Central America, one of the poorest countries, what kind of difficulties do you face. And for the Master, it was not just living abroad but also living with foreigners and studying with foreigners so we all learned a lot, and having different contacts, having to do adapt again, even though you know your classmates already, so you kept on changing, being on different mode, yeah challenged.

27.16

10. Haha, I will start travelling to Cuba on a one-way and I'll see where I'll end up. It might take me half a year to return to wherever I return to but I might be on the road for a year since I really don't have a clue, just travelling open end, until my money runs out, not working, maybe volunteering, Woofing, Helpex, Workway, so I will be there for a while, I don't know how many months cause it really depends on conditions, situations, opportunities.

I am very happy how very far I got so far, I could not have travelled more, I travelled as much as I was able to and as finance was allowing me to, so I am really really happy, thankful. Also the people I met, I could have met more people but I wouldn't be able to be in touch with more of them, so I'm happy.

29.51

11. Well yes and no, because right now I'm still curious to the world and I can still travel on a low budget and I'm still very open-minded, so the next year definitely, but then I do believe soon I'll start looking for certain stability, then I do hope I will settle down somewhere, but I don't know, yeah, my head will tell me when haha!

12. Yeah yeah, and I truly believe everything happens for a reason, like one negative thing happens in my life and then I decide to do a Master and then it got me where I am today so I really, really see connections everywhere.

### **Participant 8 (P8)**

0.28

1. I was in Finland for 9.5 months and it was Erasmus for my first time for my undergraduate, basically I was studying there Entrepreneurship in Central Finland and then I was in EMTM and the fourth semester home.

01.31



2. Finland to EMTM was 1 year and 2 months.

2.03

3. For Finland it was, I don't know, a lot of people from my university went like each year when I was, there were around 200-300 people that went abroad, so it was like a normal thing and my brother did it in the same city before me, so I knew he had a great time, and I saw his pictures, so I decided basically because he went I guess haha, but I did it half a year more than he did. And then for EMTM I actually wanted to do this program since I was in high school, when I went to see the Faculty of Economics in Ljubljana, like when we were in high school we could go see the faculties just to see what they have and they would present themselves so we know where to go and when I went to the faculty and saw the Tourism Department, then they told us about the program and that's why I went to this faculty in the first place because I eventually wanted to go here so. That was the plan all the time I guess, it just sounded interesting, I don't know. I wanted to get out of it, meet international people.

3.51

4. I don't know, I think like your mind broadens a bit when you meet like a lot of people from different cultures, so I guess being able to understand different cultures, well maybe the biggest one that made me different, eeem, yes I don't know, it was just like a great experience, our country is so small, I think we need to get out of it to see the world haha, cause otherwise you spent your whole life in one place, so yeah, so maybe become more international, yeah.

8.57

5. Ok I will start with independence, I've never, before I went out, lived outside of my family's house without parents cause there was no money before so it was a big part of why I decided to go, it was nice I mean, I knew I wanted to live maybe independently for a bit, like take care of myself, you know stupid things, but it means a lot I think, so like cooking for yourself and cleaning for yourself and basically taking care on your own bills and rent and everything and it was great I always loved the experience of it. And then I had to come back home and that was sad, it is a lesson and you learn a lot and you see it's manageable and you understand why you want to do it again. I think once we reach certain age we should be able to want to move out of our parents' house like become independent, financially and personally I guess, I think it gave me the opportunity to have that experience cause I wanted it anyway so getting some scholarship and just being out of the country made me more independent for sure.

Improve CV and career prospects, everybody here talks about international experience like you've got to have international experience so I don't know if it will help me in the end like with my job, everybody says they want that so now like everybody has it now, so.

**Well I am interested in what you believe.**

The thing is I'm hoping it will improve my career prospects, I mean it has improved my CV at least the education section, full of universities.

**Maybe focus on the now, how it affected you till now.**

I haven't had that many jobs, that's the thing, that I did work.

**I mean improving the CV is probably kind of for the future part and since you didn't have yet that much working experience, maybe you haven't seen the effect yet of this idea/item.**

Ok make international friends, that's always great, I think it's great to have people outside of your country you can visit cause I like to travel so, for example now that I have people from EMTM I think I will visit more but so far I have visited people in multiple countries. You can stay with them, they can show you around, you get to know somebody local, like you knew them from before but then you visit them in their own country and I think it's kind of special as well so it means a lot of travel opportunities and also travelling is inspiration, like if you have somebody somewhere you go there and you have a broader variety of friends from different cultures and I think it connects to the other one, develop sensitivity to other cultures, you have friends from there so you kind of see the whole culture differently and from a different point of view so you become more sensitive, I think those two connect.

13.30

6. I guess language barrier, it's not the biggest deal I think but it's actually very important for making you feel home somewhere, like it's a big difference if people around you speak a language that you can speak so it makes you feel more comfortable I guess so that is a problem I think sometimes, depends on where you go. Other problems, it's sometimes expensive I think haha, well yeah, depends on where you go again yeah.

### **Maybe on a personal level?**

It is a personal level kind of, I mean it costs, you kind of want a job cause you want to earn more money but you can't get a job because of the language barrier and it's kind of frustrating sometimes. You're not that much in control of your own life sometimes when you are abroad because you are a newcomer to the city and stuff, and that can be frustrating from my personal point of view.

And at least for me, I always miss my language cause nobody speaks my language, nobody speaks Slovenian, I mean you always find Slovenians everywhere but like you start missing it I think, that's why it is important to talk to people from back home, keep in contact cause I would go crazy after a while, if I didn't speak Slovenian to somebody I would just be speaking Slovenian randomly to people like my roommate that don't understand at all haha!

19.16

7. Yeah ok restlessness, yeah I can see that very well, whenever I get home, Slovenia it's hard to aaah stay here haha, I love it here and I'm always glad to come back but then after a couple of months I just want to get out again, I need to get out, I have this real need to get on a train and go I don't know somewhere across the border. Whenever you move somewhere abroad you start exploring your new city, I know the city I live in here in Slovenia so well, I mean there's stuff to explore but not that much and you kind of want the challenge of finding a new restaurant, finding a new favorite cafe or sth. Stuff just start become the same and I become restless. I need to get a lot and it's not always possible especially if you have a job or you don't have a job and you don't have money, so time or money constraints.

