

Transnational Strategies in Swedish Higher Education

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1. Introduction

This paper presents some findings and hypotheses from an ongoing study on transnational strategies of Swedish élites.¹ “Transnational” signifies relations that transgress the borders between national states. “Strategies” denote the (conscious as well as unconscious, explicit as well as implicit) undertakings by individuals, social groups or institutions aiming at defending or ameliorating their positions.

A focus is on the conditions for the selection and formation of groups that will obtain dominant positions in different social fields, for example the economic field or the cultural fields. This means that we primarily investigate two kinds of transnational strategies: (1) the strategies of social groups or individuals and (2) the strategies of the educational institutions. In the following we will focus on the second aspect, that is on the strategies of the educational institutions. In both cases our main method consists in searching for investments in “transnational” resources, or *capital* to use Pierre Bourdieu’s concept. These resources might for the individuals comprise language skills, to be widely-travelled, networks of friends and acquaintances abroad, etc. For the educational institutions they might imply a reputation outside Sweden, participation in research networks, partnership in student and staff exchange programmes, etc.

The significance and value of these resources are determined by the struggles both within national and transnational educational markets and within different social fields. It is crucial to inquire not only into the transnational resources’ relations to various markets and fields, but also into their relation to other kinds of resources or capital species. We will argue that transnational resources do not constitute a specific species of capital of its own.

In the following, after some comments on the last mentioned conceptual problem and on the recent expansion of “international” components in Swedish higher education, we will relate some aspects of the “internationalisation” phenomena to the hierarchies and relations of power within the field of educational institutions. The arguments are based mainly on recent series of interviews with students,

¹ The study “Élites och transnationella utbildningsstrategier” (Élites and Transnational Educational Strategies) is funded by the Swedish Council for Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences (Humanistisk-samhällsvetenskapliga forskningsrådet, Europaprogrammet). It is a collaboration between the Sociology of Education and Culture research unit (now at ILU, Uppsala University, former at the Stockholm Institute of Education) and the Department of Economic History at the Stockholm University. One aim is to combine French traditions of social science (inspired by the works of Pierre Bourdieu among others) with Anglo-Saxon research traditions concerning globalisation (including, for example, Ronald Robertson, Mike Featherstone, Saskia Sassen, Arjun Appadurai). The study also forms part of the research network “Formation des élites et internationalisation de la culture” (Élite Education and the Internationalisation of Culture), with participants in 21 countries; see URL <http://www.lhs.se/~broady/sec/formation.html>.

staff and administrators at educational institutions in Stockholm, as well as with representatives of some other organisations engaged in international matters.² Later on we will establish statistical data sets that will procure further information on the relations between student recruitment and transnational investments.

2. Is there a “transnational capital”?

“Internationalisation” is a catchword in the Swedish educational discourse (more so than in more self-sufficient countries as the U.S. or France³). In a higher education context “internationalisation” signifies roughly the following activities:

- 1) **student and staff mobility**, namely Swedish students, teachers and researchers spend time at educational institutions in a foreign university and vice versa, which can be accomplished through formal agreements or on an informal basis;
- 2) **courses at Swedish institutions given in foreign languages**, whereby Swedish students might develop their foreign languages skills and foreign students are given the opportunity to study in Sweden;
- 3) **adjustment of the organisational aspects of education to international standards**, most often concerning accreditation systems and the description of courses;
- 4) **adjustment of the curriculum content**, to include international perspectives or to follow foreign models;
- 5) **research networks and co-operation with foreign research milieus** either formalised or informal, with their Swedish base in either existing institutions or recently created excellence centres, competence centres or graduate schools.

Few of these activities are directly controlled by national authorities. They are in most cases the outcome of decisions and initiatives at a department level in the university organisation and to a large extent determined by personal efforts. Decisions on the national level concern primarily agreements between states on, for example, student exchange programmes and research co-operation, as for example EU programmes. Therefore we prefer to use the term “transnational” (signifying any kind of relations or flows across the borders between countries) instead of “international” (which we reserve for what is going on between nation-states and their representatives).⁴

Further, the list above — i.e., the themes dominating the current public discourse on “internationalisation” in higher education — is far from exhaustive. In fact, the main bulk of the most substantial transnational investments in higher education are “extra-curricular,” and far less

² The educational institutions that have been included in the present phase of the research are the Karolinska Institute, the Royal Institute of Technology, the Stockholm Institute of Education, the Stockholm School of Economics, the Stockholm University (Dept. of Art, Dept. of Business, Dept. of Economics, Dept. of Law, Dept. of Journalism, Media and Communication, Dept. of Political Science) and the University College of Arts, Crafts and Design. At the major institutions interviews have been carried out with personnel at different levels. At all institutions students who have been studying abroad through the institutions’ exchange programmes have been interviewed. Among the organisations engaged in international matters in higher education interviews with representatives of the following have been undertaken: the National Board for Student Financial Aid, the National Agency for Higher Education, the Swedish Institute and the Sweden-America Foundation. Beside the interviews, informational material, statistics, annual reports and other written sources have been analysed.

³ It is interesting to compare the extraordinary and extensive transnational investments undertaken by the Swedish state administration, educational institutions and individuals with the French situation studied by Ann-Catherine Wagner in *Le jeu du national et de l’international. Les cadres étrangers en France*, Diss., EHESS, Paris, 1995. In France skills in modern foreign languages or familiarity with foreign cultures are no prime concern in the typical educational trajectory — an élite lycée, les classes préparatoires, a Grande École, maybe École Nationale d’Administration in addition — preparing for dominant positions in the field of power. Instead precedence is given to “domestic” French investments. While for many high-aspiring Swedish students a study or work sojourn abroad is an almost inevitable part of the *cursus*, for a French student to stay away from Paris where the real competition takes place might be a hazardous endeavours, a detour or even a dead-end.

⁴ For the distinction “transnational”/ “international,” see Sverker Sörlin, *De lärdaas republik. Om vetenskapens internationella tendenser*, Liber-Hermods, Stockholm 1994, pp. 29–30.

discussed. The students (above all those originating from culturally well-to-do groups) inherit transnational resources, as language skills, familiarity with foreign cultures, and networks of friends, acquaintances or relatives abroad, etc., in their parental home, and later on during vacations and at many other occasions outside the seminar rooms. And the staff's ability to communicate with colleagues abroad or their chances to send their students to foreign prestigious institutions is determined by their own and their institutions' position in the hierarchies of the educational field. These combined resources of the students, the staff and the institutions constitute the stock that can form or be converted to transnational investments.

Are these types of resources and investments to be analysed as "capital" in Bourdieu's sense, in line with other specific species of capital? Our preliminary answer is no — or not yet. We have during the course of the research reached the opinion that "transnational capital" is nothing *per se*. Transnational capital resembles, for example, social capital (in Bourdieu's sense, i.e. networks of family bonds, friends and business contacts, alumni from prestigious institutions, etc.) in that it receives its significance and efficacy in combination with other species of capital.

The fact that a student learns foreign languages or accomplishes studies abroad is thus possibly to be understood not so much as an investment in transnational capital but rather as a modification of his or her possession of cultural capital, educational capital, social capital, etc. When a student at the Stockholm School of Economics (Handelshögskolan), the most prestigious business school in Sweden, spends some time at the Wharton School, Pennsylvania University, he or she of course acquires transnational resources: language skills, contacts with fellow students and maybe future business partners (not only Americans, since there are 30% foreign students at Wharton School), and familiarity with such American economic theories, models and rhetorics that are hegemonic in many countries. These resources function, though, rather as an add-on to the student's already accumulated and future cultural, symbolic and social capital. This becomes obvious when compared with a student of small cultural means, let's say a student with a modest social origin from a Swedish teacher education college who takes courses at a minor university college in England. Our interviews with students of the latter category reveal that they, besides improving their English, are gaining very little in terms of capital. They often express this very clearly by complaining that the instruction was simplistic in content, badly organised, and probably of negligible importance for their future professional life, and that their fellow English students were "childish." When translated into a sociological frame of reference, these testimonies might be interpreted as that what they did gain were language skills and personal development, but hardly any recognised cultural capital, any specific symbolic capital to be used in the educational field, or any social capital that can be activated in a future career.⁵

Thus, despite that the same rhetoric on "internationalisation" is cultivated at most Swedish educational institutions, this word covers social and cultural phenomena that are most disparate at different educational institutions and for different social groups. It is in fact misleading to use one and the same word to signify a SSE student's and a future top executive's sojourn at a prestigious MBA-school and a future school teacher's semester at a teacher education college abroad.

