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Space, place and internationalisation of higher education: Exploring everyday social practices in the ‘international’ classroom

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to use a spatial approach to tease out implicit understandings of what is perceived as the ‘good’ student, the ‘right’ pedagogies and ‘legitimate’ knowledge in higher education internationalisation practices. We do so by attending to the social practices in the ‘international’ classroom and explore how such practices are shaped and impacted by students’ various backgrounds, educational paths, prior knowledges and at the same time by structural, cultural and national characteristics of the host institution and the lecturers teaching there. The paper combines both lecturers’ and students’ perspectives and details the complex relationality of people and places connected through movement and performances of internationalisation. Inspired by critical internationalisation studies, we demonstrate how everyday practices and discourses in the ‘international’ classroom produce and reproduce global inequalities; thereby, we show some of the uneven geographies of higher education internationalisation.

KEYWORDS

higher education, international classroom, internationalisation, pedagogy, social practice, youth mobility

1 | INTRODUCTION

Everyone comes here not knowing each other. You link people from your own country, try to get people from other countries; it’s a lot of mixed personalities and life experiences together. All thrown into one room, for literally into one room for some subjects, and that can be really difficult (Susan, student from Ireland).

Susan studied at university in Denmark for one semester as an Erasmus student. In her account, Susan refers to the classroom as a physical setting; she says students and lecturers were ‘all thrown into one room’. In addition to the classroom being a locality, a place, Susan’s reflections also mirror aspects of social space (Massey, 1995), constructed and produced through relations and experiences. Susan describes it as a linking and getting one another, concurrently entailing

tensions and difficulties. Through internationalisation practices such as the Erasmus programme, students and, to some extent, lectures travel from various countries and end up in specific places to learn together. Thus, the classroom becomes a kind of melting pot where international students and lectures meet, mingle and connect with one another; it becomes a place of navigation, adaptation and negotiation legitimacy.

Employing a geographical perspective, this article contributes new empirical findings and conceptual arguments to internationalisation of higher education. The aim is to use a spatial approach to tease out implicit understandings of what is perceived as the ‘good’ student, the ‘right’ pedagogies and ‘legitimate’ knowledge in the so-called international¹ classroom. With its focus on international students, this paper adds to geographical studies of youth mobility (e.g., Brooks & Waters, 2011; King, 2017; Kölbl, 2020) and thus to the body of papers on the topic recently published in this

journal. Articles in *Population, Space and Place* have contributed new insights into the role of mobile young people as students (King & Williams, 2017), shown youth transition and migration as processes of becoming and unbecoming (King, 2017) and highlighted the interrelationship between mobility and materiality for young academics' knowledge production (Adriansen, 2020). Other articles have pointed to the importance of temporality for transnational youth mobility both in relation to intimate relationships and synchronicity (Harris, Baldassar, & Robertson, 2020) and in relation to emotions and inequality (Cheung Judge, Blazek, & Esson, 2020). The intersection between youth mobility and themes such as processes of becoming, emotions and inequalities are also touched upon in this article, and we suggest international students as an interesting population group to study from a geographical perspective and the 'international' classroom worth a spatial exploration.

The study is based on 4 months of ethnographic fieldwork at a Danish higher education institution, and it is an example of how internationalisation of higher education takes place at the periphery of the hegemonic Anglo-American academy. Although located in a very privileged part of the Global North, Denmark is not at the centre when it comes to internationalisation—the flows go to other parts of the Global North such as the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, and France (Brooks & Waters, 2011). In Denmark, as in many other countries where English is not the mother tongue, the term 'the international classroom' is a common concept used to denote English Medium Instruction and students of diverse nationalities. Hence, Susan's experiences take place in an 'international' classroom. During fieldwork, we noticed that lecturers would sometimes call it a Danish and sometimes an international classroom. These occasional utterances made us wonder how to locate the 'international' classroom in terms of pedagogical approaches, perceptions and construction of students and negotiated legitimacy of knowledge.

In our study, we are inspired by Beech and Larsen (2014), who argue that the ways humans inhabit and experience a place partly define and shape what that place is and, at the same time, the spatial context structures and produces *social practices*. Thus, we explore how social practices in the 'international' classroom are shaped and impacted by students' various backgrounds, educational paths, prior knowledges and at the same time by structural, cultural and national characteristics of the host institution and the lecturers teaching there. We do so by attending to the relationality of people and places connected through movement and performances. We draw on the idea that 'any given place is materially and imaginatively constructed by many different types of people. The dynamic tension created by the co-presence of all these people results in each lending different dimensions to those places' (Johnston, 2000, p. 583). Places are about relationships, about the people who engage and interact with one another, materials and proximities (Sheller & Urry, 2006). Everything happens in space, but *where* things happen and *who* takes part is critical to knowing *how* and *why* (Warf & Arias, 2009). We base our study on the understanding that what happens in the encounters in the classroom also affects the larger higher education landscape. Inspired

by critical internationalisation studies (Madsen & Adriansen, 2020; Stein, 2019; Stier, 2004), we explore how internationalisation offers opportunities for some students, while at the same time disadvantaging others and thus producing and reproducing uneven geographies of higher education.