Where is home, that was a weird sensation for me the first time I came home from Finland for Christmas vacation, I was just here for 2 weeks and then went back, aah and after a week, of course I saw everybody, it was the first time I was away for an extended period of time so after a couple of days I had the feeling I need to go home and I felt home was in Finland and I was a visitor in my own childhood home. Weird experience cause I spent what 21 years here and 4 months there by that time but that felt like home, I had my room, I had my apartment, I had my keys, I really wanted to go home, I was tired it was Christmas of course, like everybody all the family, it was crazy, I was overwhelmed and I felt I need to go back to Finland and relax, so that was the first time I had that sensation and since I had it more times, it's weird.

And language barriers, they are a challenge, also an opportunity I think. I guess when I was in Finland the language barrier wasn't big of a problem because most people spoke English, same in Denmark. And then in Spain it really hit me, this can be hard, because, a lot of people spoke Spanish but I kind of never did, so when I went there, I've been there for half a year so I said I will start learn Spanish but then again I didn't find the time and also wanted to do sports. I found a karate club and I wanted to do that, so I never found the time and I never started and then I felt guilty cause everybody was asking me if they spoke English and if we could have a conversation with the locals, they asked me if I'm learning Spanish and I was like "no" haha, "I'm not" and then everybody looks at you weird, like "why, you should" and I was like "I know but I don't have the time" and it's like and you're kind of feel uncomfortable and people don't want make the effort to understand you sometimes. Sometimes they do, I mean now I also had pleasant experiences with the language barriers, like people really made the effort, so the karate club I mentioned. Like nobody spoke English but, maybe some people that had practice with me but I was like maybe 4 times in the whole 4 months and I went there 4 times per week so there nobody spoke English, and I didn't speak Spanish or Catalan, it was weird but I managed and they really made the effort using their body language and hands and everything and then sometimes they really make the effort to communicate with you even though you don't speak the same language and don't just give up on you. That makes a big difference, helped me feel like home there because somebody made the effort to like want me to be there and show me it's ok, even if we don't speak alike, we can communicate somehow, that makes a big difference, it's a challenge and an opportunity.

24.48

8. I wish I have learned more languages, I never managed to learn the language that much, I learned a bit of Finnish but Finnish was just so hard and it's kind of the same as my language, nobody speaks that and there are also so few Finns and they were speaking English, so. I am really sad I didn't learn Spanish, it could come in handy and even in Denmark, I know it's not that useful but I think it shows a great respect for local people to try to learn their language. I think it's important that I never really managed to do it a lot, I guess I wasn't that good at it, I regret I didn't do that. And I also regret sometimes not staying more time, like you have to go home. Other than these two I always had positive experiences and I wish I could have more and sometimes you have to go home and I spent all my money that I saved before and had to go home and I wish I could stay longer.

26.48

9. Definitely, definitely, anyway for international experiences now at least in the business field it's important to have them and people want them supposedly, I will see if it really helps or not, but the problem with programs like this is that they look really nice on paper but I hope they will find it impressive in real life you never know. I have a bit of a concern about EMTM and having a Master in Tourism Management at least people in Tourism in Slovenia are not that usually well educated so having a Master in Tourism kind of scares them. I mean I had a job interview for like a summer job in a hostel and I talked to the person that owns a hostel and he was telling that people are probably afraid of me, in the meaning of the future because I have a Master and most people that have own a hostel or hotels or in Hospitality and Tourism Industry are not that well educated and they don't want somebody that's more educated than them. Slovenians have a big problem with that, we don't like people being better than us haha, I am kind of afraid of that maybe. Aaah, there is always going back abroad right?

Personally, well of course it changed me, you actually learn a lot about living with little when you move abroad for a couple of months cause you know you can buy a lot of stuff and there's no way to resell it, either you buy and you sell when you go and nobody wants half of those stuff and you learn to live with a mattress and one fork and one spoon and one plate, for like a year. I lived like with one plate, my roommate had one plate, there were a lot of international people in the buildings around us and everybody just had one plate and whenever we had international dinners everybody brought their own plate and their own fork and it was fun, it wasn't bad, it was so much fun and you learn to live with little. And then you go back home and you have a house full of stuff and it just feels too much so I think it's important to learn to live with less than you have and it's never the same, once you meet a lot of international people, a lot of different cultures, just learn to live somewhere else, it's just more experiences life-wise and you never go back.

30.09

10. I don't know, for a long time I had in mind that I want to do a PhD just because it's interesting, interested in tourism and I'm fine with academia but I wanted to do it abroad, I didn't want to do it here. Now that I am writing my Master thesis I'm kind of struggling with it so I am not sure, like if I see a good opportunity, a good program then I might apply and see if I get in or not but mostly I think I will be looking for a job after graduating.

I think there is always more, I am very proud of what I experienced and where I've been in and the people I met, I think I met enough people, of course I really want to meet more people, I'm really happy with the people I didn't meet haha, but I don't know, I am proud but I always want more and I don't know if that's the thing if it would stop after some point, I would be like "ok that was enough travelling and experiencing for a while", I think it becomes kind of an addiction, like you need to get out, you need to experience more, it's adrenaline. So when I look back and I'm saying "I survived all of that and I've seen all of that and it was great" so I'm very proud of it, I don't think I'm done, I don't feel like this is it, this was great, now we do sth else. I feel like this will follow me forever and I always want to go somewhere and maybe live for a couple of months somewhere else for a year or 2 years. I would like to go back abroad for like 2 years, just work somewhere else and come back maybe.

32.54

11. For sure, aah, I would love that for whatever reason, I would love to go work abroad and maybe then study abroad, like I said before PhD if I would do it I would do it abroad, so definitely moving somewhere else. I have this wish to go work abroad at least for a couple of years, like the economy here is not that good, jobs are not good, it's hard to get them so if I would get one abroad I would for sure go out for a couple of years, the situation right here might be better by then, volunteering more probably as well, I kind of want to volunteer abroad as well like half a

year or a year, I would have to save money before that but like it is a wish that I have and do sth I love for free and help somewhere, I don't know.

34.14

12. Yeah, I'm very happy, there is always stuff you wish you did and stuff you wish you had done differently or more. Sometimes you wish you went more out of your comfort zone, because even when you are abroad you can still stay home or go out and meet people. So I would usually be in between but I was so happy with everything, with every experience and everywhere I've been, there were definitely experiences, not all of them pleasant but all good, so I'm very happy with what I've done so far, yeah sure, I guess.

### **Participant 9 (P9)**

0.34

1. So I think the first time I lived abroad was in 2008 when I did my Erasmus in Spain in Tenerife, Canary Islands. Then to Vienna for internship in 2009 for half a year and then the next time I think it was in 2013 and I went volunteering in Guatemala for 3 months with a local volunteering organization. And in September 2013 I started EMTM and the 4<sup>th</sup> semester was in USA, in Arizona.

