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Staying for the benefits: Location-specific insider advantages for geographically immobile students in higher education

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Abstract

In the youth mobility research, young people's geographical immobility is often associated with negative connotations. This paper challenges this discourse by analysing the location-specific insider advantages (LSIAs) of geographically immobile young adults in higher education institutions (HEI). We use data from a survey of students in two locations in Denmark: the peripheral city of Esbjerg and the metropolis of Copenhagen. We categorise students with diverse geographical mobility backgrounds into four (im)mobility types: 'local stayers', 'regional commuters', 'regional in-movers', and 'distant in-movers'. The paper explores LSIAs across (im)mobility type and location type. We find that immobile students are more likely to have a connection to, and experience with, the local labour market, to be satisfied with their social life, and to live with their parents compared with their geographically mobile peers. However, the advantages differ in type and amount between the peripheral and the urban case locations. We conclude that immobility should be (re)framed as an advantageous strategy for some young adults in early higher education.

KEYWORDS

higher education, staying, student mobility, study town, youth

1 | INTRODUCTION

Student mobility has become an important topic for researchers who explore urban and regional development due to the increasing number of European young adults who pursue the option of higher education (HE) (Altbach et al., 2009; Moos et al., 2018). To date, most student mobility has been explained by the unequal distribution of HE institutions and graduate employment opportunities between urban and peripheral locations (Bjarnason & Thorlindsson, 2006; Venhorst & Cörvers, 2018). These structural inequalities have led to the outmigration of young adults and derived challenges of unbalanced populations in peripheral and urban areas (Ni Laoire, 2000; Pedersen, 2018; Smith, 2008). Although the research suggests that some young adults would prefer to remain closer to their home region

to pursue their HE if they had the opportunity to do so (Howley, 2006; Thissen et al., 2010), in the European context in particular, student mobility has become culturally embedded (Holdsworth, 2006). A rising number of branch and satellite campuses (Pinheiro & Berg, 2016; Turley, 2009) have made it possible for an increasing number of young adults to stay in or near the city where they have grown up; however, thus far, most of the attention has focused on the role of the mobility of young adults in their opportunities to enter HE (Finn & Holton, 2019). The result of this bias in the research is that the immobile young adults at HE institutions in both core urban and peripheral areas are mostly overlooked (Christie, 2007).

This lack of attention to immobile young adults can be explained by a dominant trend in the literature to link young adults' geographical

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mobility to an increase in social capital and to the successful realisation of (higher) educational aspirations (Nugin, 2014). Neoliberal societies regard *immobility* as less attractive (Yoon, 2014), whereas mobility is linked to ambitious individuals and life progress (Christie, 2007; Sofritti et al., 2019). Conversely, *immobility* has been linked to a lack of educational attainment, a lack of personal development, and lower levels of social capital (Holdsworth,). Hence, 'moving away' generally has positive connotations, whereas staying is often associated with 'staying behind' and 'failure to leave' (Carr & Kefalas, 2009; Looker & Naylor, 2009).

The lack of interest in *immobility* may also be due to earlier tendencies in the research to view geographical *immobility* as a kind of 'default stage' and therefore as self-explanatory (Hjälms, 2014), with rural stayers being a relatively new concept (Stockdale & Haartsen, 2018) and urban stayers also being underresearched (Erickson et al., 2018). Considering contemporary calls to look beyond the mobility bias in the migration literature in general (Schewel, 2019; Stockdale & Haartsen, 2018) and in the youth and student mobility research in particular (Finn & Holton, 2019; Stockdale et al., 2018), this paper examines youth and student *immobility* in both peripheral and urban locations. Because the availability of HE in peripheral regions differs across European countries (Thuesen, Mærsk, & Randløv, 2020), we underscore that we engage specifically with peripheral regions with (satellite- and main-campus) HE institutions in the region.

We investigate the veracity of the negative connotations associated with staying by exploring whether we can find positive aspects of *immobility*. We focus on immobile students in HE because this group is most heavily featured in the mainstream common-sense understanding that leaving is necessary in the development of talent and to gain access to opportunities in life. We investigate whether *immobility* is related to advantages in different aspects of students' lives and thus whether *immobility* might be an advantageous strategy to progress in life. We do this by applying the theory of location-specific insider advantages (LSIAs) from Fischer and Malmberg (2001), who have investigated how *immobility* can be explained by the accumulation of capital within the individual's different life domains. By introducing the potential benefits related to *immobility* to the current debate on young adults and their HE options in peripheral and urban areas, we contribute by nuancing the current discourses on the values associated with the mobility and *immobility* of young adults in general.

In our paper, we use Danish survey data from 2016 (Sørensen & Thuesen, 2017) to compare immobile students, the so-called local stayers, with different types of mobile 'newcomer' students. We compare two towns in two different types of regions in Denmark: the core urban region around the capital city of Copenhagen and a peripheral region around Esbjerg, a town in a peripheral municipality. Thus, this paper has two main objectives: (1) to examine whether local stayers possess LSIAs when compared with different types of newcomers and (2) to compare differences in LSIAs of local stayers (if any) between institutions of HE located in a metropolitan region and a peripheral region.

In short, we explore whether and how geographical *immobility* can be associated with advantages in students' life domains in the form of professional networks, internship experiences, labour market

knowledge, social networks and housing situations and whether these conditions vary across urban and peripheral locations for HE institutions.

