

Journal of International Mobility Moving for education, training and research

Call for contributions No. 6
Living and study conditions: resources and strategies of students in international mobility

Submission of proposals by 31 March 2018

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Details

The Agence Erasmus+ France / Education Formation is the French national agency in charge of the European Erasmus + programme for education and training.

Its interdisciplinary scientific journal, the *Journal of international Mobility*, publishes contributions on all dimensions of people's international mobility in the context of education and training in Europe and elsewhere in the world. It particularly aims to improve understanding of the conditions and impact of mobility, to encourage its consideration by the researchers and political decision-makers who have the authority to support it.

The agency is currently launching an appeal for contributions for the sixth issue, on the following theme:

Living and study conditions: resources and strategies of students in international mobility

An increasing number of students are experiencing mobility in the context of their studies. Whether these mobilities are long or temporary, horizontal or vertical (Teichler, 2017, to be published), these students share the same characteristic, that of being students who are known as "foreign students", or "international students"; the situations in which they find themselves are, however, varied. These periods of mobility are lived through as one-off experiences depending on the contexts which lead to the experience of mobility, and depending on the geographical origins of the students. They can be experienced as a special phase of life and study for students in Erasmus+-type temporary mobility; as an opportunity for better studies and better occupational integration for those who go abroad to take a degree; or even as the jumping-off point for a new life abroad for those who plan to settle down permanently in the country of their studies, or who decide to do so in the course of their studies (Guilbert and Prévost, 2009). The conditions of life and studies of these students also vary, depending on the countries in which they settle, temporarily or permanently, in the light of the institutional, legal, political or social contexts which apply (Vatz Laaroussi, Bernier and Guilbert, 2013). There is, then, a conflict between the life stories, expectations and aspirations during mobility and these contexts, which influence the realities they experience. We can therefore imagine the diversity of the situations and the inequality of the issues.

The data we have include investigations carried out by institutions, universities, national *Observatoires*, etc. They look into various aspects, especially students' satisfaction with regard to their stay abroad: general satisfaction, quality of the courses, infrastructure, housing, welcome, support, etc. These are often quantitative studies which subscribe to attractive policies in order to assess the services offered to foreign students.

However since the launch of the European mobility policies through first Erasmus, then Erasmus +, the studies have increased in a number of disciplines¹ and have focused on different dimensions of this mobility experience, as much in terms of institutional logic as in the individual strategies of the various stakeholders concerned by the processes involved in mobility. In this way, the studies carried simultaneously on the policies of mobilities and the individual experience of students in a foreign context began at the end of the 1990s/start of the 2000s. Elizabeth Murphy-Lejeune (1998) was the first: she was the instigator of a real paradigmatic turning point in the understanding and analysis of mobility, which adopted a qualitative approach in a field which until then had mainly been occupied by the quantitative².

Qualitative studies in both Europe and Canada, for example, have focused on real-life experiences (Ballatore, 2007; Guilbert and Prévost, 2009; Gagnon, 2016) by looking into the socio-economic conditions under which

² In this context, please see the texts of Gohard-Radenkovic (2017, JIM 5) describing the evolution of research and the paradigmatic rupture in the field of the analysis of mobilities.







¹ The field of foreign languages and cultures, educational science, micro-sociology, anthropology, socio-linguistics and history.

these international students lived during their mobility, from their living conditions in terms of housing to the cultural aspects of their integration into academic and local life. They pose this central question: do their living conditions affect the academic success and study conditions?

1/ Living conditions

Among the factors making the mobility experience tend towards being a positive, mixed or even negative real-life one, the question of financial resources appears to be crucial. The student's financial means give access to good-quality accommodation and determine the accessible volume of social and cultural practices, as well as whether or not the student needs to undertake paid employment alongside his studies. Policies in this respect vary considerably from one country to another, with some prohibiting taking on work at the same time as studying, whereas on the contrary, others make it easy not only on the university campus, but also in the surrounding area (Belkodjja and Vatz Laaroussi, 2012).