In order to do so, we begin by setting the scene for this paper and briefly outline the methodology. Then follows the analysis, which focuses on three themes: the 'good' student, the 'right' pedagogies and the 'legitimate' knowledge. We discuss where the 'international' classroom may be located and conclude by pointing to the uneven geographies of internationalisation.

2 | SETTING THE SCENE

We hear about the ERASMUS student Susan in Section 1; she is one of the young people embodying global educational policies and practices through her educational mobility. Through initiatives such as the ERASMUS programme, internationalisation of universities has been on the higher education policy agenda in Europe for more than 30 years. In the European higher education context, internationalisation is associated with mobility not only of students but also of academic staff (Morley, Alexiadou, Garaz, González-Montegudo, & Taba, 2018; van der Wende, 2015). Worldwide, internationalisation is regarded as a tool for enhancing the quality of education, research and service to society (de Wit, Hunter, Howard, & Egron-Polak, 2015). Based on that argument, Susan's mobility and subsequent participation in the 'international' classroom outside her home country become a contribution to enhance the quality of education. Therefore, it is interesting to understand what goes on in the meeting in the classroom.

It is not surprising that internationalisation of higher education as a research field has received much attention, generating a large body of literature over the past 20 years. Scholars have analysed the meaning and rationales of internationalisation (Altbach, 2004; de Wit, 1999; Stier, 2004; Teichler, 2004), its future (Altbach & de Wit, 2018), its curriculum (Leask, 2015) and geographical imaginaries of international students (Beech, 2014; Kölbl, 2020). There is an increasing number of studies exploring what goes on in the classroom. Tange (2010) examines the lecturers' perspectives, Wallace and Hellmundt (2003) report their experiences with student-centred teaching and Mangan, Kelemen, and Moffat (2015) have experimented with pedagogical responses to the international classroom. Other studies of the international classroom focus on different cultures of learning (Trahar & Hyland, 2011; Yates & Trang, 2012): English proficiency, perceptions and classroom engagement (Galloway, Numajiri, & Rees, 2020; Tebbett, Jöns, & Hoyler, 2020; Yu & Wright, 2017). Few of the classroom studies use spatial perspectives; Pitts and Brooks (2017) apply a 'third space' approach to evoke an understanding of the international classroom as an 'in-between' space, whereas Leung and Waters (2013) explicitly explore the role of space and place in transnational education including aspects of classroom interactions and language use.

Internationalisation can potentially open the world of education by including a diversity of perspectives, yet it can also close the world through 'Westernisation' or 'Anglicisation' of education and curriculum (Leask, 2015). Hence, there are inevitable geographical dimensions to internationalisation of higher education. Spatial and mobility theories² highlight such geographical dimensions (Beech & Larsen, 2014). A number of education researchers have used spatial and mobility perspectives in their studies of education: from the microlevel in the classroom (Fenwick, Edwards, & Sawchuk, 2011) to a macrolevel on internationalisation (Larsen, 2016). In a parallel development, human geographers have become increasingly interested in the field of education (Holloway & Jöns, 2012; Waters, 2017), for instance by applying concepts such as geographical imaginaries to detail how ideas about places influence educational mobility (e.g., Beech, 2014; Kölbl, 2020).

Using a spatial approach can help us to move beyond the assumption of internationalisation as a neutral process (Brooks & Waters, 2011) and instead tease out implicit understandings in the 'international' classroom, for example, who becomes the 'good' student and what becomes the 'right' knowledge. We argue that when looking at internationalisation from a critical perspective, we need to include nationality as a component and ask how it plays into internationalisation. Through our spatial approach and building on the new mobilities paradigm (Sheller & Urry, 2006, p. 214), we argue against an ontology of distinct places and people. Rather, we see the world in constant flow: people, places and space as relational and always in a process of becoming, and we consider mobility rather than stasis as a norm. In analytical terms, we can conceive space 'as a product of cultural, social, political and economic interactions, imaginings, desires and relations. In this way, space is not merely an objective structure but also a social experience' (Singh, Rizvi, & Shrestha, 2007, p. 197). To this end, we take into account both students' home place and place of study in Denmark, instead of only focussing on their experience of 'studying abroad'. We use the spatial approach to explore which notions about students, teaching and knowledge the students and teachers bring to the 'international' classroom and how these notions and performances in turn create this educational space.

3 | METHODOLOGY

This paper uses qualitative data collected by the first author through ethnographic fieldwork at a Danish higher education institution.³ In order to anonymise, we will not provide further information about the institution. The group of incoming students consisted of a little over 100 students from 19 different countries, all studying modules in the same programme related to education. The majority of the students was part of the Erasmus+ programme; only a few came from non-European partner institutions. The students came to Denmark for one semester (4 months). The first author accompanied them from their arrival until the final day at their host institution. We base our analysis primarily on classroom and campus observations (three classes of only international students, two mixed classes of international