1.1 | Research on youth (im)mobility

Despite the large focus on mobility, the geographical *immobility* choices of young adults have begun to receive increased attention from academic scholars in recent years (Faggian et al., 2017; Farrugia, 2016, 2019; Muilu & Rusanen, 2003; Sage et al., 2012; Stockdale & Haartsen, 2018; Thissen et al., 2010). Whereas the earlier research suggests that the outmigration of young adults is involuntary but necessary due to a lack of opportunities for HE (Yndigegn, 2003), newer research suggests that the outmigration of young adults from peripheral areas can also be explained by social norms (Corbett, 2007; Pedersen & Gram, 2017). In the context of HE, Cook and Cuervo (2018) investigate how the mobility imperative that encompasses how both social norms and concrete opportunities for attaining HE in nearby regions (Farrugia, 2016) affects young adults' tertiary education choices. They argue that the mobility imperative is indeed present in the spatial reflections of young adults but that the differences between 'those who stay' and 'those who leave' have been overemphasised in the research (Cook & Cuervo, 2018: p. 14). Nevertheless, the research on decisions favouring *immobility*—in the form of being enrolled in HE located in an individual's home region—is scarce, with most of the (youth) migration literature focusing solely on aspects of mobility (Schewel, 2019). However, the recent research has begun to question this bias of focusing only on the positive sides of *mobility* and not the potential positive sides of *immobility* (Erickson et al., 2018). A critical review of youth *mobility* is offered by Holdsworth (), who argues that the mobility choices of young adults seem to be socially constructed and reserved for privileged students. Holdsworth (2009: 1861) criticises how educational institutions and mainstream culture, when valuing mobility at the expense of *immobility*, reproduces the specific norms that focus on mobility and separation from parents at the expense of social support and interdependency. Building on this critical reconsideration of 'mobility as a privilege', Forsberg (2017) suggests viewing *immobility* for young adults as a potential sign of 'high spatial capital', referring to young adults having opportunities in the area they come from. She emphasises that 'a decision to stay may very well be made from a privileged position and the possession of symbolic capital' (Forsberg, 2017: p. 340). Thus, (im)mobility for young adults may be related to opportunities that are close at hand. Breines et al. (2019) addresses the agency and digital opportunities required to stay immobile for young adults in relation to international HE. Accordingly, Preece (2018) argues that *immobility* can be a very active and deliberate strategy for people entering the labour market and that, in a Scandinavian context, this is also evident for young adults where good social (local) networks are linked to rapid labour market entrance, often in the form of informal recruitment processes (Behtoui, 2016). This suggests an element of potential related to the nearby region that is attractive for students

planning their HE. In other words, despite the positive connotations that are generally ascribed to residential mobility, it seems that the actual spatial behaviour of young adults is not always as mobile as the current discourse suggests. In relation to this, we additionally draw on the findings from Holton and Finn (2018) showing that residential immobility does not equal everyday immobility. Although we acknowledge everyday mobility as multifaceted, our point of departure is residential immobility.

1.2 | Advantages of immobility

Some of the few researchers who have analysed immobility are Fischer et al. (2000) and Fischer and Malmberg (2001), who investigate why immobile people are immobile. They explain immobility—staying—with the concept of LSIA. LSIA include several types of advantages that are defined by being place-bound and accumulating over time. A location-specific advantage could be a large social network in a specific town or knowledge about job or housing markets in a region. Fischer and Malmberg (2001) argue that the accumulation of various forms of LSIA explains why some people stay, as LSIA could turn into ‘sunk cost in the case of migration’ (Fischer & Malmberg, 2001: p. 358). By analysing data from the total population of Sweden between 1985 and 1995, those authors trace the relationship between (lack of) interregional migration and work, age, gender, income, employment, profession, household conditions and linked lives (the individual's significant relationships). Based on their different explanatory models of staying, they show that staying can be explained by migration becoming unattractive for people who have obtained LSIA:

... we suggest that an individual's assets and abilities are partly location-specific. In other words, they can only be used in a specific place: their own house, the neighbourhood, the home town, the region, or the country. These are what we call location-specific insider advantages (...). An important part of these abilities has to be obtained within a location-specific learning process, which requires time, information, and temporary immobility. (Fischer & Malmberg, 2001: p. 360)

LSIA thus introduce a more complex and partly reversed relationship between geographical mobility and opportunities for life progression by stressing potential opportunities for the individual that are bound to a local region.

In this paper, we draw on the theory of LSIA by Fischer et al. (2000) and Fischer and Malmberg (2001). We hypothesise that immobile young adults who stay in their home region—regardless of whether they are located in a peripheral municipality or in a core urban municipality—have more LSIA than their in-moving or commuting peers. Moreover, based on the findings of Erickson et al. (2018), we also expect that there are differences in the type of LSIA for young adults in peripheral and urban areas.

By applying the perspective of LSIA to young adults in HE, we consider immobility advantages to be multidimensional and investigate how LSIA relate to the life domains of young adults in HE. In doing so, we use the terminology of Fischer et al. (2000) who identify two categories of LSIA: work-related and leisure-related (which we adopted in our analysis as ‘professional’ and ‘personal’) LSIA. Professional LSIA focus on access to the labour market in the form of finding the first job after graduation. Many graduates choose to include the region of the university from which they graduated in their spatial scope when seeking their first job (von Proff et al., 2016). This is additionally relevant to explore in a comparative perspective because of the unequal distribution of HE institutions in peripheral and core regions, which may reinforce demographic differences and existing inequalities in the patterns of movement of young adults between urban and peripheral areas (Farrugia, 2016).

Personal LSIA are relevant because the research shows how social support and quality of life generally have a definite influence on young adults' retention and success in the education system (Pritchard & Wilson, 2003). Like Fischer and Malmberg (2001), we focus on the respondents' housing situation and its relationship to immobility because there is both contemporary and earlier research showing that a (self-reported) good housing situation is positively related to student well-being and student retention rates (Costa et al., 2019). The housing advantage is especially relevant in European countries that are similar to Denmark where most HE institutions are located in urban areas, resulting in a need for long-term approaches to addressing the lack of affordable student housing and the problematic studentification of cities (Sage et al., 2012). For students, immobility might prove to be a good strategy if they have the opportunity, and desire to, stay in their parental home in proximity to the university or if they have access to attractive housing through social networks or knowledge about local housing opportunities.