2.01

2. Spain to Vienna was 1 year, Vienna to Guatemala 4 years more or less, Guatemala to EMTM was 1,5 month.

3.49

3. Probably mainly to experience sth different from what I was used to, to see other places, get to know other people. Of course the first time for Erasmus the main motivation was to learn Spanish, so language, and also to experience local Spanish lifestyle haha and to merge into new cultures.

Guatemala I think because it was volunteering, I always wanted to go and do sth which was not related to like money exchange but like to help people so there was this motivation of helping other people and contributing sth. And maybe in the society, I grew up from a western society, see whether I could help them in sort of way, which was mainly information on how to do marketing, do like photography or design, some brochures for them cause they were not really familiar with programs, like Photoshop or Indesign, I could help them with that.

And for EMTM it was mainly for learning and to get to know people from all over the world and study with them, just like a learning experience.

So there's like an overall theme kind of, like to challenge yourself, learn sth and learn sth new but each time it was a little bit different why I went abroad.

5.56

4. For me the main thing is that you develop friendships all over the world, like you connect to people from all over the world, which is a feeling it's kind of a family you build up all over the world when you feel like whenever you go now, you just know someone. You know someone who knows someone so it's like a totally different experience from travelling, if I would have to stay my whole life in this small village I grew up in Germany haha you know. I think it's really the stories with the people, for example now Lydia she had a friend here so I could stay like the first week with her friend, she connected then me to other friends sth totally unique I think, yeah.

12.46

5. I think for me making international friends is important, open-mindedness or independence, live a life experience, see the world and travel, be yourself, freedom.

**I'm really interested in which 2-3 you will pick in the end, you know, this fine line. You said be yourself for example, how did you discover this, how was that in your life and why is that, for example? I just picked one.**

14.51

Travelling always brings you in situations where you are out of your comfort zone and you're often like alone, sometimes you're lonely, you are not surrounded by family or your friends you grew up with or people who know

you really well and I think in these moments you kind of have to find a way eem, to not get like frustrated haha! So you need to either develop some interests, so things that you can do wherever you are and I think the more you challenge yourself in these situations the better you get you know, like moving to a new place. It can be whatever, for example here I'm doing yoga I can do all over the world and then you can connect to people who have similar interests so you feel less lonely wherever you are. And I think now also with my research or the touring cycling thing, I think this is a very great example, so people share the same love for biking and for bike travel so they are all over the world and it doesn't matter where you come from, you can just connect with them wherever you are. And you are in a sort of community and then they are like super nice people and that's mainly it, that you have to listen more to yourself, maybe because you have more of those moments, maybe when you are alone and then you need to find strategies haha.

17.20

6. I think the main difficulty I'm facing right now is this feeling that I was moving for 2,5 years now without like really living somewhere, which is sometimes challenging. But also it has these really great moments, you live like a very extreme life I think because you have all these extreme moments which are so great and then sometimes also the negative moments are more extreme as in your daily life. But sometimes now I'm feeling like can I ever settle down somewhere, just stay in one place again after such a long time of moving, am I able to live such a normal life haha! Without all crazy people from so many countries, can I just be again in my hometown with people who have lived there all the time, is that really my place. I think this feeling that you don't have a place anymore is sometimes for me challenging because I think we all have this feeling of belonging in us, this wish to belong somewhere, where we can start sth or build up sth. And for me now like this is very challenging because I don't know where that place will be you know like if it's where I grew up or if it's somewhere in this world haha! I think this is like a big challenge that comes with mobile life as we are having. Your friends are just all over but it doesn't necessarily mean they are where you live, so you have to start all over again and again, I think this is also sth I feel a little bit tired of now after such a long time. After every time you move you have to build up new friends, build up everything new and then the moment when you manage to do that, then you're already leaving again. So I think these are the two biggest challenges I'm facing right now haha.

21.21

7. Definitely sometimes missing sth, especially my family or things, my language sometimes, just to express myself in my own language definitely is sth that, haha! And then countless options create confusion, this is especially for after now, after this intense program, you're facing a lot of options, you're like "aaah" haha! Together with what I said I think it's enough yes.

23.36

8. I think it's very hard to say it that way, because I think it's always a process and always you just have to accept yourself the way you are in that moment. For me for example, at the beginning of EMTM, maybe I wasn't as open as I should have been to meet other people, especially in the beginning, I was just still, you know I just came back from Guatemala and such a different world and life I had there, then I just saw my family and I immediately moved to Denmark and I think for me it was the reason that I got accepted very late into the program. So I think if you have a little more preparation for yourself and I think it's very important to take your time, how much ever you need, so I took this time when I was already in EMTM which was eem, maybe for the beginning to meet other people not like the best but I kind of needed it, I think it's like a process and I wouldn't really change sth. It's always like a, you just learn from all like these different situations and from the good and the bad situations and I think it's like a long learning process. And for me I think it's just important to reflect and sometimes now of course people especially in our program have different view and different ways of dealing with a situations, inspired me, to see how differently everyone copes with different situations and I think it's really beneficial also to see other people being in the same situation and some would react totally different like you would do and you're like "oooh that's a great way to do it" haha, so I just like also adapted some things. Well I thought "hey that's cool, I want to do it that way", just change my own perspective on things so I wouldn't really change anything no.

25.55

9. Yeah, in every perspective I think. Our program has been very intense so I think what we created and these bonds between people in our program they will stay like that, maybe not as intensely but I think if anyone would ask from our program "hey can you help me out" or "can you host me" or whatever, I would always say "yes" no matter what, if I can, and I think to be challenged in so many different ways, especially for our career life, is definitely sth

not everyone has. To be like so flexible, open, tolerant, all these interpersonal benefits, I think what I take most out of that program is not only like academic-wise but like all these intercultural-personal however you can call that haha!

27.30

10. Yeah, I mean I'm still not 100% sure about that, on the one sense I always thought I could imagine a PhD haha, but now with my master thesis I'm like "no, no" hahaha, I'm like "ever, ever, ever go back to university". I think right now I'm not really feeling, I just don't want to sit in front of the computer anymore, but I think most of our jobs are also very computer intense jobs, especially if you go to management, so I'm very confused haha, about my future life so I don't have an answer for that hahaha!

28.44

Yeah, I think I haven't arrived yet at that point where I say where I 100% feel, yeah I don't know. This is probably what comes next because so far I was, we were just moving and I'm still not really spending a lot of time like thinking about what's going to be in the future because I'm thinking ok, first I have to finish this and then I maybe need a break a little bit and then I'm like ready to move on again, you know.