and Danish students) and different kinds of qualitative interviews. The interview material consists of seven life-history interviews structured around construction of spacelines and timelines (Adriansen, 2012), nine focus group interviews (Cragg & Cook, 2007) with three to four students from 10 countries and six semi-structured individual/pair interviews (Kvale, 1996) with lecturers. The interviews were carried out at different points of time throughout the semester. There were two planned timeline interview sessions with the students. The first part was conducted in the first weeks of the students' arrival, and the second part was at the end of the students' stay as a revisiting and reflective approach on their time in Denmark. Primarily, these life-history accounts from the spaceline and timeline interviews provide insight to individual students' meaning making in regard to mobility and their educational paths, allowing us to recognise and acknowledge students' complex relationships between their home countries and their study destination. Focus group interviews were arranged after the students had been in Denmark for around 2.5 months. Focus groups were used to trigger discussions among the interviewees on their roles and positions as students at their home institutions. The interviews with the lecturers were conducted within the last 2 weeks of fieldwork, thus at the end of the semester. Themes and topics of these interviews were the lecturers' own individual educational path, how they plan their lessons (also in terms of certain differences between teaching Danish and international students), what literature they choose, how they decide on specific activities and exercises and how, based on their own experiences, they think it is best to engage student, or how they believe students learn best.

As argued by Simandan (2019), a commitment to the thesis of situated knowledge, which is inherent in our analysis, requires reflexivity especially in regard to positionality. Thus, a few words about positionality before proceeding with the analysis. The first author comes originally from Germany and has been an Erasmus student herself for one semester. She has studied as an international master's student in Denmark for 2 years. Being familiar with some of the experiences, difficulties and feelings of the incoming students helped but also influenced making sense of the participants' narratives. The second author is Danish. She has more than 12 years' experience with teaching so-called international programmes (English medium instruction with students from different countries). She has also studied in Australia as an international master's student. Thus, we perceive our positions as insiders concerning the subject matter (see Adriansen & Madsen, 2009).

The second author is project leader of a larger research project on internationalisation of higher education, which the master's project of the first author was affiliated with. The second author was her supervisor all throughout the process of conducting fieldwork and thesis writing. The first author had an abundance of empirical material relating to social practices both inside and outside the classroom. For the purpose of this paper, we decided to focus on inside the classroom and in a joint process analyse what the empirical material would tell us about the questions of the wider research project, that is, to explore how internationalisation produces new understandings of students, pedagogies and knowledge.

4 | STUDENTS, PEDAGOGIES AND KNOWLEDGE IN THE 'INTERNATIONAL' CLASSROOM

In the following analysis, we examine how social practices in the 'international' classroom are shaped and impacted by students' various backgrounds, educational paths, prior knowledges and at the same time by structural, cultural and national characteristics of the host institution and the lecturers teaching there. Although difficult to separate, we have divided the analysis into three sections: the 'good' student, the right 'pedagogies' and the 'legitimate' knowledge.

5 | THE 'GOOD' STUDENT

During a focus group interview, three students described the study requirements at their home institutions in Germany as more demanding compared to their current experiences. One of them said that studying in Denmark would often feel more like being on vacation. Yet all three of them pointed out that having to work in study groups was challenging. They reflected positively on it in terms of acquiring new social skills but described the actual process as time consuming and mainly frustrating. In our analysis of what it means to be a 'good' student in the international classroom, we are inspired by Simandan (2002). Based on his personal experiences, Simandan highlights the differences between studying in Romania and the United Kingdom and the contrasting expectations to what it means to be a 'good' student in the two places. Simandan's observations are no attempts for systematic comparison, rather to illustrate that specific ways and types of learning shape interactions and everyday routines between students and lecturers. Simandan shows how these ways are not incidental but shaped by national policies and institutional practices. The situatedness of knowledge claims is one of the epistemological underpinnings of Simandan's scholarship, one that he has elaborated in his later work (Simandan, 2019, 2020). He argues that 'the trope of situated knowledge is inherently spatial' (Simandan, 2019, p. 129). This focus on situating not only knowledge but also teaching, learning and pedagogies spatially is the core of this paper. We find it productive to combine Simandan's ideas about what it takes to be a 'good' student with Ulriksen's (2009) notion of the 'implied student'—despite Ulriksen not having a spatial approach but a focus on disciplines. The implied student attunes to unspoken, implicit anticipations about what studying is and shows that certain modes of teaching and lecturers' expectations affect students' behaviour. Becoming a higher education student means that students have to relate to, interpret and follow a complex of expected behaviours and rules (Ulriksen, 2009). At the same time, the way of teaching is dependent on students' willingness and ability to act in accordance with the expectations. Ulriksen speaks of 'academic socialisation' and describes such process as the construction of a social identity as a recognised and affirmed student of a certain discipline. Hence, we find Ulriksen's notion of the 'implied' student supplementing Simandan by helping us to attune to the implicit, instilled perceptions the students brought with them.

The first observations of the international students revealed many different forms of behaviour, traditions, routines and epistemic styles at work in the classroom. This involved figuring out how to engage with one another, to recognise mutual expectations and to understand the way other students practised being a student. Teaching, lecturers and classes vary between institutions in Danish higher education, but the focus and ambition is on 'innovative teaching methods and an informal learning environment designed to promote creativity, self-expression, analytical and critical thinking' (Danish Ministry of Higher Education and Science, n.d.). The teaching style is student-centred with active participation and problem solving rather than passive listening. There are discussions and open debates during class. This is not something unique to Denmark. Although there are national differences as seen in policies and classroom practices, these have also developed in relation to changes in educational policies and pedagogical thinking more broadly.