Another way of putting it, is to claim that there does not (as yet) exist a coherent "transnational field" with a specific species of capital of its own. A hypothesis might be that such a transnational field is emerging in the world of business affairs, inhabited by top executives in transnational companies, "symbol analysts," etc., with its own species of symbolic capital, its own production and recruitment devices (such as international business schools), and its own practices and discourses.⁶

⁵ Many examples of the last mentioned phenomena are to be found in a series of interviews reported by Kerstin Sund-Tidholm in *Internationalisering vid gymnasieskolans omvårdnadsprogram*, Rapport från Forskningsgruppen för utbildnings- och kultursociologi, forthcoming 1997. Here Swedish secondary school health care students recount their experiences from practice periods in hospitals in Britain and in the Baltic states. Their main conclusion is that everything is much better at home. Coming from the Swedish by comparison more homogeneous and less hierarchical educational system they have in many ways been placed in a much more dominated position abroad.

⁶ Anne-Catherine Wagner has made important contributions to the study of this emerging field: "In these international locations, families from different nationalities approach each other, in material as well as symbolic respects. A constant ingredient in the lifestyle of this population is the insertion in the networks of international relations: marriages are often mixed and the interviewees most often state that they count all nationalities among their friends in France. This

However, even if there is no “transnational field” (expect maybe in the above-mentioned restricted sense) there no doubt exists a rapidly expanding transnational educational market.

3. Expansion and differentiation

3.1 Expansion

In the last decade, transnationalisation and internationalisation have become very significant phenomena in Swedish higher education. The most obvious example of the vivid expansion is to be found in the flow of students from Sweden out in the world, see Diagram 1. Between 1982/83 and 1987/88 approximately 1,000 to 2,000 Swedes studied abroad. During these years the Swedish politics of financial aid was very restricted regarding aid for studies in foreign countries. The only educations entitled to financial aid were the so called *bristyrkesutbildningar*, i.e. educations for scarce professions as physiotherapists, dentists and medical doctors, together with unique educations that Swedish higher education was unable to offer. On January 1, 1989 the new regulation for financial aid for studies abroad came into force. It now became possible to obtain financial support for almost every foreign education as long as it had an acceptable standard as defined by the National Agency for Higher Education (HSV). Already in the first academic year 1988/89 for this new and by international comparison extraordinary generous conditions for financial aid there was a significant increase in the number of students studying abroad, rising from 1,944 the year before to 2,902, which meant a doubling in one year. This increasing trend has been rather stable since then. Between 1989/90 and 1993/94 the number increased with approximately 20–25% each year. The rate then stabilised at ca 14,000 students studying abroad in the period 1994/94–95/96, after which it increased to a level of 17,000 students in 1996/97. This rising tendency seems to continue. According to the Swedish National Board of Student Aid (CSN), the prognosis for 1997/98 is an increase with 20%, which means a level of 20,000 students.⁷

These figures are, though, only accounting for the group of students that have organised their studies on their own (so-called “free movers”). To obtain a figure of the total number of Swedes studying abroad, we have to add the students who study abroad within the framework of exchange programmes between Swedish universities and university colleges and their foreign partners. The total number of these students could today be estimated to at least 5,000.⁸ Also the students taking part in exchange programmes have also increased in numbers, much as a result of the possibility for Swedish universities to be part of the EU exchange programmes in higher education (opened already

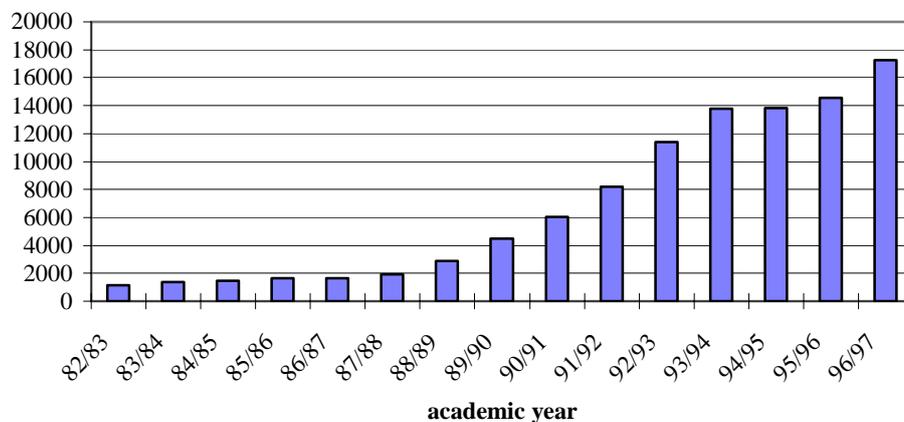
international sociability is to be explained by the fact that top executives in different countries have a homogeneous style of behaviour and a homogeneous frame of values. Important unifying instruments are the international integration of management of large corporations, and the development of business schools which procure a management education that is rather similar from one country to another. This unification also takes place outside work. In the environment there are a whole series of obligatory practices characterised by a veritable international conformity. Families read the same publications, use the same sources of information (International Herald Tribune, Time magazine, The Economist), practice the same sports (tennis, golf), and undertake the same family practices characterised by a strict division of sexual roles (international managers are men, their wives accompany their husbands and most often give up all professional activities).” (Anne-Catherine Wagner, *Les stratégies transnationales en France*, Skeptron Occasional Papers, No. 13, Stockholm Institute of Education, 1997, p. 8; HTML version available at URL <http://www.lhs.se/~broady/sec/ske-13.html>).

⁷ Interview with Helena Thörnqvist, CSN International (the International Department at the Swedish National Board of Student Aid), Stockholm, 970814.

⁸ According to CSN (the Swedish National Board of Student Aid), *Vida världen. Tidningen om studier utomlands*, N. 1, 1997, p. 8, almost 3,000 Swedes studied abroad in 1996/97. The number of students enrolled in other exchange programmes could be estimated to 2,000 students, which means that the total number of Swedish students studying abroad due to exchange programmes is at least 5,000 students.

in 1992/93 by the ESS-agreement and in full scale after Sweden entered EU Jan 1st 1995).⁹ The number of Swedish students in ERASMUS, the largest exchange programme of the EU programmes, has increased from 1,125 in the academic year 1992/93 to almost 3,000 in 1996/97.¹⁰

Diagram 1. Number of Swedes studying abroad in higher education with financial aid (only "free movers") 1982/83–1996/97



3.2 Dominating institutions still dominating

In earlier studies, we have used fine-tuned data on the social origin (socio-professional categorisation in at its most 111 social groups: sons and daughters of medical doctors, engineers, psychologists, shopkeepers, etc.) of cohorts of higher and secondary education to construe the polarities and hierarchies of the Swedish field of educational institutions.¹¹ It is striking how well the distribution of the transnational investments correspond to these social hierarchies in the field of higher education. The educational institutions that have most heavily invested in "international" matters are those that occupy the dominating positions in the field of higher education: the Karolinska Institute, the Stockholm School of Economics and the Royal Institute of Technology. Their dominance is clearly seen in the student exchange rates — the Karolinska Institute sends over 50% of their medical students abroad for studies, the Stockholm School of Economics over 30% and the Royal Institute of Technology almost 25%. They also host approximately the same number of foreign students in their educational programmes as they send abroad. If we compare these figures with the Stockholm University the difference is significant. At the Stockholm University, the Faculty of Law sends approximately 10–15% of their students abroad, which means that this faculty has the largest share of the four faculties. To illustrate the dominance we can compare with the Stockholm Institute of

⁹ There has up until the present day been a problem with the statistics on Swedes studying abroad. Before July 1997 only those who studied abroad as "free movers" were included in the Swedish National Board of Student Aid's statistics over Swedes studying abroad. The group of students who studied abroad in the exchange programmes were registered as studying at their Swedish institutions and thus not included in the statistics, which makes it difficult to establish an overall figure of the number of Swedes studying abroad.