2 | METHOD

The measurement of LSIA in this paper is based on Fischer et al.'s (2000) analysis of their five dimensions in which an individual can accumulate LSIA through immobility over time. Under work-oriented LSIA, what we call professional-oriented LSIA, they identify society-, firm-, and place-specific LSIA. Under leisure-oriented LSIA, what we call personal-oriented LSIA, they identify place- and society-specific LSIA. In this paper, we applied the five dimensions of LSIA to the lives of young adults in HE as follows (see also Table 1).

1. *Professional social network*, or what Fischer et al. (2000) call ‘society’, is defined by the respondents' having a regular, paid job besides to their studies in the local area, a so-called study job, which is often a part-time job. In Denmark, having a ‘study job’ is associated with having good prospects for subsequent employment. A study job is similar to an internship although such positions are often study specific and time limited. We argue that for young adults, having a study job is one of the main links to

TABLE 1 Location-specific insider advantages (LSIA) of students

Dimensions from Fischer et al. (2000)	Professional dimensions			Personal dimensions	
	Society	Firm	Place	Place	Society
<i>Dimensions for our analysis</i>	Professional social network	Firm-specific social capital	Insider knowledge about labour market	Housing advantages	Private social network
<i>As defined by Fischer et al. (2000)</i>	Professional networks in local labour market	Internship in specific firms	Knowledge about labour market opportunities	'Good value for the money'	Social networks of friends and family in the local area
<i>Operationalised for our analysis</i>	Local job experience	Knowledge about specific firms and organisations in the study town	Belief in job opportunities in the study town in the future	Living with parent(s)	Having a good social life with friends or family in study town
<i>Questions from the survey</i>	'Do you have a job next to your university located in Esbjerg or surrounding area/ Copenhagen?' Reply options: 'Yes' or 'No'	'How much knowledge do you have about firms and organisations in Esbjerg or surrounding area/ Copenhagen within your field of study, on a scale from 1 to 10?' (1 means <i>no knowledge at all</i> and 10 means <i>a large degree of knowledge</i>)	'Do you think you will be able to find a relevant job in the region of Esbjerg/ Copenhagen or surrounding area after you graduate?' Reply options: 'Yes', 'No', or 'Do not know'	'Do you live with your parents?' Reply options: 'Yes' or 'No'	'How satisfied are you with your social life in Esbjerg/ Copenhagen on a scale 1–10?' (1 means <i>very dissatisfied</i> and 10 means <i>very satisfied</i>)

professional social networks and thus a measure of professional social capital.

- Firm-specific social capital* relates to firm-specific advantages that '... make the individual particularly attractive for all or at least some firms in his region of work' (Fischer et al., 2000: p. 10), which we measure by the respondents' assessment of their knowledge about the firms and organisations within their field of study. We argue that although people in the early stages of their careers do not have broad and deep knowledge about their sector, they may obtain local sector-specific knowledge through their studies.
- Insider knowledge about the labour market* is the third LSIA within the professional section. We operationalise it as the individual's optimism about getting a job in the local area in the future. This dimension captures the individual's knowledge about the local labour market combined with the individual's belief in his or her own ability to mobilise such social capital (Pena-López & Sánchez-Santos, 2017) for the purpose of finding a job in the future.
- Housing situation* is the first personal-oriented LSIA. Although this is a broader category that includes knowledge about consumption opportunities where the individual will find 'value for money' (Fischer et al., 2000: p. 11), we exemplify it in terms of the individual's opportunities in the housing market in relation to being a student. For young adults in most European countries including Denmark, finding a place to live while studying or getting into the housing market is difficult but highly valued (Sørensen & Thuesen, 2017). A lack of (good quality) student housing is additionally associated with higher dropout rates (Fleuret &

Prugneau, 2015). To assess this LSIA, we focus on the extent to which students live with their parents. Thus, the possibility of living rent-free with parents must be considered a significant advantage of immobile students.

- Private social network*, the last LSIA dimension, is defined by Fischer et al. (2000) as a society-specific, personal insider advantage that 'capture[s] the utility increase a decision-maker and his family get from having friends, being socially integrated, accepted and active at a certain place of residence' (Fischer et al., 2000: p. 11). In other words, the last dimension in Fischer et al. (2000) captures the social capital the individual perceives himself or herself to have. We apply this to young adult life by focusing on the respondents' satisfaction with their own social life in the context of the study town.

2.1 | Data

We use data from an online survey designed and administered by two of the authors of this paper: Sørensen and Thuesen (2017). The survey was conducted in 2016 (from October 6 to December 23) among bachelor's students at six comparable study programmes located in Esbjerg and Copenhagen. Sørensen and Thuesen (2017) made contact with a gatekeeper at each of the 12 participating institutions who distributed the questionnaire among their students via email or social media. At the University of Southern Denmark and the University of Copenhagen, a link to the online questionnaire was distributed on the

students' closed Facebook group pages for the group years 2014, 2015, and 2016. Because of how the data were collected, there are some limitations to the calculation of response rates. Therefore, we also do not know how representative the sample is for the various student populations. Meanwhile, we have no reason to suspect sampling bias. Specifically, the following students participated in the survey (number of respondents in parentheses). In Esbjerg, students from the University College South Denmark (604), the Southern University of Denmark (102), Aalborg University (102), Business Academy South-west (EASV) (202), the School of Marine Engineering (102), and the Danish National Academy of Music (18) participated. In Copenhagen, students from Metropolitan University College (126), the University of Copenhagen (103), the Technical University of Denmark (DTU) (123), Copenhagen Business Academy (253), and the School of Marine Engineering (123) participated. In total, data were collected from 1035 students in Esbjerg and from 669 students in Copenhagen. During the analysis, we weighted the data to generate an equal number of responses from students from each type of study programme in Esbjerg and Copenhagen.