Contrarily, most of the international students described their role within class settings at home as passive, having to sit quietly and to listen to the lecturers. They said they were used to a stricter system and a rather more formal way of communication than the one in Denmark. During one English class, the topic of the lesson was task-based learning, and the lecturer asked how students would define a task. Leonie, a student from Germany, raised her arm and rendered a perfect dictionary-like definition. During interviews with German students, they explained that they were used to learning being related to memorisation; it was not acceptable not to know something by heart. Students would sit, listen and write down the information delivered, and their knowledge was checked through questions based on fundamental texts and theories, rather than originality. Olja from Ukraine said that at her home institution, she felt that lecturers were 'one step higher' and that there was a certain distance between them. This resonates with Simandan's (2002) experiences at his former institution in Romania. He describes it as more traditional, where lecturers were privileged as repositories of reliable knowledge and students were held and put on a lower, novice-like rank. The students' descriptions imply a rather passive, recipient role without much engagement or active participation, and a lecturer-centred teaching. Such social, situational and emotional interactions and dis/connectedness between students and lecturers shape and construct their spatial everyday routines and foster a certain type of learning (see Simandan, 2002, 2019, 2020) and 'implied student', as with most of the international students showing a more restrained, disciplined behaviour.

Even though the majority of the incoming students were used to, what Simandan (2002) describes as a more 'traditional' academic setting, their individual responses and reactions to the situated practices and discourses at their host institution varied. In a focus group interview with three students from Lebanon, Tamina said,

I always want to be the leader in the group. When I came here first, I noticed, I had to change this, this won't work here, I was listening. In Lebanon, we don't listen to each other, we just talk, talk, talk, we don't actually listen. I don't hear you.

Tamina's reflections mention the experience of 'being surprised', which according to Simandan (2020) plays a significant role in shaping the spatialities of both social and personal change. Notions of surprise can help explain these 'processes of becoming' (Simandan, 2002), thus further an understanding of how and why change happens. Tamina's friend Sada added, 'Like when you follow a specific value, you can't change it, it's the same with our answers and opinions, so, that's why we are like fighting, it's kind of competition'. One time in class, Meris also from Lebanon commented, 'In my home country, it's normal to just stop me and that interactions come directly'. Contrarily, Hiromi, a student from Japan, pointed out that she found it difficult that some of the international students seemed so eagerly and actively engaged in classroom discussion. A value for Hiromi was to be a good listener, and she found it rather impolite how other students would interrupt one another. From her perspective, she explained that Japanese people were 'So kind, so polite (...) not active, not noisy'. She said, 'If we make a group of words, polite, silent, passive is like the same group or similar'. Satoshi added, 'Japanese students should be passive and obey to teacher, and the silence in classroom is very good from elementary school. So it is very difficult (...) to tell something in the classroom or in group'. With a small smirk on his face, his friend admitted, 'I don't like it here (...) because I am so lazy person (...) I came here and was surprised because there is a lot of active person'. Satoshi nodded, 'It's so tough, compared to just sitting, it's quite challenging, but it's interesting'. In general, the international students experienced the role of being a student differently, and their possibilities to perform the role of the 'good' student varied. According to Ulriksen (2009), fulfilling the role of the implied student depends on values and norms of the respective discipline but also on, for instance, gender or cultural background.

We would also like to point to the issue of English proficiency. During two focus group interviews with German and Swiss students, both groups emphasised that they had to explain things several times to their international peers, because these did not understand the tasks nor the content of the classes. Being strong English speakers put the German and Swiss students in a privileged position. They had to check and correct other international students' written parts and were often left to finish the assignments before handing them in. Both focus groups explained that their education systems are based more on individual tasks and efforts and mentioned their own strong academic ambitions to achieve good results. Having to do all the work, as they put it, did not necessarily mean a greater workload though, as within both interviews, the students mentioned feeling relaxed and emphasised they would still have more capacity for work. Outside their ordinary system, both German and Swiss students found themselves in the role of the 'good' student without having to put much effort into it. In fact, what they criticised was that from their perspective, some of their fellow students allowed themselves to be dragged along without contributing much. These accounts show how students drive and negotiate legitimation processes. The German and Swiss students legitimised themselves as proficient speakers of academic

English and simultaneously distanced themselves from their fellow students (see Ennser-Kananen, 2018).

