INVESTIGATING CHALLENGED LOCALITIES THROUGH A GEOGRAPHY OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

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CNTRE FOR REGIONAL AND TOURISM RESEARCH - BORNHOLM

BACKGROUND- THE VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM (VET) IN DK

- High demand for vocationally educated people on labour markets in rural districts

- High drop out rates in VET: lack of apprenticeships

- Poor local provision in rural areas

- Extremely high mobility demands

The Blame game in policy discourse:

- VET Reform 2015 - `better´ students then apprenticeships
- Some youth are not mobile enough

- Youth education in Denmark
- 16/17-19 approx.
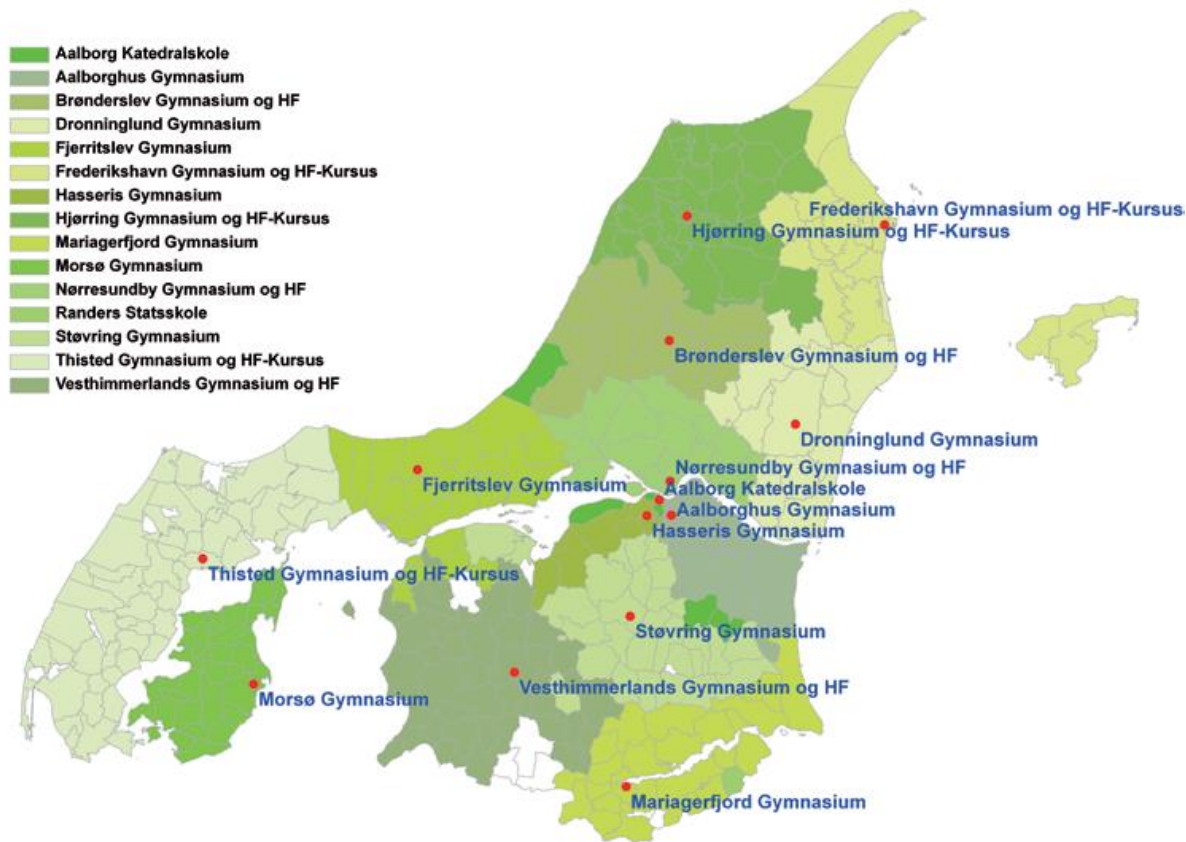
Academic track/ gymnasium

Basic 1 → Basic 2 → Main/ apprenticeship

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EDUCATION POLICIES ARE ALSO GEOGRAPHICAL POLICIES

- Controlling flows of students through infrastructure

- Education systems have built-in transition imperatives – both in time and space

- Education systems shape mobility patterns

- National education planning has been spatially blind

Provision structures of dominant and recessive education systems

Legend (left map):
- Aalborg Katedralskole
- Aalborghus Gymnasium
- Brønderslev Gymnasium og HF
- Dronninglund Gymnasium
- Fjerritslev Gymnasium
- Frederikshavn Gymnasium og HF-Kursus
- Hasseris Gymnasium
- Hjørring Gymnasium og HF-Kursus
- Mariagerfjord Gymnasium
- Morsø Gymnasium
- Nørresundby Gymnasium og HF
- Randers Statsskole
- Støvring Gymnasium
- Thisted Gymnasium og HF-Kursus
- Vesthimmerlands Gymnasium og HF