The survey was initially developed to understand students' experiences of moving to either a peripheral study town (Esbjerg) or a core urban study town (Copenhagen). We define the 'home area' of the respondents as the municipality of Esbjerg and the municipalities of Greater Copenhagen. The respondents were asked questions about their social well-being, social networks, living arrangements, experience with the local labour market, and various standard background questions. In the survey, the respondents were asked questions about where they lived before and after beginning their bachelor's study (municipality level). This made it possible to categorise the respondents within four mobility categories and to generate a mobility typology (see Table 2).¹ In the typology, we draw on the findings from Holton and Finn (2018) emphasising the importance of distinguishing between residential and everyday mobility and

immobility. 'Local stayers' represent the residentially immobile, whereas 'regional commuters' are residentially immobile but highly mobile from the perspective of everyday mobility. 'Regional in-movers' as well as 'distant in-movers' are considered to be residentially mobile as they moved between different municipality borders. Although our main focus of investigation is the effects of residential immobility, by including the group of 'regional commuters', we add a comparative dimension and obtain an understanding of certain aspects of everyday mobility.

As shown in Figure 1, Esbjerg is located on the west coast of Denmark, and Copenhagen lies on the east of Denmark. In different typologies, the Esbjerg municipality is viewed as a rural municipality (Kristensen et al., 2006) and an intermediate density area (Eurostat, 2016), whereas the municipalities that make up Greater Copenhagen are viewed as urban municipalities (Kristensen et al., 2006) and as a densely populated area (Eurostat, 2016). The population densities thus vary between the case areas. In 2016, the Esbjerg municipality had 115,748 inhabitants, of which 72,151 lived in the town of Esbjerg, which makes the population density in Esbjerg municipality 146 inhabitants per km². In the same year, Greater Copenhagen had approximately 1.3 million inhabitants with a population density of 2141 inhabitants per km². There are also differences in the areas in terms of education levels. In Esbjerg, the largest proportions of the active population have a vocational education or primary school as the highest completed education, whereas in some municipalities of Greater Copenhagen, a larger part of the population holds an upper cycle HE. In addition, the Greater Copenhagen municipalities have had a large and increasing annual positive net inflow of 20- to 24-year-olds, increasing from 7058 to 9024 from 2008 to 2018. This difference is explained by the fact that Greater Copenhagen has a longer tradition of providing HE, offers a larger number of education opportunities and has a larger number of job opportunities compared with the region around Esbjerg (BDE, 2016).

TABLE 2 Mobility typology

Typology	Esbjerg		Copenhagen	
	Definitions of (im)mobility typology	Number of observations (n = 967)	Definitions of (im)mobility typology	Number of observations (n = 630)
Local stayer	Lives in Esbjerg municipality and lived in Esbjerg municipality before enrolment	366	Lives in Greater Copenhagen and lived in Greater Copenhagen (17 municipalities) ^a before enrolment	311
Regional commuter	Commutes to Esbjerg from somewhere in the Region of Southern Denmark	275	Commutes to Greater Copenhagen from somewhere in the Capital Region of Denmark or Region Zealand	123
Regional in-mover	Moved to Esbjerg municipality from another municipality in the Region of Southern Denmark	200	Moved to a municipality in Greater Copenhagen from another municipality in the Capital Region of Denmark or Region Zealand	107
Distant in-mover	Moved to Esbjerg municipality from another region than the Region of Southern Denmark	126	Moved to Greater Copenhagen from another region than the Capital Region of Denmark or Region Zealand	89

^aThe 17 municipalities that make up Greater Copenhagen are Albertslund, Ballerup, Brøndby, Frederiksberg, Dragør, Gentofte, Gladsaxe, Glostrup, Herlev, Hvidovre, Høje-Taastrup, Ishøj, København, Lyngby-Taarbæk, Rødovre, Tårnby, and Vallensbæk.

3 | FINDINGS

We begin by outlining the general picture of the local stayer. Local stayers make up the largest mobility category in the sample. Local stayers differ from the other categories in terms of three parameters. First, local stayers are characterised by being older (mean = 26.4 years old) than regional in-movers (23.3) and distant in-movers (23.9). However, regional commuters are on average the oldest group (27.6). This corresponds to the findings of Fischer et al. (2000), who find that migration is negatively correlated with age; that is, when age increases, the likelihood of migration decreases. Age difference can be explained by a higher probability of having a house, a partner with a job in the local area, or children. However, local stayers and regional commuters are also more likely to live with their parents (Christie, 2007).

Second, the share of female respondents is higher among regional commuters (70.4%) than among local stayers (66.3%), regional in-movers (64.4%), and distant in-movers (61.9%).² Accordingly, we find a slight gender difference, which has also been found in the previous research on migration away from peripheral areas (Cairns, 2014; Rye, 2006; Wiborg, 2003).

Third, parent's educational level differs between the categories in the typology. The traditional migration research on the link between

parents' education and the residential mobility of their children suggests that children with parents with HE are more likely to move away from peripheral regions—the so-called brain-drain effect (Faggian et al., 2017). In our case, the share of students with at least one parent with an HE degree (in the form of a bachelor's, master's, or PhD degree) is higher among local stayers (47.9%) and distant in-movers (61.1%) than among regional in-movers (37.8%) and regional commuters (38.5%).