**The break you're talking about, would be in your country or somewhere else?**

Mmm, I don't know hahaha!

**Because sometimes break can be either vacation or real break like I want to be home just to relax.**

Really like both, there's definitely a part of me being home again for a while to see my grandmas and my family, my brother, just to connect to your people again. Also it's important to not lose this connection, this contact and I think I'm...**Connection shortly fails**...very open and I will see what comes up and whenever sth good comes I will probably take the chance you know. So I'm very, very open which is on the one side very cool but also sometimes scary haha!

30.37

11. No I don't think the same intensity as I had now, I can imagine living in a place which is not where I grew up, in another country maybe in Europe or sth, when it comes to job but I don't feel that I want to move every 5 months no, I think that's enough for now haha! I think that I would like to have a base somewhere and build up sth and then maybe due to my job, travel and every now and then or like go on longer vacation. Ideally I would like to work with bike travel and so maybe I could imagine then maybe lead a tour through Europe for a couple of weeks or sth and then just come back but like, have somewhere a base yeah, I think this is sth I really feel for now that is important to me. And about more education you asked me, from all these experiences what we gain, I have this feeling that at one point I would really like to pass it on to let's say other generations, that's what mainly what I would like to do later maybe, to work with a university, if it's a professor or maybe just like lecturer. But I think it's very nice, I mean not so many people have had this intense experiences which we have and I think it's kind of cool the idea haha, to like pass it on and work with other generations about how they see it.

32.53

12. Sometimes yes, sometimes no haha! Because I think for me sometimes what is challenging is like, I mean my friends they are all already there, all a step ahead of me, like they have like a house, they have a husband, they have kids haha, and they live kind of like this so they have everything kind of sorted out a little bit you know. Not that really sorted out because life is just changing always but it has, I don't know, they have just built up sth. When I'm coming home sometimes I feel like "oooh no, I want that too" you know, I just spend my whole life travelling haha, so yeah sometimes I have this feeling that, yeah, maybe I should have stayed, like you know build up a family too but on the other hand I also feel like now that wouldn't be me you know, so far, so I think overall I did what I had to do but of course there is sth in these moments when you see, the cute kids from you friends, you're like "oooh" haha! I think that's going to happen in my life too but just a little bit later than in theirs. If you have this feeling inside of you that you need to travel or go to different places, see different things, if you don't live it then, then maybe later you will be like "ooh why I have never done it" or you would regret, so yeah I always did it and I think there is not that much to regret so far haha! So overall I think it's very good. I think maybe right now I'm like more in this moment where I'm feeling I'm having less and less energy to sometimes cope with all these situations,

probably because of the master thesis haha, and not having your family and friends around just sometimes to support you or just take you somewhere like “come on, let’s just do that”, I think that’s very intense and probably wouldn’t have thought for that it’s going to be so intense hahaha! Sometimes I’m living here in the house and I don’t really have a workspace here, so all these questions because here there is no university so I have to find places where I can work, then I cannot always go at the time I want to go, so I need to cope with their hours, so it’s like all these little things, but in the end they sum up and they make it even more difficult to write a paper like that haha.

### **Participant 10 (P10)**

0.48

1. So the first experience when I was abroad I was 18, in high school, kind of work exchange, for summer holiday, for 3 months in France, I was working in a campsite in a bar. All the time I went out of Slovakia for the summer, so next two summers I went to Cyprus and again I was working as a Bartender, it was again as work exchange. Then I went for Erasmus to Turkey, it was just one semester. Then it was France but only for 1 month, don’t know if it counts. Then I went for Work & Travel in the USA, two summers again. And after my Bachelor, I had a gap year, I studied and I was working also in Caribbean, I studied 3 months French there in Guadeloupe and then I moved to Martinique and I was working there but there the working experience wasn’t anything really connected to my studies or sth like that, it was sth with paperwork and office work and translation, so I was abroad for all this time. And then it was our program EMTM and in the 4<sup>th</sup> semester I came to India and I’m doing my thesis here.

3.06

2. Usually it was during the summer holidays, summer break so during the year I was home, I studied home and then in the summer holiday it was usually like for 4-5 months. So all before Caribbean were in summer holidays but Caribbean was full year. Actually, USA and Caribbean it was all together, I left to USA at the beginning of June and I stayed whole year and then I started our program in August.

**3. I will skip this question since you have many experiences and would take time to answer and I’m really interested in the next set of questions.**

4.23

4. Ok I have to make it in two different groups because when I look at the educational program, the study experience, this one, was very beneficial. For me especially when I look at the language learning that was really good experience cause when I look at myself how I spoke French before and what I learned outside it was totally different, cause you know in my country when I studied it, it was only in the school and you cannot really learn that much so that was really good regarding the language. And the working experience, all this experience I can say, yeah personally, let’s see, wow it gave me a lot haha.

**Whatever counts for you, you know and I’m really interested in the personal aspect but you can talk to me about anything.**

For sure I am more independent, I would say, regarding to the fact that I was studying over and over and over all the time, I’m not that scared anymore to start sth, I don’t know, it’s like a part of it, this comes very natural, this change or whatever.

12.44

5. You want to discover your history/heritage or theirs, definitely because before, I don’t know, I never put a value on my country, I was always like “eh we have nothing, eh” you know, just this stereotype “there’s nothing special here” but after I was travelling more and more I feel like “yeah actually we have a lot” and I feel that I travel the world, I go to other countries but I don’t know that much about my own country. And when people ask me many times, like I don’t know what to recommend you I know more about the neighbor country than about my own country so it’s definitely changed. So now I’m sometimes even more interested in my own history than maybe in other places. I found it actually here in India because now we were planning a trip with Dear and we were thinking I really want to go in Slovakia, I don’t know why, I don’t want to go anywhere else now, I just really want to see how it is during the summer there, cause I’ve never been there in the summer haha!

Yeah, adaptability, definitely, I mean especially in USA, I lived with many people in one house, one room and in the beginning it was difficult so I adapt. But after that I don't have a problem haha I think with anything, it was even easy to adapt to Indian culture now haha! Adaptability for me was the most important thing, I think, because that was really difficult in the beginning, you know you always see yourself your priority, but after a while you learn that haha it's not only that.

See the world, travel for sure. Since I started I just want to see more and more, the more you travel the more you want to travel, the more you see the more you want to explore I believe in my case. You travel and you are already thinking of another trip, I don't know this is my case, I'm travelling and I'm already thinking where is the next destination.