Legend (right map):
- EUC Nord, Frederikshavn
- EUC Nord, Hjørring
- EUC Nordvest, Thisted
- Erhvervsskolerne Aars
- Skive Tekniske Skole
- Tech College Aalborg
- Tradium, Randers

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Challenges within and surrounding the DANISH VET SYSTEM

THE MARKETISATION OF EDUCATION

MIND THE GAP

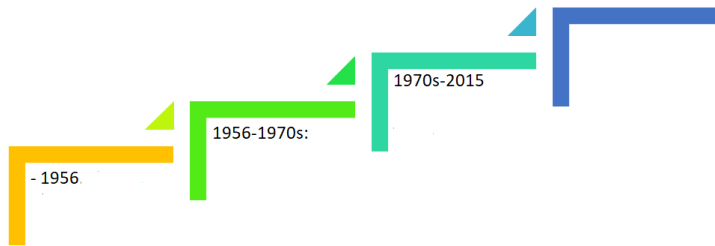**Shifts in dominant production paradigms**

Governance spaces of power

School-based basic (12+106) → Firm-based main (106)

Increasing student mobility demands

Social marginalisation in student intake

1970s-2015

1956-1970s:

- 1956

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WHAT FACTORS IMPACT EDUCATION CHOICES AT INDIVIDUAL SCALE?

Youths' reflexive
individualisation construction

Complex hierarchised
socioeconomic,
network, gender and
place structures

Concrete (spatial)
structures and processes
of the VET system
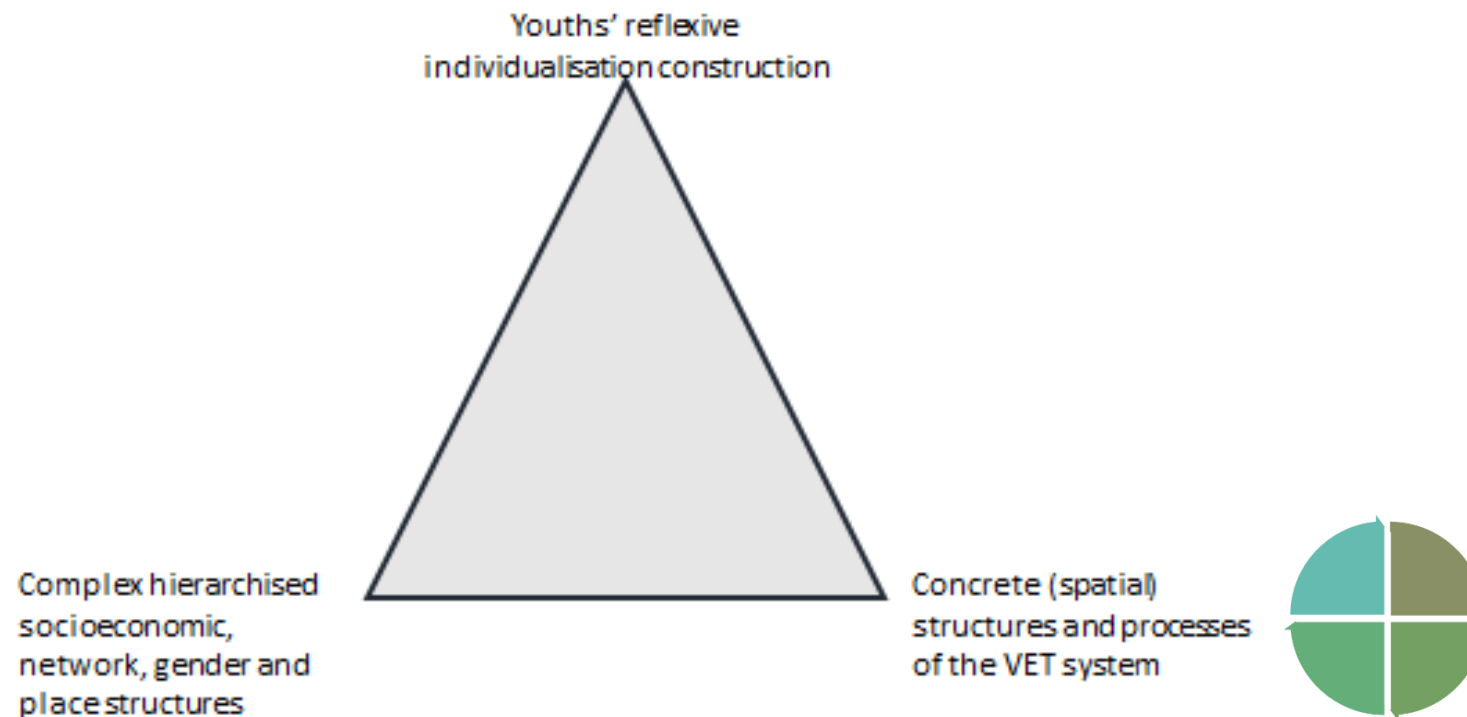
Based on Evans, 2007