The next sections will present whether immobility brings about advantages when considering the five LSIA measures shown in Table 1: local job experience, knowledge about firms and organisations in the study town, belief in job opportunities in the study town in the future, living with parents, and satisfaction with social life in the study town. For each LSIA, we present descriptive scores. We analysed group differences via χ^2 and ANOVA tests. We begin by presenting the three professional LSIA's and then we present the findings related to the personal LSIA's.

Immobility and local job experience

There are significant differences between the mobility categories in the typology in terms of experience with the local labour market.

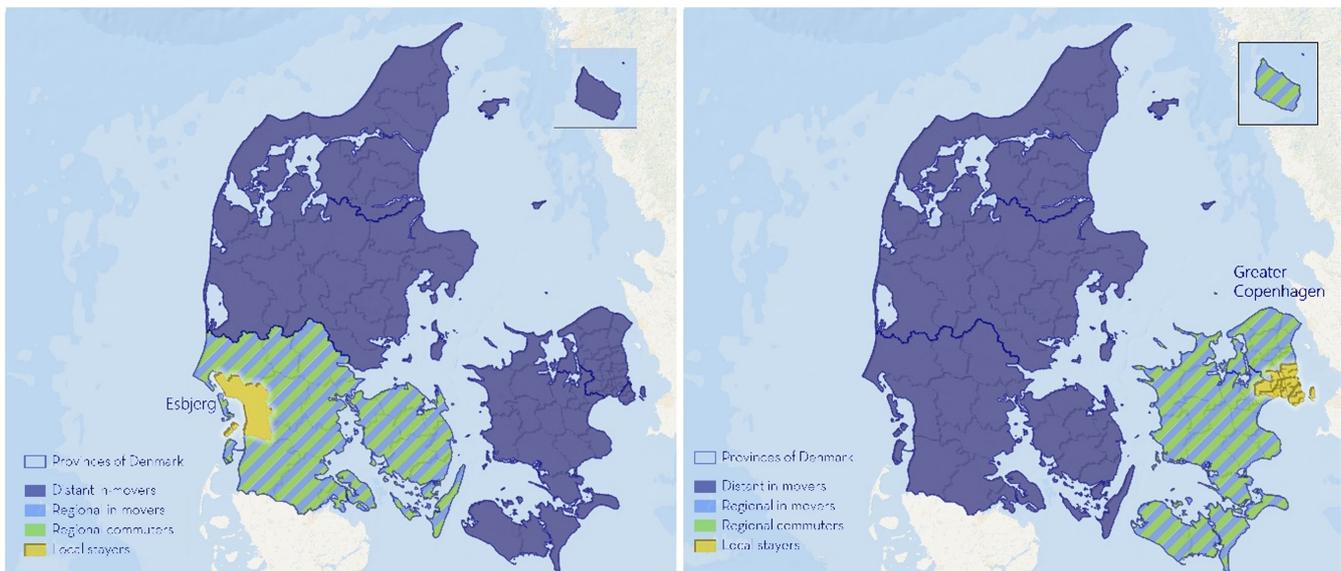


FIGURE 1 Typology of (im)mobility

Typology	Total (n = 1592)	Esbjerg (n = 799)	Copenhagen (n = 793)
Local stayers	60%	52%	65%
Regional commuter	17%	15%	20%
Regional in-mover	42%	40%	45%
Distant in-mover	48%	29%	66%
χ^2	177.8***	79.5***	98.9***

Note: We performed a χ^2 test by cross-tabulating the typology variable (four categories) with the variable measuring whether having a job in the study town at the moment (yes or no).

* $p < 0.10$. ** $p < 0.05$. *** $p < 0.01$.

TABLE 3 Local job experience: currently holding a job in the study town

Considering the first column of Table 3, compared with other types in the typology, far more local stayers have a job besides their studies (60%). Thus, in the total sample, immobility seems to relate most strongly to having a job besides their studies. An explanation could be that local stayers had a job in the local area even before they enrolled in their bachelor's. A very low share of regional commuters reports having a job in the same town as that of their university. This may be the result of low levels of insider information or the result of the students already having a job in their home municipality. When comparing Esbjerg and Copenhagen, it becomes clear that students in the urban area of Copenhagen more often have a job besides their studies. This applies to all different mobility types but especially to the distant in-movers. However, it seems that the advantage of being a stayer is more significant in Esbjerg. This can be explained by several factors. Densely populated urban areas are characterised by a broader range of study jobs due to the large numbers of inhabitants enrolled in tertiary education (Sokołowicz, 2019), which suggests that the network factor is not as important in Copenhagen as in Esbjerg because the number of jobs is higher. This would also explain the similarities in advantages for distant in-movers to Copenhagen. Focusing on the differences between the mobility types across the regions, our findings show that there are significant LSIsAs associated with being a local stayer in terms of having a study job in the study town.

Immobility and knowledge about firms and organisations in the study town

In terms of knowledge about the labour market in the study town (Table 4), it becomes clear that immobility is again related to

advantages for individuals. With an average score of 6.4 (on a scale from 1 to 10), compared with other mobility types, local stayers in general report having better knowledge of companies and organisations that hire within their field of study. This corresponds with the findings of Preece (2018). The most eye-catching difference between the urban and the periphery is that all scores in Esbjerg are lower than those in Copenhagen. Students in all different mobility categories feel that they have less knowledge about companies and organisations in Esbjerg that offer relevant jobs. However, this difference is the smallest for local stayers. Considering Copenhagen, the results in the groups are more similar. This might be explained by urban capital areas offering more specialised jobs of interest to young adults in HE. For both Esbjerg and Copenhagen, the biggest difference is between local stayers and regional commuters. The fact that regional commuters have more knowledge of the firms and organisations in their home region may explain this finding. Considering the research questions of this paper, Table 4 tells us that immobility is significantly beneficial regardless of whether the HE institution is located in a peripheral or a core urban study town.