¹⁰ VHS, *Årsrapport för universitet och högskolor 1993/94*, p. 40 for the figure on 1992/93. Regarding the figure on 1996/97 cf. note 8 above.

¹¹ Donald Broady & Mikael Palme, "Le champ des formations de l'enseignement supérieur en Suède — bilan de recherche", pp. 1–19 in Monique de Saint Martin and Mihai D. Gheorghiu (Eds.), *Les institutions de formation des cadres dirigeants. Étude comparée*, Maison des sciences de l'homme, Centre de sociologie européenne, Centre de sociologie de l'éducation et de la culture, Paris 1992; and Donald Broady, Barbro Berg & Mikael Palme, "L'enseignement secondaire et l'enseignement supérieur en Suède face à l'internationalisation", pp. 148–163 in Donald Broady, Monique de Saint Martin and Mikael Palme (Eds.), *Les élites : formation, reconversion, internationalisation*. CSEC, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales / FUKS, Lärarhögskolan, Paris and Stockholm 1995.

Education, which occupies a dominated position in the field of higher education and where the student exchange rate is a mere ca 3–5%. There is also an internal hierarchy within the dominant institutions. At the Karolinska Institute, which has eight educational programmes, the medicine programme has a remarkable student exchange rate of over 50%, while none of the other programmes reach over 20%. At the Royal Institute of Technology, the shorter and less prestigious engineering programmes are excluded in the calculations of the exchange rates and the figures are thus only valid for the Master of Engineering students. Three departments at the Stockholm University — the Dept. of Business, the Dept. of Economics and the Dept. of Law — together account for almost 50% of the exchange students in the largest exchange programme at Stockholm University, the ERASMUS-programme, and they host more than 50% of the incoming students.

Research is an important factor to explain the dominance of the dominating schools with regards to transnational investments. The Karolinska Institute, the Royal Institute of Technology and the Stockholm School of Economics dispose solid resources for research and their research has a good international reputation. Research is important in two perspectives. First, a long tradition of extensive and esteemed research means that there exists a wide range of international contacts that makes it much easier to, for example, establish new student exchange agreements. The staff tells us that it is common that many agreements are simply formalisations of already existing collaborations with foreign universities. Second, extensive resources for research also to some extent correspond with an international reputation and, according to the informants from the institutions mentioned, the fact that their research is well known at other universities makes it easier to establish and cultivate contacts. The problem for these institutions is not to obtain offers for exchange but rather that those offers are too numerous and that many proposals have to be turned down. To have an excellent reputation is a extremely important, as is illustrated by the manner in which the Karolinska Institute exploits the fact that it is responsible for the nomination of the Nobel Prize laureate in medicine.

The dominating educational institutions possess impressive resources for research which to a considerable extent is inscribed in a transnational context. For example in 1992/93 the Karolinska Institute accounted for 55% of the research funds of the Swedish International Development Cooperation, 34% of the Swedish Medical Research Council's resources, and 39% of the Cancer Fund's means.¹² Today visiting scholars represent 20% of the research capacity at the Karolinska Institute and 25% of the doctoral students hold a foreign diploma.¹³

Between the dominating educational institutions there are some significant differences in the orientation and objectives of the transnational investments in the research area. The Karolinska Institute invests heavily in research and research support in the Third World, and international solidarity is a strong motive,¹⁴ while the Stockholm School of Economics is more oriented towards commercial and business objectives and the development of economic sciences, with a focus on markets in economically more interesting regions as Japan and Eastern Europe.¹⁵

An overall strategy among the dominating institutions is to expand the co-operation with European universities and to enlarge their share of funding from the EU research funds. To support these efforts these institutions have established well equipped offices with expert personnel on the EU policies and research programmes.

It is often said that disciplines such as technology, science and medicine are more international than the humanities or the social sciences. This is of course true to some extent, since the subject matter as well as theories, methods and language often are more universal. It should, however, be

¹² The Karolinska Institute, *Policy för internationalisering vid Karolinska institutet. Nuläge och framtidsvisioner*, 1995, p. 17.

¹³ *Op.cit.*, p. 4.

¹⁴ Which does not imply that research collaboration with élite institutions in medicine, for example, in the U.S. is a neglected area.

¹⁵ The semi-private Stockholm School of Economics receives significant contributions from corporations. In the year 1995/96 SSE received donations which amounted to 11,5 mkr, out of which one third, i.e. 3 mkr, were destined for international exchange, guest professorships, grants for visits abroad etc (Stockholm School of Economics, *Annual Report 1995/96*, p. 20). The year before 10 mkr was donated to a found for economy educational programs in Central and Eastern Europe (with a focus on the Baltic States) and 10 mkr to educational projects in S:t Petersburg (Handelshögskolan i Stockholm, *Årsberättelse 1994/95*, p. 23).

noted that if we exclude the mass education, scholars in most disciplines in the humanities or the social sciences also take part in transnational competition fields. For many of them the symbolic and social capital gained in these fields — i.e. international reputation, partnership in networks, research collaboration, publication in recognised journals and invitations to major conferences or sojourns at reputed universities — are more important than investments in the national scholarly fields. Here it is crucial to distinguish between two different strategies in the use of transnational resources. For some scholars in the humanities or the social sciences, the main objective is to gain recognition in the transnational field of their discipline, while others primarily use their transnational resources as weapons in the struggles within the Swedish domestic fields.

There are not merely quantitative differences between the dominating and the dominated educational institutions. Even more important are the qualitative differences that are most effective in widening the gap between the dominated and the dominating. The Karolinska Institute, the Royal Institute of Technology and the Stockholm School of Economics all invest extensively in exclusive contacts with foreign prestigious universities, above all in the U.S. While the Stockholm School of Economics offers their students approximately 30 exchange positions at some ten North American universities, of which a majority are considered to be top ranked, the Dept. of Business at the Stockholm University only has agreements with two North American universities, none of which ranked among the élite universities, and the Dept. of Economics at Stockholm University lacks any agreements with American universities. A similar pattern exists among the more culturally oriented schools. The in some respects dominating University College of Arts, Crafts and Design (Konstfackskolan) has agreements with prestigious schools as Parsons and School of Visual Art in New York and École des Beaux Arts in Paris, while the Dept. of Art History at the Stockholm University does not have similar formalised contacts with art history institutions abroad.

The dominating institutions are in the position that they do not have to accept less advantageous co-operation propositions from minor foreign universities and colleges. To safeguard the quality of the exchange programmes, the dominating institutions have developed different strategies. A general policy at the Stockholm School of Economics is not to support “free movers” among their students. To be able to include foreign studies in their diplomas, the students at SSE thus have to arrange their studies abroad within the framework of SSE’s exchange programmes: when matters are “*decided here in the school, then you have some control of what they are studying, one does not want to be too flexible with what one transcript to the diplomas of SSE...it is a sort of check of quality.*”¹⁶ Albeit SSE students who wish to study abroad on their own are not forbidden to do so, they have to take a sabbatical year and finance the stay on their own (which approximately 10–15 students, i.e. 3–5%, do each year). At the Royal Institute of Technology, the staff mention that their strategy is only to conclude agreements with universities that are on at least the same level as their own school. This means for example that the Royal Institute of Technology only collaborates with foreign educational institutions that have extensive research resources, and sometimes pays the substantial tuition fees for the students in order to be able to send them to the most prestigious universities in the U.S.