Analysis based on qualitative interviews

- 23 interviews amongst 17-22 years old
- As close to major VET transition as possible
- Life biographies = narratives
- in 3 rural municipalities
- both genders, across many VET programmes
- Both local and non-local
- Many sources: schools, local youth counselors, networks and snowballing.
- Exploratory

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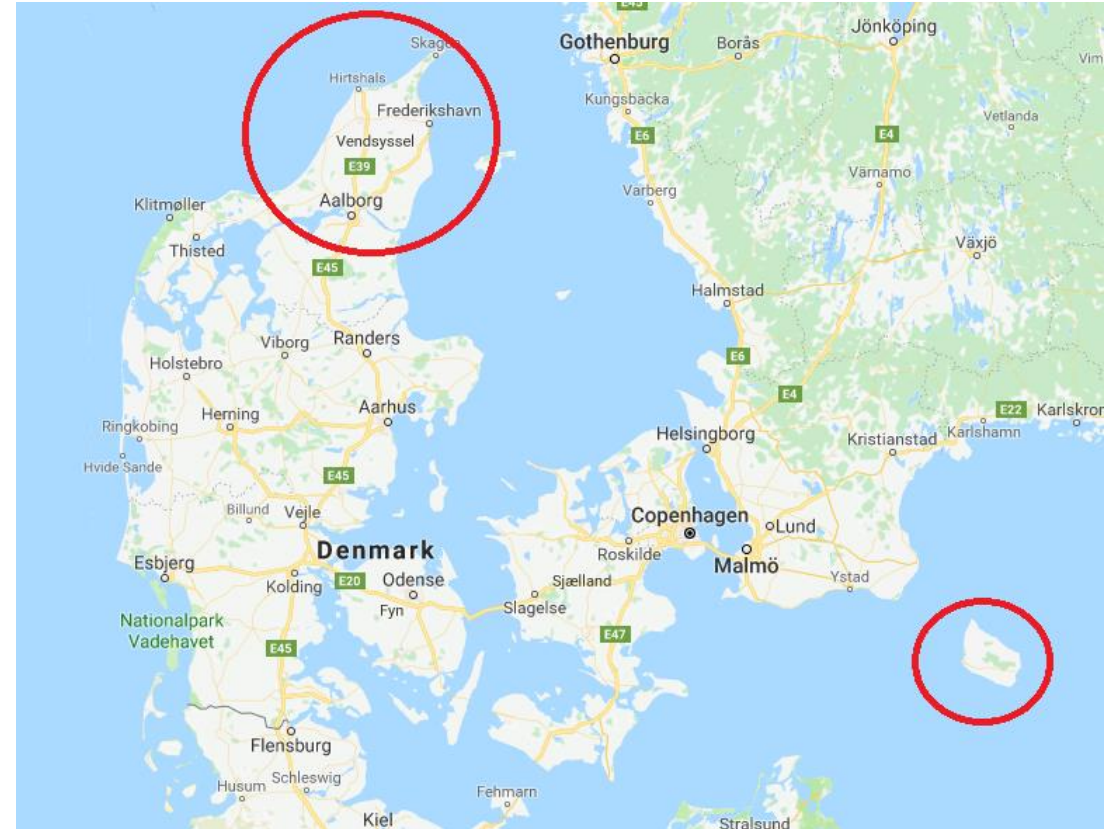
FINDINGS

ORIENTATION PREFERENCE

Vocational

Local

Mobility
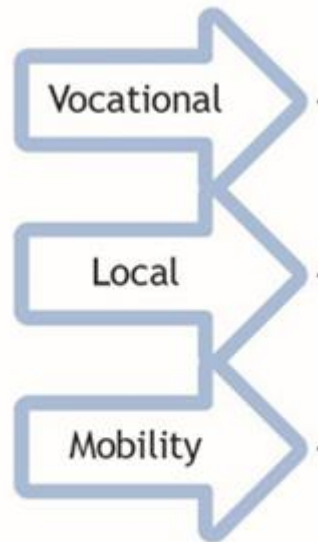
- Preference for vocational orientation
- Preference for local orientation
  - Conscious decision
  - The de-facto local
- Preference for mobile orientation (moving out)
  - Vocational
  - `Lost in space´