Immobility and optimism about job opportunities in the future

When asked if they think they will be able to find a relevant job in the study region after graduation, a large share of the students (85%–95%) says yes (Table 5, first column). In particular, local stayers are very positive about their future job opportunities (Table 5). In Copenhagen, the scores are higher than in Esbjerg. However, there are no significant differences between being a local stayer, regional

TABLE 4 Knowledge of companies and organisations providing jobs within the study field

Typology	Total (n = 1591)	Esbjerg (n = 799)	Copenhagen (n = 792)
Local stayers	6.4	6.3	6.5
Regional commuter	5.2	4.9	5.9
Regional in-mover	5.5	5.0	6.2
Distant in-mover	5.7	4.9	6.4
F (ANOVA test)	22.3***	20.3***	2.7**

Note: Knowledge was measured on a scale from 1 to 10.

* $p < 0.10$. ** $p < 0.05$. *** $p < 0.01$.

TABLE 5 Confidence in personal job opportunities after graduation

Typology	Total (n = 1313)	Esbjerg (n = 620)	Copenhagen (n = 692)
Local stayers	95%	94%	96%
Regional commuter	85%	79%	95%
Regional in-mover	89%	83%	97%
Distant in-mover	88%	76%	97%
χ^2	28.8***	27.2***	1.5

Note: We performed a χ^2 test by cross-tabulating the typology variable (four categories) with the variable measuring belief in job opportunities after graduation (yes or no).

* $p < 0.10$. ** $p < 0.05$. *** $p < 0.01$.

commuter, regional in-mover, and distant in-mover regarding the perceived future job opportunities in Copenhagen. This is in contrast to Esbjerg, where there are clear and significant differences between the mobility types regarding their optimism about future job opportunities. In Esbjerg, local stayers have the strongest confidence in future job opportunities, whereas regional commuters and distant in-movers have the weakest.

Immobility and housing situation

Moving on to the personal LSIA, we begin with the possibility of living rent-free with parents (Table 6). For the total sample, residential immobility in the form of either being a local stayer or a regional commuter is highly advantageous in this respect. For obvious reasons, the possibility of living rent-free with parents is much higher among local stayers and regional commuters than among regional in-movers and distant in-movers. In Esbjerg, it appears that an equal number of local stayers and regional commuters decide to live with their parents. In Copenhagen, however, regional commuters live with their parents to a larger extent than local stayers (38% vs. 11%). The higher rate among regional commuters from Copenhagen can be explained by larger living spaces in areas outside urbanised areas, which makes it more convenient to have adult children living at home. Another explanation could be that local stayers in Copenhagen can benefit from their social networks to help them find an affordable place in the city.

To supplement the above, we report an additional finding from the survey. Those who reported *not* living with their parents were

asked to specify their housing situation through the following question: 'Do you live alone or do you share your accommodation with a partner or friend(s)?' There were five reply options: (1) I live alone; (2) I live alone, but share a common room or kitchen with others; (3) I live together with my boyfriend/girlfriend/partner; (4) I live together with a friend or friends; and (5) Other. Table A1 reports the merged reply to this question and the question on whether one lives with one's parents. Table A1 reveals a couple of additional disadvantages of residential mobility, especially among distant in-movers. Thus, distant in-movers have the highest frequency of living in an accommodation where they must share a common room or kitchen with others. Moreover, although less pronounced, distant in-movers have the highest frequency of sharing their accommodation with one or more friends. A lack of social network in the study town might explain why distant in-movers are at a disadvantage in these cases.

Immobility and satisfaction with social life in study town

Coming to the last of the five dimensions from Fischer et al. (2000), we consider satisfaction with social life in the study town (Table 7), which is defined as the networks and social life in the area of the study town. In the total sample, local stayers are the most satisfied with their social life, and regional commuters are the least satisfied. For local stayers, this may relate to the length of time they have already lived in their study town: A longer residential history provides more opportunity to develop social networks. For regional

Typology	Total (n = 1592)	Esbjerg (n = 798)	Copenhagen (n = 793)
Local stayers	11%	12%	11%
Regional commuter	23%	14%	38%
Regional in-mover	1%	1%	2%
Distant in-mover	0%	0%	0%
χ^2	112.1***	33.2***	110.0***

Note: We performed a χ^2 test by cross-tabulating the typology variable (four categories) with the variable measuring whether living home with parents (yes or no).

* $p < 0.10$. ** $p < 0.05$. *** $p < 0.01$.

TABLE 6 Housing situation: living with parent(s)

Typology	Total (n = 1508)	Esbjerg (n = 746)	Copenhagen (n = 762)
Local stayers	7.9	7.5	8.1
Regional commuter	5.9	5.9	6.1
Regional in-mover	7.1	6.7	7.7
Distant in-mover	6.9	6.3	7.4
F (ANOVA test)	53.3***	20.1***	29.1***

Note: Satisfaction was measured on a scale from 1 to 10.

* $p < 0.10$. ** $p < 0.05$. *** $p < 0.01$.

TABLE 7 Satisfaction with social life in the study town (1–10)

commuters, it is (again) highly possible that most of their social life is in their home region, which explains their low score in satisfaction with life in the study town. The most prominent difference between Esbjerg and Copenhagen is that satisfaction with social life in Copenhagen is higher for all mobility categories. This might be explained by core urban areas being associated with youth lifestyles and opportunities for attaining social capital (Arnett, 2000; Barcus & Halfacree, 2018). This is also in accordance with the earlier findings of Farrugia (2019). However, in both Esbjerg and Copenhagen, differences between the mobility categories follow the pattern of the total sample. Overall, we find that immobility seems to be conducive to satisfaction with one's social life, regardless of location.