To give all students the possibility to study abroad is not a goal in itself for all the institutions. For the Stockholm School of Economics, the maintenance of the quality of exchange schools is more important than expansion. “*I believe that many students are aware of the fact that we have good schools....Above all, I believe that it is our discriminating taste considering the exchange schools and that we have a rather good check of control over the schools with which we exchange students, which is the reason for our good reputation.*”

It is important to the dominating educational institutions to form a part of distinguished exchange networks. The Stockholm School of Economics is maybe the outstanding Swedish example. The SSE is part of the CEMS consortium (Community of European Management Schools), constituted by twelve leading business schools in Europe. Only one school per country is allowed to be part of this consortium, since the objective is that each country should be represented by the “best” school in the country: France is represented by École de hautes études commerciales (HEC), Great Britain by the London School of Economics, etc. Approximately 50 leading European corporations are connected to

¹⁶ Interview with Helena Andersson and Åsa Kjellström, International Student Affairs, the Stockholm School of Economics, 970520.

the consortium as members, and Sweden is represented by Ericsson, Arthur Andersen, ABB, Trygg-Hansa and Alfa Laval. The students who study to take the special CEMS Master diploma, valid in all the participant countries, are offered to undertake the obligatory trainee period at one of the member corporations. According to CEMS' own statistics, 30% of the students with a CEMS Master diploma work abroad after their graduation, which is twice as many as the average of leading European management schools.¹⁷ The transnational aspects are central to the CEMS Master education. The students are supposed to speak three languages fluently, usually meaning their native language, English, and French, German or Spanish¹⁸. Among the courses are courses in International Marketing, Global Business Strategy in the European Context, and Selected Aspects of EU Law.

One of the networks in which the Royal Institute of Technology forms a partnership, TIME (Top Industrial Managers for Europe), is based on a similar exclusive principle. TIME is constituted as a network "of 30 known Technology Universities in Europe."¹⁹ The aim is that the students should be able to take two diplomas at two different technology universities and thus obtain a wider professional as well as cultural and linguistic competence. The Royal Institute of Technology is the only Scandinavian representative.²⁰ This is also true for the network CLUSTER (Consortium Link between Universities of Science and Technology for Education and Research) which characterises itself as "a network based on excellence in education, research, continuing education and know-how transfer."²¹ It was established in 1990 and today eleven technology universities that "produce high qualitative science and are known all over the world" are members. The president of CLUSTER is Janne Carlsson, headmaster of the Royal Institute of Technology.²²

Though the Karolinska Institute does not participate in any networks of this kind it has organised its bilateral agreements in a specific programme, the LINK-programme, which includes agreements with seven universities in the U.S., two in Canada, two in Australia, two in Great Britain and three in the Baltic states.²³

3.3 Selection of students

The students educational sojourns abroad can in general terms, besides the professional or disciplinary training, be regarded as an accumulation of linguistic capital, cultural competence and transnational social capital.

Out of the series of interviews we conducted, we are able to distinguish two main different strategies concerning investment in a linguistic capital. Some of the students ameliorate their former skills in English, French or German, while others invest in an additional language, usually French or German, and in some cases Spanish or Italian.

The cultural competence, the capacity to master the conditions in a foreign country or to take part in transnational networks, includes for example apprehending the cultural codes and understanding and orienting oneself in another national educational system or professional field. Most of the interviewed students report that their time abroad was an important personal experience which has strengthened their self-confidence. Many of the more high-aspiring students also acquired not only insights in the conditions of one single foreign country but a true transnational cultural competence, since they usually stayed at schools and universities together with students from all over the world. The foreign students normally live in the same housing quarters and it is not uncommon for a Swedish student to share an apartment with for example a Frenchman, a German and an Indian. The studies abroad thus not only mean being in a different national context, it is also means to be included in a transnational environment, which among other opportunities provides the chance to acquire a transnational social capital that might be useful to their further academic and professional trajectory.

¹⁷ CEMS Student Guide 1996/1997, p. 5.

¹⁸ Handelshögskolan i Stockholm, *CEMS på Handelshögskolan i Stockholm 1997*, pp. 7–8, bilaga 3.

¹⁹ Kungliga tekniska högskolan; *Att studera utomlands*, p. 7.

²⁰ *Op.cit.*, p. 7.

²¹ <http://www.admin.kth.se/CA/extrel/edu/cluster.html>, 19970521, p.1.

²² *Loc. cit.*

²³ Karolinska institutet, *Internationellt studentutbyte. Handbok. Läkarutbildningen*, pp. 20–22.

Apart from the general aspects of the advantages offered by studies abroad, there are some more specific advantages that however are most diversified, and to a large degree determined by the hierarchical structure of the field of higher educational field and the homology between this structure and the distribution of transnational investments. Firstly, the students at the dominating institutions are offered privileged opportunities to study and to accomplish practice periods abroad. At the Karolinska Institute, the students have the possibility to study certain optional courses abroad, they can undertake their practice abroad, the student organisation organises summer jobs in foreign countries, and it is even possible for the students to study abroad twice, both within the ERASMUS programme and within the Karolinska Institute's own exchange programme with American universities and other non-ERASMUS agreements. For the students at the Stockholm School of Economics, the school's and the student organisation's contacts with the business corporations are most valuable assets when it comes to arranging practice periods and examination tasks abroad. Second, the qualitative differences are important to take in consideration. As stated above, the dominating institutions invest heavily in exclusive contacts and direct exchange programmes with the most prestigious universities in above all the U.S., while the dominated institutions are obliged to participate in the less distinctive exchange programmes such as ERASMUS and NORDPLUS. The dominated schools seldom have bilateral agreements with foreign universities and, if they do, the agreements usually are established with minor universities or university colleges in for example the Scandinavian countries. To have agreements with American universities — and especially the more prestigious ones — is extremely uncommon among the dominated schools.

Thus, the value of the studies abroad is for the students primarily determined by the position that their own institution occupies within the Swedish field of higher education. Within the range of possible exchange schools, the value of studies is determined by the exchange schools' position in the hierarchies of the transnational educational market.²⁴ We will discuss the principles for the hierarchies of the transnational educational market later on. We can though notice that the students' preferences on which country to visit do not vary so much between the schools in our material.

In sum, the hierarchy of educational institutions in Sweden and the hierarchy of exchange universities imply a considerable variation between the students. A student from a regional university college in Sweden who uses the ERASMUS exchange program to go to a similar institution abroad does not have much in common with a student at the Stockholm School of Economics who goes to a prominent American MBA school. The following is a quotation from an interview with a SSE student, male, 26 years of age, son of a business executive, who has spent three and a half months at one of the highest ranked MBA-schools in the U.S.

— When you have applied for jobs, have you noticed in a concrete way that it has been seen as something positive?
“Yes, I have.”

— Do you have any idea of what is regarded as positive?

“Well, it is actually two-dimensional. One the one hand, to be chosen as exchange student at the SSE, where the competition is very tough, is regarded as something positive to have the privilege to do. The other aspect is that my school ranked one of the best MBA programmes in the U.S. and people that know this also appreciate it.”

The citation highlights one important aspect of the studies abroad, namely that the exchange positions, especially at the most sought after schools, are subject to extensive domestic competition between the students. It is not unusual that there are between ten and twenty candidates for the most attractive positions. For the selection of the students in the exchange programmes, there is at all the examined institutions a rather thorough application procedure; The students are supposed not only to procure an application form and a report of marks and other credentials but also to write a CV in a personal style and often in English, and to present their objectives for studying abroad and arguments

²⁴ For example the students at the Stockholm School of Economics are most fastidious in their choice of exchange school. The most sought after are the Wharton School at Pennsylvania University, ranked as the topmost MBA school in the U.S., followed by MBA educations at Columbia University and New York University. From the SSE-students there are more than 20 applicants per position to all of the three institutions mentioned (there are only one or two positions available at each school). For the business schools in the Nordic countries, there were less than two SSE-applicants per position, and none applied to go to the two Finnish business schools.

for their choice of school, as well as letters of recommendation. As a rule most of the students are also interviewed and sometimes their language skills are tested. The most important criterion for selecting the student to the most sought after exchange schools is the marks, but this is not an absolute criterion. Also important is to manifest languages abilities as well as an ability to get along with people, to speak loudly and clearly, and to be an extrovert with a pleasing manner.