Simandan's work (Simandan, 2002, 2019, 2020) shows that space and place co-produce the policed norms of practices and (disciplinary) knowledge traditions and these norms impact specific ways of seeing and shape one's professional becoming. Students are socialised into an academic community. They comply or at least relate to ways of teaching and learning, such as memorising, obedience or in opposition dialogic teaching and active participation, developing a specific way of acting, seeing and to an extent a 'blindness' (Ulriksen, 2009). We can see certain notions of implied students and situated pedagogies shaped by the students' respective home institutions, as, for instance, in the Lebanese students' talkative way of engaging, leaving little space for others to participate, or the Japanese students' quiet, polite manner that implies not taking up much space. It is very important here not to stereotype national behaviour, we merely wish to underline that a very heterogeneous group of people inhabits the 'international' classroom and all of them have to find a way of dealing with these different forms of interacting discursively, relationally and spatially. The students' backgrounds and the very coming together of students from diverse backgrounds into the Danish higher education context produced a learning space characterised by both tension and negotiation. In other words, the very presence of the international students created the spaces of learning they were immersed in. In the interview excerpt above, Tamina mentioned that once she started studying in Denmark, she became aware of her own customary behaviour when working in groups, which she realised she had to change in order to work together effectively with her fellow students. Yori, a student from Japan, seemed uncomfortable and anxious over several weeks. At some point, he expressed feelings of stress and even panic. Yori described a discrepancy between his usual practice as a student and the practice that seemed to be the acceptable and good one at his host institution in Denmark. He was asked to work in groups and make presentations in front of the whole class and thereby was expected to operate in speaking and learning modes in which he seemed to have limited experience. Although some international students struggled, others enjoyed being exposed to other pedagogies (which we will detail below) and started reinterpreting their previous experiences. During an interview, Aleksandra questioned institutions and the educational system in her home country Ukraine. She described the system as strict, saying, 'This is what really hurts me, because teachers have their own vision and you have your own vision, and you're just trying to say, "no, it can be in another way" (...) mostly you just need to sit silently and listen to their opinion and do nothing'. We come to see how stepping outside their home institutions with well-known structures, situations, routines and roles, and instead encountering another institution with different learning/teaching approaches entailed tensions but also provided space for new ways of seeing self and others. We see how the 'international' classroom becomes a place for negotiation of what it means to be a 'good' student and how the 'good' student is culturally produced.

6 | THE 'RIGHT' PEDAGOGIES

During a study group meeting, Nuria, a Spanish student, asked, 'So, in the assignment we have to start with a problem?', looking at Ida, the only Danish student in the group. She answered, 'Yes, this is how we are used to do it here'. Another group member, Josephine from Iceland, was running late that day, but the group had decided to start working on their assignment anyways. Yet, Ida emphasised, 'It's important that Josephine also gets a say on how we plan to do this'. Ida had brought books from the library and made suggestions for relevant literature. A week later in class, the lecturer said she would like to spend around 20 min with each group discussing their ideas for their assignments. When the lecturer sat with Ida's group, both of them engaged in a long dialogue. Ida outlined their assignment, explained the main arguments and showed the lecturer things on her laptop, whereas the four international group members stayed quiet. Ida was a student driven by interest and a strong desire to study. She engaged actively throughout lessons and showed up to class every week. As a domestic student, she was familiar with the Danish setting; she was socialised to the particular modes of teaching and situated practices. Compared to other study group meetings among only international students, Ida's presence as a domestic student seemed somewhat dominant but at the same time helped the group to work in a more structured, efficient and harmonious way.

In this section, we add Becker's (1952) concept of the 'ideal client' to our understanding of the 'good' student. We want to explore how certain pedagogies are seen as the 'right' ones by the lectures and how this is negotiated or accepted by the international students. Becker explains that teachers' perceptions of the ideal client are linked to 'the implicit assumptions which institutions, through their functionaries, make about the society around them' (Becker, 1952, p. 465). Thus, lecturers' idea of the ideal client is not simply individually produced but is largely shaped by the institutional and societal setting. Lecturers' choice of certain pedagogical approaches is based on the idea of such an ideal client (Becker, 1952). In the 'international' classroom, however, the clients vary greatly. It is a highly differentiated classroom with various levels of English proficiency and a group of students with diverse backgrounds.

As mentioned above, the teaching style at the Danish host institution was student-centred, demanding active participation from the students and engagement in debates and discussions. The choice of pedagogies can be seen to reflect the fact that Danish universities are influenced by the Humboldtian model. Wilhelm von Humboldt advocated for a student-centred activity of research, where students work independently, guided and supervised by their professors. Thus, the Humboldtian university model carries an underlying value of professional autonomy (Nielsen & Birch, 2015). It is based on a unity between research and teaching, emphasising the actual process of discovery of knowledge and teaching critical thinking. Therefore, pedagogies enabling students' independent search for understanding and knowledge are supported, instead of the banking model of education with its knowledge transfer. The students noticed this. In a small conversation during a class break, Lada said, referring to her home

institution in Azerbaijan, 'we only work with theory, it's so boring. Here [in Denmark] you can learn with activities, you can read a lot and remember it'. During an interview with two Azerbaijani girls, they emphasised feeling 'more free' within lessons, linking it primarily to notions of a greater agency and own responsibility of their learning process. Susan from Ireland, whom we met in Section 1, mentioned that she liked that lecturers were not dictating what the students had to do. Given more freedom to choose and decide, she concluded, led to a stronger engagement on her side.