To summarise, when considering both professional and personal dimensions, our findings indicate several advantages that relate to being immobile. When comparing the immobile respondents with the mobile respondents, we found that the local stayers in general are well connected to the labour market, both in terms of having a job besides their studies and in terms of having general knowledge about the opportunities within their field in the labour market. The local stayers are highly confident in their own opportunities in the labour market after graduation; however, the significant difference between the groups in the typology begins to vanish when comparing the periphery and the urban area. It seems that moving to core urban areas is characterised by a belief in personal labour market opportunities after graduation. However, contrary to the mainstream migration discourse, it also appears that immobility is more beneficial in the periphery in terms of having knowledge about the labour market. Although we find that the local stayers are highly satisfied with their social life in their study towns, the average satisfaction with social life in the study town is slightly higher in Copenhagen in general than in Esbjerg. However, the advantage of being a stayer in relation to job experience and professional networks is more significant in the peripheral regions. Overall, although the urban and the peripheral study towns offer different kinds of benefits related to the place, immobility indeed seems to be advantageous.

Table A2 shows the results when gender, age, and parents' educational background are considered. As shown in Table A2, accounting for these socio-economic factors does not change the basic results. Immobility is still associated with positive outcomes, and this is still especially the case for Esbjerg. Apart from that, Table A2 reveals an interesting finding related to the high score of distant in-movers in Copenhagen on the first two measures regarding job experience and knowledge of companies and organisations. When considering Table A2, we find that the high scores of distant in-movers in Copenhagen on these two measures are found mainly among older students and students with less educated parents. This can be explained by a need for these groups to earn more income because older students may demand better and thus more expensive housing and because they probably cannot rely on as much economic help from their parents as their fellow students with more well-educated parents. Job experience and knowledge of companies are presumably linked given that job experience will increase knowledge of companies and organisations.

4 | CONCLUSION

In this paper, we explored whether and how immobility relates to students' LSIA in the form of having study jobs, labour market knowledge, belief in future job opportunities, housing situation and satisfaction with social networks, and whether these aspects differ across urban and peripheral areas. We distinguished four categories of mobility: local stayers, regional commuters, regional in-movers, and distant in-movers. We found evidence that immobile students, 'local stayers', have a range of advantages compared with the newcomer and commuter groups. However, we also found that the amount of advantages differs between types of locations. In the peripheral location of Esbjerg, our findings show that immobile students have more advantages on all dimensions compared with the rest of the groups in the typology. In Copenhagen, the differences between the immobile and mobile groups are much smaller. Our findings indicate that the negative connotations of immobility must be reframed because staying in urban areas in both metropolitan and peripheral areas can be advantageous. However, we also find that it seems to be more beneficial to stay in a peripheral student town than to move to one.

In connection with recent calls to put immobility or staying in a more positive 'spotlight' (Schewel, 2019; Stockdale & Haartsen, 2018), our findings show that there is indeed more to the story of immobile young adults than 'failing to leave' or 'staying behind' (Haartsen & Thissen, 2014). Until now, immobility has mostly been explained in terms of social relationships and feelings of belonging; however, this article shows that being immobile also provides other benefits. Additionally, similar to other studies, our findings show that it is time to challenge some of the negative discourse surrounding staying.

By including the commuter group, we highlight important nuances with regard to being a staying student in the city in which you study. Throughout the article, we show how the commuter group has some of the same advantages as the local stayer group, for example, in terms of housing situation, but the commuting group simultaneously has all the disadvantages of the mobile groups, for example, in terms of less knowledge about the labour market and less satisfaction with one's social life, because of the fact that their residential immobility is bound to a municipality in which they do not have the opportunity to study. Thus, we once again emphasise that the opportunities of one's home municipality are relevant in terms of the advantageousness of staying. Although we consider a 'staying student' to be residentially immobile, we emphasise that this does not mean that this individual is necessarily immobile in terms of everyday life.

We acknowledge that the dimensions offered in this analysis might not capture the entire experience of being a 'staying student' in a peripheral or urban location; however, it is indicative for further research. Future research could explore whether students' perceptions of LSIA will actually prove to be beneficial, for instance, in relation to getting a first job after graduating. Analyses of success on the labour market after graduation as related to geographical (im)mobility stemming from enrolment at the university could indicate this; however, thus far, most of the research has focused on labour market

success in relation to migrating away from the location of the university (Haapanen & Tervo, 2012; Venhorst et al., 2011). Additionally, future research should explore in greater depth how mobility and immobility intertwine. Considering our findings from the perspective of the current research on mobility/immobility, we suggest that future research should be sensitive to the potential benefits of mobility/immobility in terms of various parameters, both material and social. Our typology suggests a much more complex and messier (im)mobility pattern of university students, which may be amplified by the opportunities that have been made possible with the implementation of the Bologna Agreement (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2018), which aims to design unique university programmes by mixing semesters abroad with stays at other universities in other regions.

In conclusion, we advocate a reframing of immobility by incorporating the perspective of LSIs to prevent further reproduction of current taken-for-granted assumptions about young people needing to move geographically to progress in life (Erickson et al., 2018; Holdsworth,). This reframing might be especially beneficial for peripheral regions that tend to experience depopulation and outmigration flows towards more core urban areas. By beginning to understand immobility as an advantageous, beneficial, and deliberate strategy for young adults, peripheral cities might discover new potential for regional development in collaboration with (satellite) universities and their students.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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ENDNOTES

¹ The following cases were left out of the mobility typology: students who had moved to the study town from countries outside Denmark ($n = 33$), students who indicated they commuted from outside Denmark ($n = 5$), distant commuters who either indicated they commuted to Esbjerg from another region than the Region of Southern Denmark ($n = 39$) or indicated they commuted to Copenhagen from another region than the Capital Region of Denmark or Region Zealand ($n = 2$), and missing cases ($n = 28$).