The students enrolled in the exchange programmes at the dominating schools constitute a group that is selected twice. First, there is a strong selection to the school and the educational programme and second, a selection to the exchange programmes. Not only do they possess extensive assets in educational capital due to the fact that they are studying at the most prestigious educational institution in Sweden in their field of study. Among the chosen ones they are those who have extraordinarily good credentials and who have been able to demonstrate desirable social skills. Further, their studies abroad at a highly valued school will provide them with an add-on to their cultural and educational capital. To this can also be added the acquired transnational social capital, language skills and cultural competences. Thus for these students studies abroad function as a true sign of excellence.

These mechanisms are a matter of interest not only to the students but also to the schools. Generally speaking, in the competition between the schools, the selection of students is a — probably *the* — most crucial weapon, and this goes also for the selection of students in the exchange programmes. The dominating institutions are in the advantageous position of disposing an already highly selected body of students — with respect to social origin and inherited resources as well as acquired educational capital — from which they are striving to pick an even more distinguished group to be sent abroad.²⁵ The staff at the Stockholm School of Economics illustrate the topic by answering the question if the school has a good international reputation:

“It is obvious considering our popularity and not only due to our academic reputation. We are very careful about whom we send abroad with respect to the ambassadorship, that the students give a good impression of SSE when they are abroad, and especially when we notice that there is a school that did not send students to us the previous year. Now we have a school in New York that did not send any students this year and thus we are even more careful of whom to send the following year in order to find good ambassadors who are able to market the SSE... with regards to both the social aspect and to the academic aspect.”²⁶

That the exchange students function as important features of the institutional transnational investments is a fact known also to some of the students. The student at the Stockholm School of Economics cited above who spent a semester at one of America’s elite MBA schools puts it in the following way:

“The studies took much time. I think I felt as an exchange student that I wanted to do my share, not only for my own sake, but also for the sake of the School. Therefore I felt I was there to perform something, to learn for my own part, and then to show that the SSE is a good institution. A self-imposed task, but I felt it anyway, which made me devote rather much time to my studies.”

When it comes to the invited foreign students, the receiving Swedish school has little direct influence on the selection. Instead the strategy is indirect: firstly to establish agreements with a prestigious school, secondly to take good care of the visiting students in order to guarantee a successful continuation of the exchange programme and in the long run a favourable selection of future foreign students.

The value of the exchange activities is incessantly to be created and proven. The existing symbolic assets of a school lend value and efficiency to its transnational investments, while they constitute at the same time a condition for its credit worthiness on the educational market and thus for its ability to invest in, for example, exchange agreements with sought after partners.

²⁵ To this one can also add that due to the social selection it is common that students at dominating institutions since early years in the parental home have been oriented towards transnational educational investments and already possess significant transnational resources (having travelled extensively, having good linguistic competencies and a cosmopolitan habitus). For example, representatives of the teaching staff at the Karolinska Institute reported that they never had met with problems regarding students who suffered from linguistic problems.

²⁶ Interview with Helena Andersson and Åsa Kjellström, International Student Affairs, the Stockholm School of Economics, 970520.

The dominating schools' efforts in all these respects stand in sharp contrast to the dominated schools' prime concern to merely raise the number of students participating in the exchange programmes. In order to understand this variation in strategies, one must consider how the dominating and the dominated schools differ from each other in their relations to the national and the transnational educational markets.

4. National and transnational educational markets

From a Swedish perspective "internationalisation" has meant increased differences and accented and more visible hierarchies within the field of higher education institutions. As illustrated above, in general the hitherto dominating institutions have strengthened their positions even further. Perhaps the most interesting feature is, however, a bifurcation of institutions of higher education divided according to their transnational or domestic orientation: towards transnational educational and scientific or professional markets on the part of the dominating institutions, and towards national markets on the part of the dominated institutions. These different orientations must be understood in relation to differences in the logic of the two species of markets.

4.1 The transnational market

Of course, one difference is in size. The transnational educational market is enormous compared to the Swedish. However a more significant difference is the diversity of the transnational market. Despite the fact that the Swedish national market is to some extent a hierarchical system, the whole system is nevertheless by comparison rather homogeneous in the sense that all institutions of higher education are under state control and all are subject to the same system of rules and organised according to the same principles, which means that it is easy for the students to change university or university college and to be able to include their former studies in the new education. Further, there is a national system for application to the national educational programmes and to other courses for which the universities are directly responsible, and in most cases the differences in criteria for admission to a certain domain of studies are negligible. Finally, the outcome of studies within the Swedish educational programmes is valid on the national labour market.

By contrast the transnational educational market is constituted by educational institutions and programmes located in a wide range of national contexts and educational systems. Compared to the Swedish system these educational systems are more heterogeneous, with regard to, for example, who controls (private or state, county, municipal). Further, the admission system is not always centralised. In the U.S. each school has admission arrangements of their own, and the admission requirements and the dates for applications vary extensively between the schools. Even more significant in the case of the U.S. is the variation in (social, scholarly and professional) quality between schools. A diploma from a recognised MBA school or an Ivy League university gives the holder access to much coveted jobs on a world-wide labour market. One could argue that on the Swedish labour market foreign diplomas are only an advantage for the job applicant if they are from recognised schools in a few Western countries, while other diplomas could be a disadvantage compared to similar Swedish diplomas (which the employer probably is more able to judge).

The transnational educational market is not an abstract market in the sense in which the economic market is sometimes described, but rather highly dependent on geographical location. The place is important in several aspects. There are hierarchies of nations and national languages which have effects on the educational market. There are also hierarchies among national educational systems, although connected to positions on the transnational labour market and transnational scientific fields. In many domains the U.S. occupies the most dominant position followed by Great Britain, France and Germany. The accumulation of symbolic capital valid in a transnational educational market is a more time consuming project than raising economic capital to be used in the transnational business world — the rapid economic development of the New Industrialised Countries in Asia does not correspond

to a similar growth of the higher education and the Asian countries are most dependent on the U.S. for supplying their need for higher education.

Higher education is a very profitable enterprise for U.S., regarded as its the fourth most important export branch. The relations between national educational systems are, though, not totally determined by the relations of economic and political powers between the countries. Seniority often is a valuable asset in itself and this is especially true in higher education and science. For example, an education in England or France is more recognised on the transnational and national professional markets than one should have expected considering these countries' overall positions in the hierarchy of nations. The location is also important in a regional aspect. To be located in an area with a high concentration of scholarly capital like Boston, Oxford or Paris, or known as an important production seat (Los Angeles and its film industry, Paris and some cultural fields, Silicon Valley and information technology, New York as a cultural and financial centre, etc.) is of value to educational institutions in the region. It might also be an advantage — and attractive to foreign students — to be located in the capital or or a major city because of the nearness to cultural, administrative or financial centres.

Further, it is important to apprehend the transnational educational market not as a unified entity with fixed relations of power but as a battlefield where different traditions and models are competing. The U.S. models are no doubt dominant in many subdomains, as in economics, but not unchallenged. Despite its French label the *Baccalauréat International* — a higher secondary education arranged in many countries with diplomas given in Geneva — represents in many respects an American model, which is challenged by the genuinely French international secondary education alternatives.²⁷

The struggles on the transnational educational market might be perceived as a struggle between larger entities than nations, most clearly highlighted in the struggle between Europe and North America in for example economic education. A citation from the Stockholm School of Economics:

“And that [European economic students tend to prefer schools outside Europe] we also discuss in CEMS, the European network we are part of. How shall we globalise it? One can observe the competition from the U.S. and how shall we make our students more interested in Europe and be able to compete for the most talented students so that they just do not only apply for the MBA schools in the U.S. when they want to study abroad, but that they apply for the German school that we collaborates with....But there are still two different systems, it depends on what the students want.”²⁸

Besides being vehicles for the integration of the inhabitants, the EU education and research programmes are also attempts to meet the challenge from the U.S. and an effort to break the U.S.'s dominance.²⁹ In a world where education and research are described as the key factors for the wealth of nations,³⁰ we might in analogy with the trade blocks also speak about “educational blocks.”