Practices relating to students' leisure, cultural activities, and physical travel also create dividing lines, as it is indicated by Eugénie Terrier (2009, our translation): "These are the 'leisure' mobilities which allow us to see the differences between students in international mobility". The majority of international students "take advantage of their stay to visit and to travel" (*ibid.*); however disparities are observed in terms of the frequence of these visits and trips (*ibid.*; Anquetil, 2011). Eugénie Terrier (*ibid.*) presents profiles of mobile students, from the most sedentary in their host towns to the hyper-mobile: African students would be the most sedentary, Asiatics would show an average mobility, whereas European or North American students, as well as those in short periods of mobility (less than six months), would be the most mobile. But this variable 'continent of origin' does not appear to be fully operational to explain differences in the conditions of stay. Other variables, such as social resources, mobility capital and especially "the importance that the student assigns to his study migration" are decisive (Terrier, 2009, our translation; Endrizzi, 2010). On this assignment which the student gives himself, Vassiliki Papatsiba (2003) recalls the awareness in which the Erasmus student specifically affirms his role as a student; a role which is both born and conferred by the academic context in which his mobility takes place and by the advertised outcome to which the mobility experience responds - both academically and in terms of citizenship (openness to 'otherness').

The student's accommodation is also an issue for social inclusion (Erlich, 2012). The multiplicity of relationships allowed by residential autonomy, particularly in student residences, structure the opportunities for meetings, and for socialising. In this way, the students' satisfaction is generally linked to this first real experience of residential independence (Ballatore, 2007). How does the choice of accommodation, in a student residence, sharing with other foreigners or natives of the country, or in separate housing, etc. influence living and study conditions?

2/ Study conditions

On the academic level, during the period of mobility, the relation the students develop regarding their studies can be analysed through different perspectives: reaction to assessment methods; interaction in class; involvement in the academic curricula (Agulhon, Ennafaa, 2016); relationship with teachers, etc. The cultural norms of proximity or hierarchical distance can be specifically considered (Gyurakovics, 2014); as well as the ability to be autonomous or the sense of responsibility towards their studies (Gohard-Radenkovic, 2000). The attractiveness and challenge of adapting themselves to new situations may tempt more than one 'student adventurer', as Papatsiba describes it (*op. cit.*, 2003). Whether they are students from within Europe or from other parts of the world, many choose study destinations where the academic and social cultures differ considerably from those of their country of origin.

Several research works have looked into the expected academic cultures and practices, and the socio-linguistic and socio-cultural codes, very often implicit and obvious to local students, which foreign students must learn to







decode and understand in order to be able to integrate into university social life (Gohard-Radenkovic, 1995). Saeed Paivandi (2016) also looks into students' interactions within the academic community, whether with administrative staff, teachers, peers, etc.

The Erasmus programme has been the subject of studies examining the success of Erasmus students in mobility, their relationships with the teaching staff or, more broadly, the way in which they get involved in their host institution life. We can particularly cite the work of Magali Ballatore (2007) which showed the diversity of scholastic experiences between British, French and Italian Erasmus students, while remembering that 'university remains the central location for Erasmus students' experiences' (our translation). Souto-Otero Manual (2008), for his part, stressed the difficulties of Erasmus students vis-a-vis their studies, taking into account the problems of adapting to the new system and concerns over the recognition of credits acquired during the mobility period. This author has also shown that being a student relies on internalised, insufficiently questioned, cultural patterns, which entail significant variations in the relationship to learning. The level of language and linguistic codes acquired before arrival in the host country are also important variables to take into account when understanding the adaptability, or lack of adaptability, of the mobile student to the content of his education. The learning of the foreign language is indeed a major hurdle which explains how the conditions of study differ from one student to another.

The interpersonal relationships international students can build on the spot with locals are also a way of promoting better integration into the academic culture of the host country. Student associations, which play an important part in sociability, can also promote language learning (Nanaki, 2009).