² Tests of independent proportions showed that the only difference that is statistically significant is the difference between the female share of respondents among regional commuters and the female share of respondents among distant in-movers ($z = 2.13$; $p = 0.03$).

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APPENDIX A

TABLE A1 Housing situation by student group

	Local stayers (n = 723)	Regional commuter (n = 350)	Regional in-mover (n = 293)	Distant in-mover (n = 224)
Lives with his/her parents	11%	23%	1%	0%
Lives alone	22%	13%	33%	34%
Lives alone, but shares common room or kitchen with others	4%	1%	6%	14%
Lives together with his/her boyfriend/girlfriend/partner	38%	44%	36%	31%
Lives together with friend or friends	14%	3%	16%	18%
Other	11%	15%	6%	3%

Note: We performed a χ^2 test with the following result: $\chi^2 = 255.9$, $p < 0.001$.

TABLE A2 Five measurements by gender, age, and parents' educational background

	Gender				Age				Min. one parent has a medium-term education or higher			
	Esbjerg		Copenhagen		Esbjerg		Copenhagen		Esbjerg		Copenhagen	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	<24	24+	<24	24+	No	Yes	No	Yes
<i>Local job experience (percentage currently having a job in study town)</i>												
Local stayers	56%	46%	70%	54%	59%	47%	74%	58%	50%	59%	59%	69%
Regional commuter	12%	21%	20%	19%	19%	13%	18%	22%	15%	17%	18%	23%
Regional in-mover	45%	31%	54%	31%	33%	53%	47%	42%	45%	29%	39%	52%
Distant in-mover	30%	28%	66%	64%	21%	40%	55%	80%	35%	24%	68%	65%
n	515	285	541	252	373	424	404	387	466	284	296	470
χ^2	72.9***	12.9***	67.2***	26.7***	45.0***	50.1***	68.4***	43.2***	41.5***	40.7***	36.5***	45.1***
<i>Knowledge of companies and organisations (mean on scale from 1 to 10)</i>												
Local stayers	6.2	6.5	6.8	5.9	5.9	6.6	5.8	7.1	6.3	6.4	6.1	6.8
Regional commuter	4.8	4.9	5.8	6.0	4.5	5.0	5.4	6.4	4.9	4.9	5.9	5.9
Regional in-mover	4.9	5.1	6.1	6.2	4.8	5.4	6.2	6.0	5.2	4.7	6.2	6.2
Distant in-mover	4.8	5.0	6.5	6.3	4.3	5.6	6.1	6.9	5.1	4.7	6.6	6.4
n	515	284	541	252	374	425	403	387	467	284	296	468
F (ANNOVA test)	11.8***	8.5***	4.0***	0.4	8.6***	11.8***	1.5	2.7**	9.7***	9.6***	0.6	2.7**
<i>Confidence in personal job opportunities after graduation (percentage being confident)</i>												
Local stayers	92%	97%	97%	94%	96%	93%	94%	97%	92%	98%	96%	96%
Regional commuter	78%	81%	93%	98%	78%	79%	93%	96%	77%	82%	98%	89%
Regional in-mover	79%	89%	100%	93%	84%	82%	96%	100%	83%	83%	96%	96%
Distant in-mover	67%	84%	97%	97%	75%	76%	97%	98%	68%	83%	88%	100%
n	387	235	470	222	285	336	348	342	368	228	257	412
χ^2	18.2***	10.8**	5.8	1.6	16.1***	11.8***	1.1	1.2	18.3***	12.3***	4.9	9.1**
<i>Living with parent(s) (percentage)</i>												
Local stayers	11%	12%	10%	15%	25%	1%	23%	2%	9%	13%	16%	8%
Regional commuter	12%	18%	35%	44%	31%	5%	62%	10%	13%	14%	35%	41%
Regional in-mover	1%	2%	0%	4%	2%	0%	1%	3%	1%	2%	2%	2%
Distant in-mover	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
n	516	284	540	252	375	425	403	387	468	283	295	467
χ^2	19.3***	16.1***	70.1***	38.8***	49.3***	8.4**	108.1***	12.0***	17.7***	13.2***	31.1***	80.3***

(Continues)

TABLE A2 (Continued)

	Gender				Age				Min. one parent has a medium-term education or higher			
	Esbjerg		Copenhagen		Esbjerg		Copenhagen		Esbjerg		Copenhagen	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	<24	24+	<24	24+	No	Yes	No	Yes
Satisfaction with social life in the study town (mean on scale from 1 to 10)												
Local stayers	7.5	7.6	8.2	7.9	7.5	7.5	8.1	8.1	7.4	7.6	8.0	8.2
Regional commuter	5.9	5.7	6.2	5.8	6.0	5.8	5.9	6.4	5.8	6.1	6.3	5.7
Regional in-mover	6.8	6.5	7.8	7.6	6.8	6.5	7.8	7.6	6.7	6.6	7.8	7.7
Distant in-mover	6.5	6.0	7.4	7.4	6.1	6.6	7.4	7.3	6.3	6.2	6.3	7.7
n	471	275	526	237	367	379	396	365	435	264	282	453
F (ANNOVA test)	10.7***	9.9***	21.4***	7.8***	9.0***	11.7***	18.3***	10.5***	10.9***	7.2***	11.5***	21.4***

Note: With regard to the variables measured in percentages, we performed χ^2 tests by cross-tabulating the typology variable (four categories) with the variable in question. All three cross tables were 4 × 2 cross tables.

* $p < 0.10$. ** $p < 0.05$. *** $p < 0.01$.