We came to observe that some students enjoyed the freedom and independency associated with autonomous learning in Danish higher education whereas others experienced the amount of interaction, cooperation and teaching approaches privileging autonomy as overwhelming and problematic. Coming from a thoroughly structured educational background where they received more instruction and guidance, many of the international students, however, struggled with the notion of independent learning and autonomy. Through the 1990s, the expression 'responsibility for own learning' became widespread in the Danish educational system (Hermann, 2007). This was part of the move from focusing on teaching to focusing on learning seen in much Anglo-Saxon educational discourse during that period (Barr & Tagg, 1995). Hence, the movement towards learning rather than teaching was not Danish, but in its implementation in the Danish education system, it developed into the 'responsibility for own learning'. This focus on autonomy and independent learning can seem like an individualistic understanding of learning. Moreover, it can seem to stand in contrast to one of the most common pedagogical practices in Danish education, namely, group work. For some of the international students, it was difficult to navigate these apparently contradictory pedagogies.

The majority of the international students mentioned group work as the biggest challenge in terms of pedagogies. Throughout the semester, several of the international students struggled with the concept of working in groups and seemed frustrated with the process as most of them were used to work individually. One lecturer described group work as rooted in Danish pedagogy and as a rather implicit part of Danish culture. In Danish educational settings, she said, people would not talk much about it and 'would just do it'.

Although common in Danish education, group work is not unique to Denmark and neither are the difficulties encountered by students as reported in a study from the United Kingdom (Trahar & Hyland, 2011). Most of the international students, however, were unfamiliar with working in study groups but were expected to do so regularly at their host institution. The students had to organise and manage independent group work outside class time, which many of the students described as new and demanding in various ways. Several students expressed a lack of support and guidance from the lecturers in terms of explicit communication and instructions about coursework and assignments. Magnus, a Norwegian student, expressed his frustration about two of his lecturers during a study group meeting, 'I don't feel any connection with both of them. Where were they when we needed them?'. During class, when students were also often asked to work on projects together, some of the lecturers

left the room for longer periods, leaving the students alone instead of facilitating peer discussions and group processes. This shows the taken for granted nature of learning and the situatedness of pedagogy in this 'international' classroom.

The concept of the 'ideal client' can help us to reveal some of the lecturers' expectations for their students. During one lesson, students had to give group presentations. Both lecturers in the room gave direct feedback to each group after their presentations. The first group received the following comment: 'You're very precise, strict presentation. For next time be a bit more creative, use drama, more visuals'. Another group was told, 'Interactive, inviting us, good variety of ways in expressing yourself'. These statements show that the lecturers expect the students to be creative, to use original ideas, actively involve their audience and to think critically. One time during class, Pernille, one of the lecturers, said, 'I need you guys to do the work, so you can get wise. It's also demanding something from you (...) you also deliver, it's not only me'. The lecturers expect the students to show interest, engage actively during class and to work independently. The lecturers expect the students to take on responsibility, rather than relying on the lecture to explain. Ida, the domestic student mentioned above, to an extent approximated the lecturers' fiction of their ideal client, not causing any 'client problems' (see Becker, 1952) for the lecturers. In relation to this, one lecturer described it as a challenge that international students would often 'Not react in the same ways as the Danish students'. Another time, sitting together with Pernille in the lecturers lounge, she reflected, 'My Danish students always want to discuss. The international students sit and just take down all notes. They are more schooled, trying to model the good student'. Becker's concept of the 'ideal client' allows us to read the lecturers' conceptions of the students as a form of classifying them in terms of the way they vary from their ideal. We can read in the accounts above how the lecturers describe the international students in rather deficit terms as, for example, 'not as active' or 'too quiet' polarising 'international' versus 'domestic' student. Yates and Trang (2012) reported a similar discourse of deficit in their study of the meaning of silence in the international classroom. From a pedagogical perspective, the construction of students in such binary terms or teaching approaches centred on a determined 'ideal client' (Becker, 1952) carries the risk to promote reductive assumptions of students' difference and sameness, which are neither accurate nor productive (Anderson, 2014). Taking these observations into account, we can explore the way people are impacted by and confront the ideological conditions and ideas presented by educational systems and institutions (see Levinson & Holland, 1996), and we come to follow how, within an international context, students and lecturers have to find and negotiate ways to navigate and occupy the academic space.

The lecturers within our study were used to domestic students who would discuss, debate and engage actively. Whereas the majority of international students claimed to be used to a higher education setting in their home countries where to obey silently meant to be a competent, good student. In an interview, Wilma, a lecturer, reflected, 'Some of them [international students] can't really handle all that freedom, because it's also a system where you put a lot of responsibility

on the students themselves. So they should take care of their own education and development, and if they don't, they just waste their time'. Here, we can hear the 'responsibility for own learning' discourse. She then later continued saying,

I think some countries are like the Nordic countries, and some countries are much more 'we do what the teacher tells us to do', so, they do what they are told but they don't think beyond that, and I think that's some of the things they are being provoked to do or to see (...) that's really the Danish or Nordic model of teaching.

