

## Global Crises as Catalysts: International Student and Post-graduate Mobility Patterns

**Research Seminar – 18 March 2022, 12.00 – 18.30**

Organised by Migration and Integration Centre Aarhus University (MIAU) & the Mobility and Education Research Unit, Danish School of Education, Aarhus University

Venue: DPU, Tuborgvej 164, 2400 Copenhagen, room D120

Zoom: tba

### Program

12.00	Welcome + lunch
12.30	<b>'Stick to your Dreams': Covid-19 and Indian student mobility to Germany</b> Sazana Jayadeva, University of Cambridge
13.15	<b>"There may come a time where you have to decide about your life" – Two cases of migration routes among highly specialized professionals during the Global Financial Crisis</b> Helene Ilkjær, Danish School of Education – Aarhus University
14.00	Break
14.15	<b>"European citizens": a sojourn in Denmark?</b> Charlotte Sun Jensen, Danish School of Education – Aarhus University
15.00	<b>Higher Education Internationalization in a time of immobility</b> Ulrika Fløisdorf and Hanne Kirstine Adriansen, Danish School of Education – Aarhus University
15.45	Break
16.15	<b>"COVID impacted the ability to migrate but not the desire to migrate": Analyzing perspectives of migration stakeholders on highly skilled migration to Canada in the times of COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath</b> Ashika Niraula and Anna Triandafyllidou, Ryerson University
17.00	Discussant: Peggy Froerer, Brunel University London
17.30	Discussant: Karen Valentin, Danish School of Education – Aarhus University
18.00	Wrap up and joint discussion

19.30 Dinner in Copenhagen

*\*Presentations should be no longer than 30 minutes, leaving 15 minutes for questions and discussion*

## Abstracts

### **'Stick to your Dreams': Covid-19 and Indian student mobility to Germany**

*Sazana Jayadeva, University of Cambridge*

This paper explores how the first-wave of the Covid-19 pandemic impacted Indian aspirant student migrants' plans to study for a postgraduate degree in Germany, and how Indian students in Germany were affected. It brings together fieldwork conducted between March and July 2020, and November 2017 and October 2018, which involved interviews with Indian Master's students in Germany and digital ethnographic research carried out within social media communities used by prospective students. Situating the impact of the pandemic in the broader context of Indian student mobility to Germany, the paper shows how apart from concerns about a disrupted educational experience, prospective and current students were extremely concerned about the impact of Covid-19 on the German job market and the ability of an international student to secure a good job in their field of study upon graduation. The paper examines how aspirant student migrants in India navigated and evaluated their plans to go to Germany for a Master's degree, in the face of extreme uncertainty and disruptions, and why most did not abandon or postpone these study plans.

### **"There may come a time where you have to decide about your life" – Two cases of migration routes among highly specialized professionals during the Global Financial Crisis**

*Helene Ilkjær, Danish School of Education, Aarhus University*

Prior to the recent COVID-19 recession, many economists considered the Global Financial Crisis of 2007-2009 to have been the most severe worldwide economic crisis since the Great Depression in the 1920's and 1930's. Synonymous with the Lehman Brothers' bankruptcy and the bursting of the housing bubble, the Global Financial Crisis led to worldwide recession including a severe banking crisis that left companies and even entire countries in economic ruin. The crisis also resulted in reports of decreasing institutional trust and increasing numbers of suicides as many people across the world faced the stress of debt, unemployment, and uncertainty about the future.

In this paper, I take the Global Financial Crisis as a vantage point to discuss directionally different migration processes among highly specialized professionals: to move (on) and to return. To do so, I draw together ethnographic examples from two research projects on highly specialized professionals in India and Denmark. One concerns Indians working in engineering, bio- and data sciences who left the US to move back to India to settle in the metropole of Bangalore, often referred to as the Silicon Valley of India. The other concerns medical doctors from Southern Europe who moved to the Danish provincial town of Nykøbing Falster located in an area that is often used as the go-to case in media stories of social and economic deprivation in Denmark's remote "rotten banana." Thinking through the ethnographic cases, I will focus on strategies and coincidences in decision-making processes and on the nexus between expectations and settlement experiences in these different examples of Global Financial Crisis-influenced migrations.