**Is there any other that you feel strong about it?**

I would put communication and language skills together.

**Is this really the most important for you, the one that you want to talk to me about?**

Ok I would say open-mindedness and sensitivity to other cultures because really after I started to travel I always had some prejudice of course haha like everyone, but the more I was travelling the more I was opening, I mean sometimes of course, sometimes I feel "ooh those people are from Germany" and all those stereotypes and sth like this but I don't judge that much anymore according to the culture and I think for sure I am more open-minded than I was 5-7 years ago for sure. And it's for sure thanks to travelling because you see different people, different cultures and you can somehow understand haha. I mean our program especially, I think it was really tense experience for tolerating yeah for sure, does it make sense haha!

18.00

6. I mean in the beginning is always challenging for me when you get to a new place and you start to make new friends, you are meeting new people, at the beginning it's always challenging because you somehow need to get into it and I mean in our program it was easy because we didn't know each other, no one knew each other but for instance in USA, it was a little bit difficult in the beginning because of the culture, and they had already their groups and in the work you are only foreigners so you need to find somehow a way how to get in touch with them, but yeah it's kind of small, but yeah, this is challenging in the beginning. It's also until you learn about a place and all those things. But I don't know, I don't have any big challenges I think, I don't know, usually just those small things you know. Like you come to this new country, you feel a little bit lost until you find yourself, find your friends, but it's very small. I don't think that there are big challenges.

24.44

7. For sure where do I belong. Yeah that always happens to me after long-term when I come back home, especially when I come back home not when I go somewhere, but when I return I feel like ok I'm super lost, don't know haha, where is my place. I mean of course there are people back home to wait for me but it's not the same and you don't feel that you live there anymore. And also when you are moving to another country it is the same after a while, you still feel that ok, maybe this is not where I belong, I always search for other place to go and to find me but yeah. It's for sure this one.

Yes countless options create confusion, that's very true, I found myself many times lost because I know that I have a lot of options but in the end I don't know what to do because I want to do everything, I want to go everywhere, there are so many options we can take. I find it more and more difficult, each time haha.

**You said sth about the food in the beginning, I don't know if it is important to you?**

Yeah for sure I miss all those things back home or back in Europe, especially here now, or in countries where you eat all the time the same haha.

**You also talked to me about relationship?**



Yeah the relationship or you lose contact with your friends or to start a relationship. This is a big thing because actually what I feel more and more all the time when I come back home I don't feel that much related with my friends and I lost contact with them for sure because I'm never home and when I come home it's just for a short time and we somehow cannot relate anymore that much. And it's the same with the relationship because all the time when I'm on the move I don't feel that I want to start sth cause yeah, you start sth for few months, then you move, then aah, I mean the long distance it doesn't work much and then you move to another country and you are always like "ok I will start sth when I settle down, when I settle down" but when haha! So yeah that's a really big thing, in my case, I have a problem with this, because I always say "no, it doesn't make sense now". It's not only with the romantic relationship, sometimes with friends when I know I'm just here for few months you don't create that big relationship with friends neither, because you know that you're leaving, so you kind of keep it on this level that ok you can say goodbye haha, you know what I mean?

Starting over again, for me it's challenge but it's also a good thing, I see it's negative but also positive because I learn a lot from this, this is not that big problem anymore, I think it's easier for us now. So it's not that big challenge anymore, I take it naturally now. But yeah for sure in the beginning it was really challenging over and over, in our program, every semester do another things and go to register etc all those damn things but it's also good because I don't think that for the future would be a problem for us, it's good.

31.01

8. Yeah sth that I regret that when I'm in the country, I'm sometimes really lazy to take advantage out of it, to really learn what I can learn at that moment you know. Like for instance when I was in Spain, I had opportunity to study Spanish and I did for one month but then I had other priorities and somehow gave up on this and I always do the same mistake. In Denmark I could learn Danish but I didn't and yeah haha, yeah that I would like to change, but yeah I don't know if it's possible that's for sure, that I don't take the opportunity that I have at the moment and I always say "ok, I will study later, I will do it later" and then I expect for a course to study, study haha so in the future.

I think, now it changed, but in the beginning when I started to travel I was always searching somehow for Slovak people, you know, somehow I kind of wanted to be part of that community of the country that I was but also I needed my own community and I think in the beginning this kind of separated me. But this was really in the beginning when I was in Cyprus or France, then it changed yeah. In Erasmus this was changed already, there I was searching for other cultures than my own haha. In the beginning there was some kind of barrier, you know, and I couldn't get in to the community.

33.19

9. Ok, for sure, when I compare it, when I compare myself with some of my friends in Slovakia, for sure I think from the professional side, I think I can tell I have more possibilities to find a better job there. I'm open because first of all of the language, I mean in Slovakia people they speak English but it's not the same as when you go somewhere and you travel and you can really learn how to talk and everything, it's just really basic, so this is the first thing, the language. And also the companies, I think they search for more independent people, I can see that I'm more independent than some of my friends who never left home you know, for them it's even difficult to move to another city and to be 40km far from home, so I think for sure, for sure in the professional way.

In the personal sphere, there are benefits but also disadvantages. Yeah definitely I don't regret this travelling because I think it's very beneficial for personal growth, and I learn a lot during the travel and I personally grow a lot, like how it was 5 years ago and how it is now.

35.49

10. The thing is that now I think that I would like to work because I need to get some money haha, after all this travelling but I was also thinking especially here in India, I found so many interesting programs I would be interested if I get some resources again, I would be out.

36.45

Yeah I think I accomplished everything that I wanted but then I have always this problem that I always want more you know haha. I don't regret no, I don't know.

37.22

11. Oh yeah, I think I'm not going to settle down haha soon, I think it's impossible. On one hand I'm thinking yeah I would like to settle down, have a nice job or sth but I don't think it's possible, I still kind of search for sth you know haha. I don't know what it is but I'm still searching sth I don't know, I always feel that there is still sth that I have to go and learn and I have to experience and I don't know if this will ever stop you know haha. For now I don't think it's going to stop that soon haha.

38.35

12. Yeah, in general I would say yes, for sure, I am happy, if I have to choose again, I would choose it but of course there are some moments when I'm like ok, maybe it is a bit more difficult, more complicated, it could be easier to stay home and just do whatever and I mean if I would not have that many options I would not want that much but in general when I take it as a whole for sure I would choose it again, because it gave me a lot, even if I struggle sometimes, it still gave me a lot haha.