Accordingly, several questions arise:

Can we recognise similarities between the types of mobility, geographical origin and academic, socio-cultural, etc. practices which may affect students' day-to-day living situations during their mobility?

What situations are experienced by students? How does the choice of accommodation - in a university residence, sharing with other foreigners or with natives of the country, in private accommodation, etc - influence their living conditions and studies?

How do their resources - their family's financial contributions or other assistance - impact on their way of life and their integration strategies?

How do students adapt to obstacles, or how do they benefit from the resources put at their disposal? Can we identify typologies of obstacles which these students must face, as well as the personal and institutional resources they call upon to overcome them, the resilience and ingenuity which they show, or even how they transform them into strengths and acquisition of skills?

What is the impact of these conditions of life on their academic success?

What factors of success, in terms of integration and adaptation to academic life, can we identify?

Finally, what are the strategies that these students develop to maximise their learning, academically as well as socially and culturally? Being at the heart of their projects and their career paths, how can they enlarge their visions of the world and their fields of action through a process of work-based individuation?







In order to respond to these questions on the living and study conditions of students in international mobility, we will give preference to articles forming part of the following logics:

a) Comparative logic between host countries and/or students' geographic origins and/or types of mobility (supervised mobility as against unsupervised mobility).

Studies show that Erasmus +-type supervised mobility has given rise to a large number of analyses, as opposed to unsupervised, free, spontaneous mobility, that of 'free-movers', which has not been much analysed in recent years. However, organised mobility does not correspond to the reality of international study mobility. Free mobility periods are quantitatively much more important. What are the different life experiences of students, depending on the type of mobility? Would the type of mobility - horizontal - and the regional characteristic of the mobility guarantee better adaptation and a more favourable outcome of the studies?

The types of mobility as well as the geographic origins appear to be the variables which explain mobile students' life-styles. Studies have shown, for example, that living conditions favour students from the European Union, who encounter fewer difficulties as compared to students from other geographic areas (Ennaffaa, Paivandi, 2008). These differences can probably be explained by ways of life and landmarks which are not all located at the same level of cultural proximity depending on geographical areas (Erlich, 2013). In addition, they are also favoured because they integrate more often into inter-university exchange projects, Erasmus+-type, which facilitate their adaptation. The Erasmus+ programme also guarantees registration fees free of charge in the institutions where the mobility study period takes place. Conversely, for those who do not set off with a supervised status, but as 'free-movers', the requirements in terms of financial guarantees and registration costs, which vary according to country, may prove unfavourable for carrying out their studies.

Eva Walker's research work (2016) within a French university highlights, as do other works, the impact of financial resources on the success of international students, and shows in particular that "if economic difficulties are exacerbated for foreign students, they are, in general, much greater for students of African origin" (our translation). How, therefore, do students from the South cope with their academic experiences and social conditions in their host countries? Claudio Bolzman and Ibrahima Guissé (2017, to be published), have shown, in a Swiss context, the precariousness of the living conditions of African and Latin American students, with the consequent negative effects on their academic courses. These situations may not be explained merely by these students' geographical origin: as the authors also show, the institutional and contextual logic of the host societies also determines the 'areas of integrability' (Gohard-Radenkovic, 2004, our translation) offered to these students.

b) Institutional and contextual logics

At graduate level, students have multiple simultaneous transitions: migrating, studying, working, becoming parents (Guilbert et al., 2013). These situations, being determining factors for their integration and academic success, require particular attention to be paid by concerned policies and services (Conseil supérieur de l'éducation, 2013). Analysing institutional and contextual logics is paramount for the better understanding of the conditions of life and studies of international mobile students. Do policies for the integration of foreign students, at national, local or institutional level, influence the conditions of arrival and adaptation? Are there procedures to support students in the host countries, which facilitate their social integration?