## **“European citizens”: a sojourn in Denmark?**

*Charlotte Sun Jensen, Danish School of Education, Aarhus University*

Based on fieldwork with a group of highly educated voluntary EU-migrants, I would like to explore how the covid-19 pandemic has affected their mobile lives and relate this subject to the issue of being *privileged* in line with Torresan’s work from 2007. The internationals are coveted specialists in a Danish governmental agency. Most hold a master’s degree and a PhD from DTU, which has prestigious collaboration with universities from other EU-countries. The majority have travelled all over the world despite being relatively young. They can cycle to work from their newly built apartments with water views and private parking for boats. In short, they have the resources, including credentials, for a comfortable life in DK. To categorise them as privileged internationals seems fitting as they do so themselves, at least in certain situations, but not in all. Especially not in the context of the workplace and lockdown. My empirical material points out that the pandemic, at some points, has illuminated the sociocultural inequality among employees in the workplace such as being neglected and restricting the opportunity to ask for advice on navigating the Nordic work culture. Furthermore, it has exacerbated the feeling of a divided life, which further impacts their decisions on staying in Denmark.

## **Higher Education Internationalization in a time of immobility**

*Ulrika Fløisdorf and Hanne Kirstine Adriansen, Danish School of Education, Aarhus University*

Inspired by spatial and mobility theories, this paper explores higher education internationalization for international students in Copenhagen during the Covid-19 crisis in the autumn of 2020. When borders closed and universities were forced to lock down due to Covid-restrictions, immobility became the result. Immobility was not only large scale, causing some international students to return to their home countries, online classes meant that immobility existed also at a small scale and challenged internationalisation processes. Through analyses of ethnographic accounts, the paper examines how international students took agency and shaped their space at home to educational place(s) and free time place(s) and how these enabled or inhibited learning in the online classroom and how this created inequities or exclusions. The paper demonstrates how students were challenged by the immobility in their daily lives and how they felt distressed when their educational place(s) and free time space(s) got blurred. It is discussed how the absent co-presence in the online classroom, ‘black screens’ and remoteness resulted in different forms of (not) belonging and were highly contributory to the reduced possibilities for students to relate to new people and places otherwise associated by international student mobility.

## **“COVID impacted the ability to migrate but not the desire to migrate”: Analyzing perspectives of migration stakeholders on highly skilled migration to Canada in the times of COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath**

*Ashika Niraula and Anna Triandafyllidou, Ryerson University*

Highly skilled migration has been increasingly heralded as the 'desirable' and easy to integrate migration that states favour but recent research has pointed out to the complexities, risks and uncertainties characterising this type of migration. This paper delves into the role of uncertainty and 'crisis' or 'emergency' in the management of highly skilled migration focusing on Canada and research changes in Canadian immigration policy that were prompted by the pandemic. Canada is a country with a proactive immigration policy that invites (highly skilled for their most part) people to make Canada their home. Annual targets have been severely affected by the border closures hence immigration policy has turned to those who were already in the country with temporary permits, facilitating their transition to permanent status. By employing the notions of crisis, emergency and uncertainty, this paper examines whether the pandemic period was defined by stakeholders as an 'emergency' (it was effectively a crisis as immigration flows were down by 50% in 2020 and down by 30% in 2021) and how the reality and perception of emergency has affected Canadian highly skilled migration, including international students and post-graduate holders and temporary foreign skilled workers residing in Canada as well as highly skilled migrants abroad who want to migrate to Canada. It mainly focuses on the stakeholder's perceptions on how COVID-19 pandemic has shaped the highly skilled migration flows, (highly skilled) immigration policy changes and highly skilled migrants' decision making to apply for the Canadian permanent residency. This paper is based on 22 semi-structured qualitative interviews with immigration policy stakeholders in Canada including federal government officials, settlement service providers, trade union representatives, post-secondary education institutions, immigration lawyers, and credential evaluation service providers.