### **Participant 11 (P11)**

0.36

1. So I had these experiences 3 times. So it would be my Erasmus in Belgium, I was in the city Ghent and it was part of International Management program. Then the 2<sup>nd</sup> one was EMTM studies and for the 4<sup>th</sup> semester I went home to Lithuania. And the 3<sup>rd</sup> experience was in Mallorca, Spain last summer, I was working for 3 months in a hotel, it was an internship, after Ljubljana in EMTM.

2.05

2. I was in Belgium in 2011 spring semester, then I went in EMTM autumn 2013 so it was 2.5 years. And then Mallorca was after Ljubljana, actually in the middle of EMTM.

3.06

3. For Belgium it was mainly to travel and to see world outside of Lithuania and particularly I went to Western Europe because I wanted to see the life there, cause I am from the Eastern-Northern Europe so I wanted to experience sth different and I haven't really travelled that much so to travel and see the world.

Then for EMTM was to receive a good quality education, I was thinking to do a Master's abroad so just education.

And Mallorca was because I never worked in Tourism industry and I wanted to gain experience and professional development.

4.47

4. I think that in general the experience abroad makes you open-minded, more tolerant, it makes you feel that everything is possible and things like this.

Of course friendships because I met many, many people from all around the world, starting from Northern America to Asia, so I think I made a lot of friends all over the world, not only Europe.

I think also I improved my languages, especially English and Russian because I met a lot of Russian people in Belgium and I started understanding Spanish haha.

What else, there are so many I'm lost now! Of course the education even when I was an exchange student abroad in Belgium I was going to classes, apart from travelling a lot and being with friends, I was still going to the university, so knowledge.

9.58

5. For example independence. Because when you go abroad you don't have your family or friends that you had in life with you and also in EMTM I didn't have any person from the same country as I am, you know, so I cannot even speak my language, only in Skype with my family and friends. And being alone in a foreign country, I think it taught me a lot to be independent and rely on myself a lot and it gave me a lot of confidence, maybe to be alone and to do things on my own.

You want to discover your country's heritage or theirs. For me it's more about theirs. For example when I am in another country I like to travel, I like to meet the local people, I even like to try the local food, I don't know, I enjoy getting to know other countries, especially when I live there for quite some time and I want to see how people act, it's just interesting for me, I'm very curious about this, this is one of my passions in life I would say about travel.

Anything is possible. I feel like if I had stayed in my country I would be like only looking for a job in my country and never think "oh, I can work outside of my country" and experience another job environment or sth. But now I'm thinking it would be really nice and interesting for me to work abroad again, like I did in Mallorca for example, because I really enjoyed this experience and I would never think about working abroad if I have stayed in my country. But now I'm thinking more broad.

12.24

6. Well I think that the biggest challenge I face is, as I said, I was away from my family, my friends and I think it's hard to be away from them sometimes. I'm not saying that I was crying everyday "oh, I'm so homesick" or sth, but sometimes you miss them you know especially when you are alone and this with your family and the Skype conversation it's not the same when you are with them in the same room you know. And even with the friends for example when I came back, for example when I haven't been home for almost a year, I have just been only 3 days last summer and I just came back for the Christmas again so it was almost a year, I feel that I'm really missing a lot sometimes from my friends' life, they made new friends, and it's just like "wow, I missed a lot", you chat with them still, but it's not the same, so.

Another challenge, for example in Spain, I knew a little bit of the language but it's still hard when people don't want to speak English. I think it's a challenge for example go to a bank or somewhere, I had some problems when I had to go to a language school, they didn't really speak English, so I was trying to explain them in Spanish it was really hard, so. I think a language barrier sometimes can be difficult.

16.47

7. Starting over again. One of the reasons I decided to go home also for the 4<sup>th</sup> semester was because I felt really tired of moving again because I count that I moved actually 4 times in 1,5 year and it was really stressful the last time in Spain because it was really hard for me to find accommodation and to move all the stuff. It causes a lot of stress and, you know, it's tiring.

Where is home. In EMTM we move so much, it's more or less the same maybe, you're just lost where do you belong, of course home is Lithuania for me but it makes you lost, at least it makes me lost haha.

People back home cannot relate. Yeah it's always when you talk with your friends, when you say "oh, I'm tired moving around" or "I don't know what I want to do in the future" and they already have their jobs, they are working for few years and I'm still a student and I think that maybe they sometimes think that I'm spoiled or sth haha, I don't know. I just have this feeling sometimes that they don't really understand me, you know, and I'm good with my friends but sometimes I feel like this.

### **So how it is with them, you go out and?**

Just simple conversations then "ooh I don't know what I want to do in the future, like I was travelling so much, I don't know which country I like" or sth like this, you know.

### **Is there any other aspect that you want to tell me sth?**

Yeah, miss your country, the feeling of your country, yeah actually, I missed even people, as I said in EMTM for example I was the only one who was speaking Lithuanian and I kind of missed sometimes being with people from my country, speaking the language and as I said the food also, I missed the home food, what my mom cooks haha.

20.03

8. Thinking of these 3 experiences, no I don't think so, I think they were perfect the way they were. Maybe I would change the thing that I might experience even more, long-term experience. For example when I was in the Bachelor

studies I didn't go to Work & Travel to USA that some of my friends did. I still think sometimes that I missed a good chance to actually travel to the USA so maybe that would be a regret. But with those 3 experiences I am very happy, I wouldn't change them.

21.00

9. Yeah of course, I think the benefits will be for example education, our CV profile will be broader and we will be more attractive in the professional way for our future employers because international experience it's haha! And the languages that we improve, that I improved, it's also a big benefit also for the CV. So languages, the professional experience and of course the friendships, the network that we made you know. Even we, EMTM we study the same, tourism management and maybe in the future if we need a job or sth, if we need an advice from each other or make a business together or sth we can contact each other, all this network you know, it's very important I think, for sure it will have some value in the future.

### **And personally maybe?**

Of course friendships, I still have, for example if I take Belgium, I met friends which I am in constant contact for few years now already and I know if I will meet them in the future probably, maybe travel to their country, you know, to see them, their friends, I don't know if it's possible but.

### **Other personal development maybe?**

As I said, I became more open-minded, tolerant so I think it affects my decisions in life for sure, looking for job internationally for sure.

22.55

10. No, I am not planning to study anymore, I want to work.

23.31

Yeah, I think so. Yeah for example even to choose the internship in Mallorca, no eem. Of course I have the feeling of accomplishment for example imagine the friendships, you know. Of course I am meeting the people, my CV is broader, I don't know.