Some of the lecturers' perspectives on teaching and learning call into question a view of Danish higher education and pedagogical approaches as inherently superior to 'other' practices (Doherty & Singh, 2005) and concurrently other 'clients'. Certain forms of pedagogies promote specific ways of learning and interaction in the classroom—based on a specific 'implied student'. The emphasis in Ulriksen's work is on the lecturers' expectations and not on the student himself/herself. Thus, the student is expected to comply with the expectations set out by the academic institution, rather than the institution (i.e., the teacher or lecturer) accommodating the individual students' learning styles. It could be argued that it was the lecturers' expectations (i.e., that students should engage in group work) that were privileged instead of attending to the different learning styles of the students in that classroom. Thus, our study demonstrates the privileging of the lecturers' expectations over the students' needs and the implicit framing of some students (i.e., those who functioned well doing group work) as good students (in Simandan's notion of 'good'). This is also emphasised by the fact that some of the students did not feel they had the guidance, support and communication that they required from their lecturers to be successful in the programme. Some lecturers did not adapt their pedagogies or reflect on the situatedness of pedagogies in order to accommodate for the diversity of students within the international group. We can see in several of the lectures' accounts that an image of the 'good' student as independent, active and a confident co-constructor of knowledge and classroom interaction stands in opposition to their perceptions of the international students' tendency to be predominantly non-interactive and passive (see Doherty & Singh, 2005). This can be seen as an assimilationist approach where international students are expected to adapt to the pedagogical practices of their host institution (Ploner, 2018), instead of focusing on the intercultural potential that international education offers (Marginson & Sawir, 2012), and critically conceptualising the students as complex resources or knowledge agents, and partners in pedagogy (Madge, Raghuram, & Noxolo, 2014).

7 | THE 'LEGITIMATE' KNOWLEDGE

On several occasions, the international students used the same phrase, 'they just give you knowledge' when reflecting on their home

institutions, referring here to facts and theories. Asking the students directly about certain differences between their home institutions and their experiences studying in Denmark, Fabian from Germany, for instance, pointed out that the amount of information he received during each class in Denmark seemed less, describing his experience at home as an overload of content. Alena from Ukraine commented, ‘the quality of knowledge we receive is higher [in Denmark] because in Ukraine it feels like I need to filter some information of what is important, what’s very important, what’s like quite important, and what can I skip somehow’, the same impression shared also Tamina and Sada from Lebanon. Aimi from Japan mentioned a similar feeling, ‘lecturer tells me only knowledge and student take a note and remember and take an exam and pass the exam and get the credit’. The way knowledge is talked about here is very much in terms of universality, knowledge as facts and theories, rather than knowledge as local and contextual. Thinking through ‘geographies of science’ (Meusbürger, Livingstone, & Jöns, 2010), this comes as no surprise. We are used to think of higher education, research and its findings and theories as universal (Livingstone, 2003). Geographies of science show us the ways scientific knowledge is produced and consumed with a special focus on space:

Instead of marveling at the apparent universality and ‘placelessness’ of scientific knowledge, scholars interested in the geographies of science have focused on the specific circumstances of scientific practices and on the ways in which the travels of scientists, resources, and ideas shape the production and circulation of scientific knowledge (Jöns, Livingstone, & Meusbürger, 2010, p. ix)

One important point within mobility studies (Sheller & Urry, 2006) is that all sorts of mobile flows are interesting and that research should focus on how these flows interrelate. Knowledge travels with the international students over space, in place and time. Inspired by geographies of science, we explore within this final analysis section, what knowledge is, which knowledge is considered legitimate, and how this is negotiated in the ‘international’ classroom. Geographies of science can help us understand the localness of scientific knowledge, which is important for understanding what relevance means in different parts of higher education. This spatial approach examines local aspects of global knowledge and education. It does not reify the local or imply a static notion of knowledge. On the contrary, geographies of science studies the world as interconnected through flows and networks instead of binaries (Adriansen, Madsen, Nissen, & Juul-Wiese, 2019).

In the following example, we will see how international students bring with them (local) knowledge, which then depending on hierarchies and behaviour is spread, shared or contested in the ‘international’ classroom. Meris from Lebanon, who we have met already in the sections above, and Nastja from Ukraine held a presentation together during one class. Meris gave Nastja small orders of what to do and say and reprimanded some of the other students in the room.

Giving feedback afterwards, their lecturer Helen pointed carefully to the problematic dynamic that pressured Nastja and the rest of the class to adapt to Meris’ instructive way to impart knowledge to his fellow students. Helen encouraged Nastja to claim space and legitimacy, attempting to help her to build a positive academic identity (see Ennser-Kananen, 2018). Helen tried to open opportunities for critical intercultural encounters. She tried to direct the students towards a process of sharing and receiving, which accommodates and values ‘other’ perspectives and which may hold transformative notions to establish ways of self-understanding (see Ploner, 2018).