4.2 *Dominated among the dominating*

Sweden's position in the overall hierarchy of countries is a dominated position among the dominating countries in the North Pacific Rim. Given that Sweden is a periphery country, that Swedish is a minor language and the relatively small size of the Swedish educational system, its education is not recognised as very valuable on the transnational educational market.³¹ There is and has been a political awareness of the dominated position of Swedish higher education. Already in the beginning of the 1970s a special commission was established to develop a general strategy for the

²⁷ Anne-Catherine Wagner, *op.cit.*, 1997, pp. 15 ff.

²⁸ Interview with Helena Andersson and Åsa Kjellström, International Student Affairs, the Stockholm School of Economics, 970520.

²⁹ An example of this can be found in the EU-China Higher Education Cooperation Programme, the aim of which is to strengthen the EU's position in China. The programme is co-ordinated by Lund University.

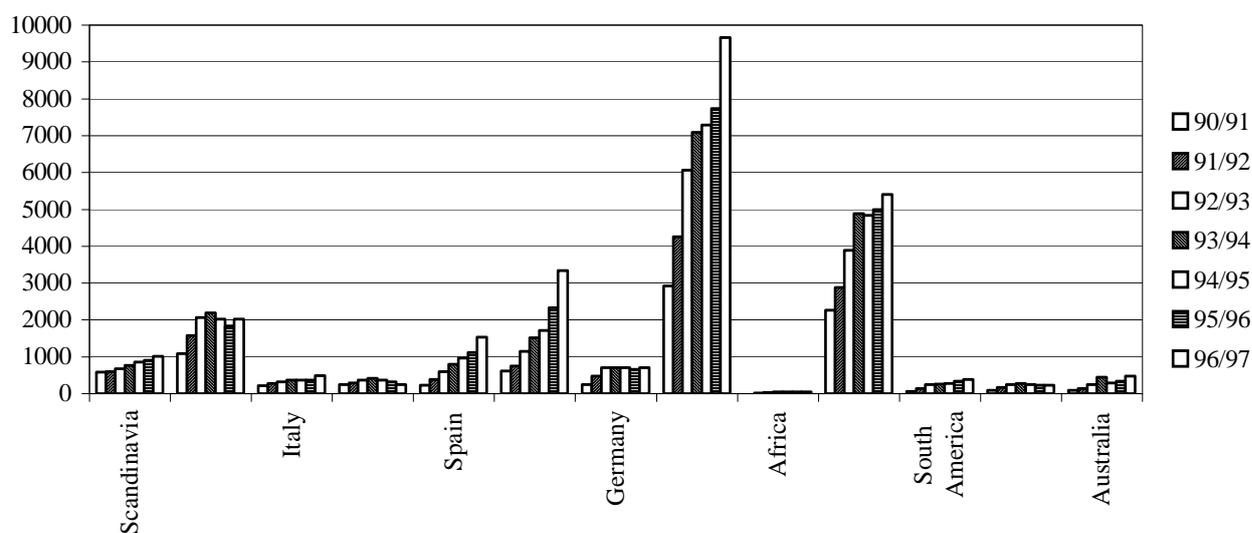
³⁰ See for example Robert B. Reich, *The Work of Nations. Preparing Ourselves for the 21st Century Capitalism*, Vintage Books, New York 1992, and Manuel Castells, *The Informational City. Informational Technology, Economic Restructuring, and the Urban-Regional Process*, Blackwell, Oxford 1995 [1989].

³¹ Sweden has not been a colonial power and thus lacks the kind of position as a centre of higher education that for instance Great Britain and France hold.

internationalisation of higher education. Sweden is after the reform 1989, together with Norway and Denmark, the most generous nation in Europe, and probably in the world, when it comes to creating favourable conditions for students to study abroad.³²

The dominated position among the dominating is manifested in the flows of students. Sweden has a negative exchange balance, approximately 20,000 Swedes studied abroad 1992/93,³³ while only some 11,000 foreign students studied in Sweden.³⁴ If we analyse the flows of students between Sweden and foreign countries, we are able to further determine the position. Swedish students are very selective in their choices, cf. Diagram 2. Most of them prefer English speaking countries. In 1996/97 the U.S. alone accounted for 30% of the Swedish “free movers” and together with Great Britain and Australia the percentage rises to 53%. If we compare the “educational blocks” we find that Europe (Scandinavia included) attracts most of the students, 62%, and North America 31%, while the rest of the world only accounts for 7%. On the other hand countries outside Europe and North America represent approximately 20% of the foreign student population hosted in Sweden. According to an investigation in 1988, 40% of the foreign students came from Scandinavia, 20% from the rest of Europe and no more than 4% from North America. Sweden thus holds a dominating position among the Scandinavian countries in the sense that the exchange balance is in Sweden’s favour, and is in a dominated position compared to the European and especially North American countries.³⁵ Further, Sweden can be regarded as a dominating educational country in relation to the Third World, but the significance of the exchange with these countries is marginal.

Diagram 2. Number of Swedes studying abroad with financial aid (only free movers) 90/91–96/97 per country/geographical domain



³² See Högskoleverket (National Agency for Higher Education), *National Policies for the Internationalisation of Higher Education in Europe*, Högskoleverket Studies 1997:8 S, passim.

³³ Utbildningsdepartementet: *Utlandsstudier och internationella utbildningskontakter. Vad ska göras centralt, vem ska göra det och hur?* Ds 1993:76, pp. 15–16.

³⁴ The figure on the foreign students refers to the autumn term of 1993 (cf. Högskoleverket [National Agency for Higher Education], *National Policies for the Internationalisation of Higher Education in Europe*, Högskoleverket Studies 1997:8 S, p. 180). The number of students with foreign citizenship studying in Sweden in 1988 was approximately 9,000 (Utbildningsdepartementet, *Utlandsstudier och internationella utbildningskontakter. Vad ska göras centralt, vem ska göra det och hur?* Ds 1993:76, p. 16) and thus the trend is that the number of Swedes studying abroad increases more rapidly than the number of foreign students studying in Sweden.

³⁵ The interviews with the staff members at the international offices at the educational departments indicate that this pattern persists, with the modification that there now at many of the examined departments and schools is a balance between incoming and outgoing students in the exchanges with France and Germany.

What does Sweden's position as a dominated nation on the transnational educational market imply for Swedish higher education? The equality ideal has been a key notion in the Swedish educational policy and discourse, but much of the opposite intention is to be found in many of the nations dominating the transnational educational market. The ranking system that plays a crucial role in American higher education has until now been unthinkable in Sweden, and the same goes for the principles of highly selective educational systems like the French. Even if the so called autonomy of national educational systems is supposed to be respected in the EU context, it is likely that the Swedish educational system due to the exposure to the transnational educational market and the increased significance of the "international" will be obliged to adapt to give up some equality objectives.

Each Swedish higher education institution that aspires for a position on or in relation to the transnational educational market needs a sufficient amount of different kinds of resources. The perhaps most important asset is research, which constitutes the foundation for a transnational academic capital, valid on the transnational educational market. A long tradition and a good reputation in research serve for the dominating Swedish institutions as efficient weapons in the competition. To compete on the transnational market is a very resource demanding enterprise in economical terms, not only in order to finance research that meets high standards, but also — and here economical capital might to some extent function as a substitute for scholarly capital — to maintain transnational contacts, to establish exchange networks with foreign elite universities and research centres, and to arrange international conferences. Other economic aspects that have to be accounted for are the marketing of the school and its international educational programmes and courses, and the cost for administrating the exchange programmes and other transnational endeavours.