### **Anything else?**

As I said, when I went to Belgium I travelled to meet people and of course I met people, I travelled a lot and with EMTM we travelled a lot in 1.5 year you know. And of course the education in EMTM, I learned a lot, especially when I haven't studied Tourism before so I gained a lot of knowledge. Yeah I have this feeling of accomplishment.

25.26

11. Yeah I do. I want to actually, I want to, I feel that my country is very small and there are not enough opportunities for me, I want to explore a bigger world, maybe not overseas but at least Europe.

### **Is this connected to the feeling of accomplishment or it's just "I am more curious, I want to see more" attitude?**

I think more, it's about more challenging yourself and achieving of course more, I think it has more with the achievement.

### **I just combine it with what you said that you are a bit tired of moving and you went home for that reason, so I want to see if that is connected to what you answer now?**

Yeah now when I'm thinking if I want to work somewhere I don't want to go just for few months for an internship or have a semester there I just want to go for at least few years or even for a life somewhere. But if I go somewhere I want it to be for long now.

26.55

12. Yeah I am very happy, I met a lot of wonderful people, I saw a lot of cities, a lot of cultures and I wouldn't change it. I don't really tend to have regrets except for the thing I said about Work & Travel maybe, but in general I think my mobile life was perfect, I'm very happy haha!

### **Participant 12 (P12)**

0.30

1. First I lived in the USA for one year when I was 16, I was in high school and I was living with a host family. Then I lived for 2 months in Italy for a summer job, I was working in a bar in a campsite. Then I went to Sweden for 1 year, I was doing Erasmus for my Bachelor degree so that was until June and then for the summer I worked for a campsite again in Sweden in a small town cause I wanted to stay longer. Then I went to Germany for 1 year, I was being a French language assistant in a high school so I was helping French teachers in the classes to teach. After that was our Master program EMTM and in the 4<sup>th</sup> semester I was in my own country France.

2.09

2. USA and Italy was 3 years. Italy and Sweden was 1 year. Sweden and Germany was 1 year. Germany and EMTM was 2 months.

2.48

3. Well the first time, I don't know, I saw an advertisement in a book somewhere about going abroad for a year and I thought it would be cool and I don't know why I wanted to do it, I just thought it would be sth different. And so, my parents thought it was funny and they didn't really believe me because I was 15 at the time, for the USA. So they told me to go 2 weeks in England first and see how I like it and they thought that this would just, you know, convince me not to go but after that I wanted to go even more haha, so it took quite a while to convince them. And then I went and then I came back to study 2 more years in high school and then go to the university and then I thought ok, it would be my, 1 year after the university, in Italy, when I was doing my first summer job and I thought I might as well go abroad cause if I work abroad and I managed to get accommodation there with the work and food, I mean it would be a great experience for the language and also I would save a lot of money. So I tried to find a job, then I did, so I just went and then I always wanted to go in Sweden cause I was in Sweden for holidays before and I really liked it and I thought "ok I want to go to Sweden" so then Erasmus was the next chance to go haha to go abroad. And then I came back, I finished my Bachelor, my second Bachelor and I thought and I didn't know what I wanted to do with my life and I didn't know what I wanted to study as a Master's, so I thought "hey, it would be a good if I had 1 more year to think about it". And I knew you could with this assistant program, it is with university, it is in Europe and I thought I can try and I see if I can do that and yeah, it worked so I went to Germany. And then slowly I looked into Masters and I found EMTM and so I applied and I got it so haha.

5.20

4. Well I think I learned a lot about myself and I have learned to be more confident because you are in this situation that you would never be alone and that you are, it's only you, you don't have any support from friends, from family that you've known for a long time, from the language you've spoken all your life, so it's really you and you have to fight for what you want, so I think that has taught me a lot. Languages skills for sure. And it also taught me whatever you want, whatever you dream of or you want, you can fight to have it, because I've heard so many times people tell me "oh you're so lucky, so lucky that you live abroad, you do this and that" but it's not only about luck. I mean you know it's what you, if you decide you want it, if you want to go then you find a way to go because, ok the first time my parents paid for it, I'm sure not every parent can pay for that but then when you go on Erasmus you have scholarships, you can do it. When I was in Germany I got a salary I was independent. So it's not about luck, if you want sth you can go for it and you can have it. And it has open my mind a lot of course cause I met so many people from so different places and what you're used to all your life then you have it against sth completely different and it teaches you not to think "ooh, my way is better" or "their way is better" but just as different way on seeing things and yeah put things in perspective I would say.

11.39

5. Improve CV and career prospects. I think it's very related because, I think and I hope today, when you've been abroad and you speak more languages, I hope that companies see that as an asset because you're more adaptable, you can adapt to many more situations, you can work with international clients and so on. Sometimes I'm afraid that people see it as "you're instable" and you know "you can't settle" and they will not hire you cause you're going to

so many directions, so for me it's definitely related but I think it's also both ways. It can affect positively or negatively. However, I am convinced that if someone thinks this is a negative thing, I don't want to work for them. For me it's also a way to see which company would fit my interests.

The stereotypes. Eem I think this is interesting because, I don't know what I think about stereotypes, because you always think you have to fight them, but sometimes it's actually funny to play with them, you know, because so many times they are true. I mean, you know, you don't always have to fight them, sometimes you just enhance them because it's funny and, you know, sometimes things that I would not necessarily do at home then when I'm abroad and because it is a stereotype I do it even more just to play with people, I don't know I think this is funny.

Escape your bubble and city. I don't really agree with that because I don't go abroad to escape from sth, I go abroad to discover sth new but then it makes me realize how much I like home and how much I miss it and how much I'm happy to go back. So going somewhere doesn't mean escaping sth for me, doesn't mean I'm escaping sth, it means I'm broadening my horizons just to be even more happy to come home and to appreciate everything that I realized there is not abroad and all the things I missed when I'm not home.

14.54

6. I don't think it applied in the EMTM so much or maybe the first semester but not the other, but when you arrive somewhere, it depends on the situation, you get somewhere, you don't know anyone, you don't know anything, you think you speak the language but you actually don't and you're just like "damn what am I doing here" haha! You know, you've been preparing this for a really long time and this does not apply for me in EMTM cause I arrived and there was a group of people sort of waiting for me somehow you know and we are all here for the same thing and we knew we had to be friends. But when I got somewhere where I didn't know anyone and I was there for a job or when I went to the USA in a school of 3.000 people no one cared about me and you know you're there and you're like "my god, no one wants to talk to me, I don't have any friends, anybody knows each other, what am I going to do", then of course you overcome this but this is for me a challenge. The more I do it the less it's scary because now I am used to it and I know eventually it will work out and now also I'm older so I have more ways to meet people but this is one big thing.