DISPLAY A VOCATIONAL ORIENTATION PREFERENCE

ORIENTATION PREFERENCE

Vocational

Local

Mobility
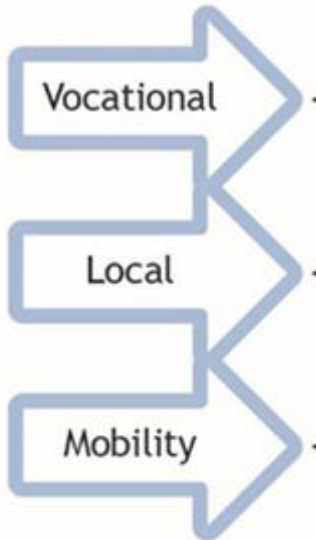
I didn't want to be welding all day, and my level of precision wasn't so good. Instead I wanted to design, but still based on metalwork. (Industrial technical programme, 19 yrs.)

-Vocationally they orientate themselves widely (supra-locally)
-Active Basic programme strategy
-Active apprenticeship strategy
-Do not want to move, but will do so if necessary

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DISPLAY A LOCAL ORIENTAION PREFERENCE

**ORIENTATION PREFERENCE**

Vocational

Local

Mobility
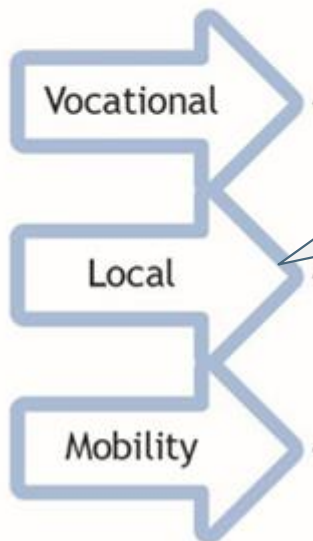
I don't know, I was told it was possible to start as a child care assistant here in town, and I thought – yeah, I like children, that could be good. So I quit retail and applied for this instead (Child care, 19 yrs.)

-Attempt to find the `right´ VET programme, but lack knowledge about themselves and about what a trade is
-Some display a conscious local orientation preference
-Some display de facto local orientation preference
-Passive Basic programme + apprenticeship strategy (`crossing my fingers´, `if I'm lucky´)

DISPLAY A MOBILITY ORIENTATION PREFERENCE

ORIENTATION PREFERENCE
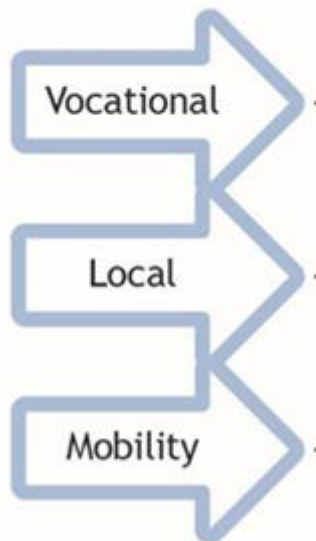
Want to use this transition as an opportunity to move out, not urbanisation imperative
- But also active basic programme strategy
- Active apprenticeship strategy, but very dependant
- Although they want to move, they face many challenges in new place (loneliness, independence -money, food, transport)
- But also 1 case of `lost in transition´ (must be embedded in vocation)

Vocational

Local

Mobility

I was so tired of my friends, I was in the wrong crowd. My relationship with my parents was really bad. So I thought: I need to leave and do things right.
(Hairdresser, 19 yrs.)

THE EFFECTS OF THIS ARE:

1. For those who are embedded /identify with a vocation, the VET functions well – as a provider of local labour AND/OR as a mobility platform

2. De de-facto local depend on local education provision structures. They are unable to `tap into´ VET opportunities outside local area.

3. GAPS in the VET system create socially uneven patterns of exclusion and inclusion. This has negative effects on the development trajectories of already challenged localities outside urban areas.

THE VET SYSTEM SHOULD

- Give young people more time for vocational identification process
- Strengthen vocational socialization processes during compulsory schooling
- Recognise that transition demand is spatial: Strengthen the capacities of local education institutions to function as supra-local orientation platforms for vocational identity formation
  - Could more flexible learning be a way forward? And if so, how?

FLEXIBLE LEARNING PERSPECTIVES

- Each education programme is deeply embedded in a national and local system – school & firm geographies. Corridors of connection between locally-provided VET programmes and the firms in the catchment area. By providing a VET programme flexibly, the relationship between the school and the local labour market needs to be taken into account (Catchment areas + the taxameter system). Envisioning a system where each school has a `set´ catchment area….

- DEEP provision: not just providing an education opportunity – provide a well-paved road toward vocational identity building.
  - Trade socialisation is still firmly embedded in the firm
  - What do we know about the process of vocational identification in school-based learning?

THANK YOU!