The investments in symbolic capital needed must not be underestimated. Given the size of the transnational market and the enormous supply, especially in the dominating countries, Swedish institutions have to put much effort in marketing themselves. The fundamental condition for success in reaching and maintaining a position on the transnational market is to possess a *name*, to be recognised as a distinguished seat of learning. As stated above, research is fundamental for the reputation and thus for the constitution and management of the name, but there are other important fundamentals. In order to establish a name on the transnational educational market the institutions try to take advantage of every speciality of their disposal. The Karolinska Institute markets itself as responsible for the selection of the Nobel Prize in Medicine. The Stockholm School of Economics emphasises its long tradition of co-operation with Swedish trade and industry and the fact that its alumni count many prominent top executives and civil servants. The specificity is also exploited in the curricula. Instead of offering general courses some institutions develop their own niche, as at the Stockholm University:

“So it is really difficult to compete on this international market, even if one of course has Master programmes in English. So what we can do is to take advantage of the comparative advantage we obviously have and this is to in some way sell the idea that it is something special with Swedish Social Studies. Some of our courses are more popular than others ... and these are all courses on Social Welfare ... and courses dealing with care of different types, geriatric care, correctional treatment and so forth.... Here we have a niche which we of course have to work on ... instead of giving courses in International Politics, or in comparative Politics, or in European Politics — it swarms with these. So if one wishes to speak about it in marketing terms, this is the business concept and I think it is good.”³⁶

As stated above, the geographical location is of importance to educational institutions, and this is true for the Swedish institutions. In the traditional university towns, Uppsala and Lund, all institutions have an advantage due to the fact that these towns are recognised as traditional seats of learning, which in the eyes of the students probably is taken as a warrant of quality. The departments of the Stockholm University have an advantage just to be located in Stockholm compared to other universities in Sweden, especially the more recently founded universities in Umeå and Linköping, and the university colleges located in the provinces. The importance of the location is emphasised in

³⁶ Interview with Bertil Nygren, Director of the International Graduate Programme in Social Studies at the Stockholm University, 970605.

the information material aiming at foreign markets: “*Stockholm University, situated in the capital of Sweden, is a city university with close links with today’s society — both from a local and an international perspective*”³⁷ and “*Stockholm, the capital of Sweden, is considered by many to be one of the most beautiful cities in the world. Wonderfully situated on 14 different islands, and with the Stockholm archipelago with 24,000 islands out towards the Baltic Sea, it is truly a City on the Water.... In recent years the street and night life — particularly in the summer — has developed into one of the most bustling in Europe.*”³⁸ However not only the institutions in Stockholm put an emphasis on the location, even Mälardalen University states that it in contrast to several other universities is located near the centre of the town,³⁹ and Kristianstad University College states that “*the magnificent boulevards lined by well-preserved old buildings have given Kristianstad the nickname ‘Little Paris.’*”⁴⁰

Finally, the international efforts might serve as resources in the competition between schools on the transnational market. This does not include basic investments as giving courses in English, which is a necessary condition of existence on the transnational market, but for example partnership in selective exchange programmes. In their marketing the dominating schools extensively refer to international co-operation and networks of a kind that signify that the school is one of the selected few in higher education. It is likely that the foreign students are able to distinguish the élite schools in their own country and thus the mentioning of those schools heightens the value of the Swedish school and by this distinguishes it from its domestic competitors. In other words, the condition for the maximum outcome of the transnational investments is that the school possesses the most prominent position within the national field.

The international orientation is in a more general sense interesting from another perspective. To be a school oriented towards the transnational market attracting a high rate of foreign students is the basis for continuing successful student exchange activities. Person-to-person marketing is probably the most effective way of expanding and ameliorating an exchange program. Therefore the foreign exchange students play a crucial role in the competition between educational institutions. For many institutions a prime concern is to attract students from English speaking countries, among other reasons because exchange programmes generally are based on a one-to-one principle, that is, one student out / one student in.⁴¹ To meet the demands from their own students who in great numbers prefer Anglo-Saxon countries, it is crucial for Swedish educational institutions to host Anglo-Saxon students. The rapid growth of the number of courses in English is part of a strategy to attract foreign students in general and Anglo-Saxon students in particular.

4.3 Domestic hierarchies

In order to discuss why and how the dominating schools have strengthened their positions in relation to the dominated schools, we have drawn the picture with broad strokes of the brush. Finally, we will give some examples to illustrate the fine distinctions and complexity of the educational institutions’ transnational strategies. There are hierarchies dividing the dominating schools from each other, and those that occupy the most prestigious positions in their fields of studies, such as the Karolinska Institute, the Stockholm School of Economics and the Royal Institute of Technology, are the ones that most eagerly compete on the transnational educational and scientific markets (exemplified by the

³⁷ Stockholms Universitet, *Benvennuti, Welcome, Willkommen, Bienvenidos, Bienvenue...Stockholms Universitet*, 1995, p. 1.

³⁸ Karolinska Institute, *Information Package. ECTS. 1997/98*, p. 8.

³⁹ Mälardalen University, *Mälardalen University. Forward to Continued Progress*, p. 6. It is however unclear which town is referred to since the Mälardalen University is located in the two mid-size towns Västerås and Eskilstuna. Given the relative smallness of both it is hard to imagine a location not “near the centre of the town”.

⁴⁰ Kristianstad University College and College of Health Sciences, *Kristianstad University College and College of Health Sciences*, p. 6.

⁴¹ The universities and university colleges in Stockholm have founded a consortium, Studying Stockholm, with the aim to improve the conditions for foreign students in Stockholm and to market Stockholm as an attractive academic city. The underlying objective for this collective enterprise is to raise the rates of incoming students in order to be able to send a greater number of Swedish students abroad.

notable difference between the economic departments at Stockholm University and SSE). It seems like it is a primary condition for success on the transnational market to be positioned as the number one educational institution in one's own subfield of the national market.

Also the dominated schools are positioned with relation to each other. Roughly the larger and the first to be established occupy the relatively dominating positions. These are also the university colleges that have made the most extensive transnational investments. The most prominent example of this is Växjö University College with vivid student exchange programmes and extensive international contacts, not only focusing on Scandinavia and Europe — we also find many agreements with universities and colleges in the U.S., Australia and Japan. (Though the contacts do not include the most well-reputed universities in the U.S., in relation to, for example, Stockholm University, the students at Växjö are offered much greater opportunities to study in the U.S.) Another example is Karlstad University College, which since the mid-1980s has built up a co-operation with an Indian university, and a wide range of activities and disciplines are included in this programme. It is important to notice that for these university colleges in the provinces transnational investments serve as a means to challenge the traditional seats of learning⁴² and in some cases these investments might turn out to be successful. The more ancient and well established universities have a high and stable rate of applicants and are by comparison with the new university colleges less dependent upon additional efforts, as transnational investments, to recruit students. Further, the universities concentrate much of their more distinguishing efforts to research or graduate education, while undergraduate studies are the prime concern for the new university colleges. Because it is less demanding to establish student exchange programmes than to create prominent research centres, in the short run transnational investments are especially important for the university colleges as a weapon in the competition for recruitment of students.

But, and this is a most important difference, the transnational investments of the new university colleges cannot be regarded as stakes on the transnational educational market, since the total capital possession of the university colleges are too insignificant to be recognised on the transnational market. Thus the university colleges' transnational investments are almost exclusively weapons in the domestic field of higher education, i.e. stakes in the competition between the university colleges and — to a lesser degree — stakes that challenge the old universities. It is too early to predict the outcome of these challenges.⁴³

⁴² In their brochures and web pages in English some of the Swedish university colleges prefer to market themselves as a “university”.