Then of course there are ups and downs, I mean you know this giant rollercoaster, first it's really exciting, then you're like "ooh no, what is this, why did I come here, I want to go home" and then you get to that part when you don't want to leave and you don't want to go home anymore. But I think the most difficult is to accept that this is a part of your life and that will never be the same in a way. That you have done it and now it's time to go and then it's over. This is for me one of the biggest challenges because you spend a year of your life, 6 months of your life with people, in a place and you manage to go home and then you go and it's gone and who knows when you'll be back and mostly the people have left cause we're all young and go everywhere so this is difficult. Now I've come to accept it more because I've done it so many times but it's quite difficult yeah.

20.17

7. Restlessness, constant need for sth new, it's really interesting because I have been like this for the past 10 years since I started living abroad because I was always going, you know, somewhere else because I always wanted to go. Eem but now, I don't want to go anywhere, I got so tired, honestly, I went for a weekend to Brussels like a month ago and it's not that I didn't like it but I really felt I don't want to travel anymore haha! I really want to stay here, now if I have holidays in a month I don't want to go anywhere, I just want to stay here, have my own place, have all my stuff and just explore this place cause it's also new to me of course. But I really, I don't know what happened but maybe I reached that point when it was too much and now I don't want it anymore and probably you know after I've stayed here for 2-3 years then I want to do it again but right now I think I've reached that point when it was too much. And I didn't think it would happen, that's the funny thing, you know, it was always more, more, more and I want to live there and then that and see this and that but now, pfff I don't want to see anything haha, I just want to be home and feel really comfortable and yeah, it's really interesting cause, yeah, I really didn't see it coming but yeah.

Lose contact with friends back home. I think living abroad has this, I think in the end it's good with friends because you realize who your true friends are the ones who stay and the ones who will come visit or they can't but they still can be in touch or even if sometimes you don't have time to keep in touch but you know when you see them again it's going to be like it was and I think that in the end you have so many people you stay in touch with that you're friends with because they are there, but if they weren't there they wouldn't be your friends. So it kind of clears out

you know who you should stay in touch with and, because you also meet with so many people in all these new countries and you can't keep in touch with everyone it's impossible and then your life has changed you don't have anything in common anymore your life that you can talk about but some people you just still see. When I was living in Germany I had this emm, one of my best friends from the USA was from Germany so I went to visit her and she visited me and we didn't stay in touch so much in the last few years and since the USA but I don't know, we saw each other and it was great. And now next month I have a friend from Sweden who is coming to visit here, and also we didn't really keep in touch but you know somehow we email once a year maybe but not more, which at first I thought it was very sad because these people are people I used to hang out all the time with and we would do everything together and from then to now, then it just stopped and now they're coming to visit and we're going to have a great weekend and yeah I think it's good.

24.22

8. No, I think, eem I heard this quote recently that I really liked, there are so many things that have happened in your life, I don't know the exact quote but, you have things happening in your life right and now you can't do anything about them, they have happened right, so now it's up to you what you do with them, if you want to regret them, if you want to learn from them, whatever you want to do. So I wouldn't change anything cause everything I've done has made me who I am. And there is one thing I regret but again it's what it is and it's not entirely my fault either. There was the family I lived there in the USA, like I had a good year but we never clicked, you know this some people they would call them mom and dad and stuff and this didn't happen for me and there was nothing I could really complain about, they were nice to me and everything, but it was never the best you know and now we never really kept in touch and I think it's sad after you spent so much time with some like family and then they're just kind of gone from your life. That's the one thing that still bothers me but again it's not only me it's also that so I can't really do much. But for the rest, you know sometimes I had, after I came back from Italy, my work experience was not really good in Italy, I told my parents I was like "don't let me do this again, I don't want to do this again" but then of course even if they had told me that, I would have done it again because, because it's just the way I am haha!

27.00

9. Well yeah, as I said I think it's definitely an asset for work life or for knowing more what I want, my life till now shows that I don't know what I want haha but I learn more I guess. Eem I think also we don't realize how much it impacts our lives and how much it impacts our future, I don't know, it's kind of difficult.

27.49

10. No, I want to work.

28.12

Well kind of, there is still one thing I want to do haha I want to leave in a wrench in Canada haha, that's one thing that I haven't done and I still want to do but for the rest as I said now I don't really want to go anywhere so, I think I have enjoyed, I always said this is the time to do it when I am young, when I don't have any ties, I have nothing to lose, you know, I might as well do it. Now I see things differently, ok I am in a relationship, I live with my boyfriend, we've been together for 5 years and I know now that, eem yeah, now I want to be with him ok and I've been away all the time, he waited for me, now it's my time to say "ok, wherever you go, I'll come with you" and because, yes in a way I mean, I've been to all these places but no matter where I go it's going to be sth new mostly and it doesn't really matter where it is I mean, it's going to be a different experience and I think yeah, I think I am at this point where I've done so many things I've wanted to without caring what people would say or what you know what I should do or what I shouldn't do and now I've done all those things and I am happy, I feel satisfied so let's see what the future brings but I don't feel like "ooh, I have to do this still".

29.54

11. Haha no. But in five years actually cause we should be here for 2 more years also because Paris, I think it's also related to the city, cause I don't see myself living in Paris for too long, I want to enjoy it for 2-3 years but then it's not the kind of city I want to live forever, so I want to move but it's more related to the city itself and the location.

### **So in your country more?**

Abroad probably not, but that's also related to my boyfriend cause he is a, he works for the State so he can't really go abroad so much, so that's more related to that.

**And if understood more time in one place?**

Yeah definitely haha!

31.14

12. Yes definitely, I mean, honestly, it's not a competition but when I talk to people I haven't met so many people that travelled or lived in places or at least lived in so many places that I have and I'm not competing with anyone but I think I'm pretty lucky. Eem, I've done quite a few things in the last years and yeah, I think for now, I think it's enough and now for me it's really the fact I want to have a home, I want to have a place I can come to at night, I don't want to live from a suitcase, I just want to have all my things, now I have a little fish and I'm really happy you know haha! I don't know, the other day we went to this workshop and we built a table for a balcony, I don't know, you know creating a space that I can go home, to where I can invite people and I know I am going to stay here for a while, I can hang things on the wall, you know, all these little things now became more important than just always worrying about "is everything going to fit in my suitcase, should I bring this or this, no everything is here" haha and that's a good feeling, that's what I want right now so.