Yet, in the ‘international’ classroom, not everybody feels recognised as knowledgeable. During a casual conversation one morning before class, Hiromi, a student from Japan, described a feeling of fear that fellow international students might perceive her as being ‘too quiet’ and not ‘as actively engaged’. She stated, ‘Western students have more power to talk. Their English is better (...) and they have more knowledge’. Hiromi then moved her right hand up to portray the level of knowledge of the Western students and put her other hand far down, ‘This is our level. So it is difficult to catch up with them’. Hiromi literally positioned herself lower compared to her fellow students, describing them as more powerful in terms of being more knowledgeable and having a stronger English proficiency. In a focus group interview, Yori mentioned that he believed that if he and his fellow Japanese friends would have a higher proficiency in English, they could perform ‘correctly or very well’ within group work. Levinson and Holland (1996) argue that ‘a culturally specific and relative conception of the “educated person” allows us to appreciate the historical and cultural particularities of the “products” of education, and thus provides a framework for understanding conflicts around different kinds of schooling’ (Levinson & Holland, 1996, p. 3). Even though Levinson and Holland approach education from the perspective of anthropology, their argument about how an educated person is produced in particular sites and also produces cultural forms is based on similar epistemological underpinnings as arguments made by spatial scholars such as Simandan (2002, 2019) and Singh, Rizvi, and Shrestha (2007). Thus, we see Levinson and Holland’s (1996) work as a compelling supplement to spatial scholars as they also point to the culturally produced character of what counts as knowledge. Moreover, the very ambiguity of ‘the cultural production of the educated person’ indicates the dialectic of structure and agency. ‘For while the educated person is culturally produced in definite sites, the educated person also culturally produces cultural forms’ (Levinson & Holland, 1996, p. 14). This becomes an interesting point for attention in terms of the various cultural productions of the international students.

As shown above, what it means to be a ‘good’ student is always place-specific. Unpacking students’ different perceptions of the ‘educated person’ shows within the international group conflicts of different forms of schooling and leads in a way to a positioning of what is valid knowledge, skills, abilities, contributions and behaviour, creating an implicit and intense interplay of agency, structure and hegemony. Several failed attempts to engage in group and class activities highlight Hiromi’s and her fellow students’ struggle to establish a sense of

validation and acceptance as recognised and legitimate members of their class community (see Ennser-Kananen, 2018). Using Levinson and Holland's line of thought, we can see that schooled knowledges and disciplines can encourage a sense of self as knowledgeable but it may also yield a sense as failure. Furthermore, we see how English proficiency is important for being seen to possess the 'legitimate' knowledge in the international classroom. Questions of whose knowledge counts in the 'international' classroom and how the 'knowledgeable person' (Levinson & Holland, 1996) may be locally and nationally defined seem to play into perceptions and/or feelings of the competent, recognised student.

8 | DISCUSSION AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

In the beginning of this paper, we raised the question, how we may locate the 'international' classroom. The analysis shows that although labelled international, the classroom was in many ways national. Despite English being used as the medium of instruction, the teaching, the pedagogies (e.g., group work) and the implied perceptions of a good student were very much situated in Danish policies and practices. Hence, the 'international' classroom is not a neutral or universal space; instead, it is shaped by certain place-based pedagogies, teaching/learning styles and ways of interaction. In the ethnographic accounts discussed, we came to see how some lecturers construct a perception of international students in deficit terms and expect them to become as independent and confident as their Danish students. Thus, international students shall 'adapt to' the existing situated practices. This is connected to the way in which students, based on their own academic, cultural and social selves, are able to comprehend and conceptualise certain 'taken for granted' practices at their host institution (see Ploner, 2018).

The paper has argued that lecturers and students bring with them culturally, nationally and place-specific produced understandings of the role of teaching, learning and knowledge. These instilled perceptions help the students behave and operate in ways of what they believe is a recognised, competent student at their home institution. We have detailed the ways in which these understandings come together, merge but also clash in the 'international' classroom and, thus, how wider cultural and national nuances influence contextual, everyday practices and discourses of internationalisation. Our ethnographic observations show that the co-presence of all the various types of people, each imparting different dimensions to the classroom, resulted in a dynamic construction of the educational learning space (see Johnston, 2000; Massey, 1995). As shown by Larsen (2016), much internationalisation research work within binaries such as mobile/immobile, host/guest and domestic/international. In a way, this fosters polarised thinking and the construction of dichotomies. Although we have also worked *with* a certain binary framework, we have not solely worked *within* such binary thinking. Instead, we have tried to capture the complexities of relations between and beyond the ends of those binaries. In this sense, it is the relation between space

and place that matters as much of our work shows how important it is to take into account where international students come from, what they bring with them and how valuable these place-specific perceptions are, and we come to see that such are the individual elements in the process of constructing space. By applying a spatial approach, we open a nuanced empirically and theoretically informed perspective to everyday discourses and social practices of higher education internationalisation. We see this paper as a contribution to the emerging field of critical internationalisation studies as the spatial perspective allows us to show how such interactions in the classroom produce and reproduce global inequalities. Thereby, we show pedagogies and knowledges not as universal but situated and internationalisation as an uneven and not a neutral process.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Research data are not shared due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ We write the so-called international classroom and henceforth use inverted commas ('international' classroom), because we want to question what an international classroom is—what and who makes it 'international'? Moreover, we want the reader to think about where the international classroom is located.
- ² In the 1990s, a spatial turn emerged in the social sciences and the humanities, whereby scholars from these fields became interested in spatial dimensions of different phenomena (Warf & Arias, 2009). This was followed by the mobility turn (Sheller & Urry, 2006), which added perspectives on mobility to spatial theories.
- ³ Please refer to Spangler (2020) for a summary of her study.

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