⁴³ In our ongoing studies on secondary education in Stockholm, one result is that the effects of the reform in 1991 with a more liberal system, giving the pupils the opportunity to, with some restrictions, choose schools, and the schools the freedom to form a unique profile with specific educational programmes (many oriented towards the “international” with training in foreign languages, EU-related courses, possibilities to study and complete exam works abroad for shorter periods, etc.) have not yet had any direct impact on the structure of the field of secondary education, though there are also tendencies towards a changing structure in the future (cf. See Donald Broady, Ingrid Heyman & Mikael Palme, “Le capital culturel contesté. Étude de quatre lycées de Stockholm.” *Formation des élites et culture transnationale* (Eds. D. Broady, N. Chmatko, M. de Saint Martin), in proceedings from the conference “Formation des élites et culture transnationale,” Moscow, 26—30 April 1996, forthcoming 1997). In the field of higher education in Sweden one recent interesting attempt to challenge the dominant institutions is the Södertörn University College, founded in 1996 and located in the southern suburbs of Stockholm where the educational level is among the lowest in all of Sweden and the number of immigrants extraordinarily high. No wonder this university college has chosen a “multi-cultural” profile, and pedagogical principles — problem-based learning, project organisation, no fixed disciplines, all teachers functioning as researchers and all researchers as teachers, etc — that contradict the old discipline-based university. In some ten years the Södertörn University College will probably enrol ca. 10,000 students and obtain the status as a university. Given the extensive investments in research and in new scientific domains and pedagogical concepts, Södertörn University College might be able to compete with the Stockholm University in the recruitment of students in the Stockholm area.

5. Conclusion

Extensive transnational investments have become common among the institutions of higher education. One main finding in the ongoing research is that these investments have very different objectives and significance at the dominating institutions compared to the dominated, because the former aim at maintaining, defending or improving their positions in relation to both transnational and national markets, while the latter aim at national markets.

We have argued that there exists no transnational capital *per se*. Transnational assets function rather as a modification of already existing resources, which is clearly demonstrated by the fact that success on the transnational market to a large degree is determined by the academic and scientific capital possessed by the institution. It is interesting to note that some social groups and educational institutions that do possess humble amounts of capital tend to rather one-sided investments in pronounced transnational educational alternatives (schools with an “EU-profile,” courses given in English, etc.), while well-to-do groups and institutions tend to invest in many species of capital.⁴⁴

A major consequence of the rapid growth of the number of Swedish students going abroad is that such studies have become less distinctive. Before the reform in 1989 and the creation of exchange student programmes in the early 1990s and onward, studies abroad were almost exclusively a matter for the dominating classes. Even if the dominating classes still are more highly represented than the other classes, the popular classes have made their entrance in the studies abroad,⁴⁵ and the appearance of new social groups is not always seen as unproblematic:

“Generally speaking, one can argue that [internationalisation] is a nice idea that requires much work and that is very bureaucratic and very red tapey. At the same time as I find it rather amusing [to work with international matters], I think it is absurd that my colleagues and I work ourselves to death to asphalt the way for all lazy students who shall spend some time, for example, in London. University students have studied abroad for centuries, but the conditions were that they themselves got into contact with the schools, found out about and obtained scholarships, and so forth. In a way, I actually think that this proves that you are capable, in the same way that you as a researcher sooner or later have to compete for research grants. This is a rather painful experience, but absolutely necessary. Here, we have thousands of professors, lecturers, administrators who work all the year round for, in some cases, students who do not even bother to read about how the courses are disposed at the university where they are going to study — I think it is very strange.”⁴⁶

The staff at the Swedish National Board of Student Aid (CSN) has observed that a new group of students have begun to go abroad, a group that is lacking the educational capital that the former groups possessed (some years ago it was rare to find students with marks below 4.0, while today students with marks around 3.0 are to be found among those sent abroad), and they observe an increase in the number of refusals on financial support applications due to the fact that the students do not meet with the requirements of the educational performance standards. A hypothesis put forth by the director of the International Section of the Swedish National Board of Student Aid is that the competition on the national educational market and the difficulties for newcomers to enter the labour market have led to studies abroad being considered as a way to escape unemployment.⁴⁷

However, this group is not represented among the students studying abroad through exchange programmes at educational institutions that we have examined, where good academic credentials are necessary conditions for being selected.⁴⁸ The interviews with the exchange students report that they already possess transnational add-ons to their different species of capital, as we can see an example of in this quotation:

⁴⁴ This difference is analysed in a recent study on transnational strategies in secondary education, see Broady, Heyman & Palme, *op.cit.*, 1997.

⁴⁵ Statistics Sweden, *Utlandsstuderande. Survey in spring 1994 concerning students abroad at university/university college the academic year of 1991/92*, Statistics Sweden, Örebro 1995, p. 9.

⁴⁶ Interview with Jana Hejzlar, International Coordinator at the Dept. of Economics, Stockholm University, 970513.

⁴⁷ Interview with Björn Sundström, Director of the International Section of the National Board for Financial Aid, 970826.

⁴⁸ We have to keep in mind that most of the educational institutions included in this study occupy dominating positions in the Swedish field of higher education. Had the university colleges been included the students' former transnational investments would not have been as impressive.

“We have never been far away, I have never been in the U.S. for example, but we travelled, we are a real car travelling family, my ma loves to ride in the car. It was really: – Get in the car, and then we went all across Europe.... We could concentrate on one part of a country and then the next year another part, so we have really travelled a lot. My mother is extreme, she wrote programmes two weeks in advance. When I was ten years old it was church after church, museum, you had to keep a diary. It was certainly quality vacations, we stayed in fancy hotels and ate packed lunches. It was unquestionably culture, in the evening one should study the history of the castle one was to visit the day after — summertime education, no doubt about it.”

(Female student in political science, 24 years old, studied a year in Bologna, both parents pharmacists.)

In general transnational investments have been a privilege of the dominating classes. In recent years, due to the “democratisation” of education and the focus on linguistic skills, the expansion of the tourist industry, the rise of Interrail and cheap Round the World trips, the globalisation of mass media messages, etc., some transnational assets have become accessible for the middle and popular classes. The “internationalisation” of higher education (and to some extent also secondary education) plays an important role in this transformation. But while transnational strategies for the middle and popular classes imply rather one-sided investments, the upper classes’ transnational strategies are more directed towards a modification of already existing capital.

Within the educational system there are changes corresponding to these new relations between social groups. Transnational investments were until the 1980s an affair for the dominating institutions, developed in an *ad hoc*-based fashion primarily as results of already existing research connections and common interests with foreign universities of the same rank. With the political emphasis in the EU on internationalisation of the higher education and the establishment of exchange and research programmes that transgress the national borders, it became possible for educational institutions lacking academic capital to establish transnational contacts and exchange agreements. The “internationalisation” has in the recent decade meant a process of formalisation and institutionalisation, which also imply a performative message to the institutions of education that “internationalisation” is a necessary investment. To highlight the importance of “internationalisation” is one of the main ideas behind the EU educational programme SOCRATES. Compared to the former organisation of ERASMUS, where the organisational principle was networks of educational departments, there has been a switch in the new SOCRATES programme (where ERASMUS still exists but only as one part of the activities) which focuses on the higher administrative levels of the educational institutions. Instead of networks of departments, the basis for SOCRATES is bilateral agreements between universities or university colleges. Some of the interviewed staff members are worried about this development, arguing that the former person-to-person based co-operation in networks will change to a bureaucratic organisation, where the personal contacts and the efficiency will be lost, and that the less prestigious educational institutions “*who are not so hot on the market*” now run an apparent risk of being excluded from agreements with the more prestigious schools, which might result in a differentiation of Europe’s educational institutions. One could interpret this likely development as an attempt of the dominating schools to safeguard their positions on the transnational market. A further argument for this is the establishment of distinguished networks and co-operations between the dominating institutions in different countries, explicitly based on excellence in research and education.

The differentiating process between the dominating and the dominated institutions on the transnational market is, though, perhaps not the most important feature of the future development. More interesting from a sociological point of view is the possibly sharpened competition between the dominating schools, which are the ones who truly compete on the transnational market and which as well are the seats for the production of future national and transnational élites.