The national and local features are therefore important for the better understanding of these experiences. Obstacles and resources can vary from one region to another within the same country, with local communities being at the heart of integration, as much for international students as for immigrants (Vatz Laaroussi, Bernier, Guilbert, 2013). Sometimes there are critical gaps between the logic of the institution's stakeholders and that of the international students (Gohard-Radenkovic, 2013; El Bejaoui, 2017). At the same time, universities do not hesitate to give students the role of recruiter (Belkodja, 2011; Garneau and Bouchard, 2013) or of 'passeur culturel' (Curien, 2007; Goyer, 2010).







c) Individual and student experience logics

The living and study conditions of international mobile students are a matter of individual routes, as a number of variables comes into play: financial and social resources, country of origin, etc. Their social and biographical profiles may present some common points (mobility capital, capacity for adaptation, etc) but also variants. Experiences of mobility must also be considered for the better understanding of the living and study conditions of international students. The degree of sociability with natives, trips, cultural and associative practices, return visits home (Ballatore, 2004), inward-looking attitudes or, on the contrary, openness to others (Erlund, 2014) are also factors which determine the success of the student experience, as felt by international students.

In order to understand this experience, it is essential to recognise the student as the main stakeholder in the progress of his life (Prévost, 2014; Dioh, 2015). In the face of institutional, political and legal obstacles, we can observe strategies of changes of course, resistance, circumvention, conversion, fresh starts, 'interstitial strategies' (Robin, 2015) in legal loopholes, ambivalent or contradictory regulatory areas, or gaps which were unforeseen by the institution (Gohard-Radenkovic, 2017). How in this space-time of transition does the student implement his sense of agency and develop his capacity to take advantage of opportunities which arise by making choices according to his values, the goals he has set and his openness to adventure, both intellectually and interculturally?

We can think of these students' life projects, of the diversity of their routes and standing, in this way: what they are experiencing is an academic and vocational integration, and the key to their success is located in, among other things, the social and intercultural skills which they develop, or have been able to develop, in their migratory route (Molinié, 2002; Monie and Khater, 2004; Collin and Karsenti, 2012).

Expected articles will be structured around these axes. Scientists, professors and experts who have researched these subjects are invited to submit their contributions.

Expected articles can be:

- Current or completed works of research, presenting the methods applied and the tools which it was necessary to develop in order to carry out the works.
- The presentation of plans and experiments which are capable of being transposed.
- In-depth articles on the questions asked.







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How to submit your contribution

Timetable

Please send your contribution (the complete article) by e-mail (Word document) to revue@agence-erasmus.fr by **31 March 2018**.

Each article will be anonymously examined by two Reading Committee members and all authors will receive a response. Four answers are possible, following the evaluation: article accepted; article accepted subject to minor modifications; major modifications requested; article rejected. The decision of the selection panel is final and no appeals will be considered.

Acceptable languages: English, French, German, Italian, Spanish.

Deadline for the submission of articles: 31 March 2018

Notification to authors: 15 June 2018

Publication: December 2018

Format of contributions

Font: Times New Roman 12. Spacing: Multiple 1.15

Proposals should contain:

- the surname and first name of the author / authors (only the first letters of the surname and first name should be in upper case letters);
- an explicit title, centred;
- A summary in the language of writing (English, French, German, Italian, Spanish) and its translation into English or French (approximately 1500 characters including spaces)
- 3 to 5 keywords;
- a short biography of the author(s) in the language of writing and its translation into English;
- all bibliographical references made in the article.

The maximum number of characters (33,000) must include notes and spaces as well as the summary, keywords, and bibliographical references.

Bibliographical and digital references:

these should be indicated at the end of the article, in alphabetical order.

Notes:

these should appear at the bottom of the page with a cross-reference in the text. They should be typed in Times New Roman 10.

Quotations:

Quotations (author or extract from interview) should be inserted into the text between quotation marks.

Format:

Italics should be used to indicate any foreign words.

Artwork:

Artwork or illustrations may be attached to the article. Images should be in JPEG format.





