

SCRIPT: "I'm Back, Now What?"  
Nada Mawsouf  
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Lead in: This audio documentary discusses the side effects of returning from exchange programs. Students who went on exchange programs at the Danish School of Media and Journalism in Denmark talk about what they miss about living abroad, and how they are getting back to their normal lives at their home countries.

*NAT SOUND: Snippet from a vlog I did in Denmark of me saying, "So, this is what it feels like to be lost in a city after midnight." (:06)*

You might guess it felt scary, but truth is, I was having the best time in Aarhus, a city in Denmark.

*MUSIC FADE IN: Chill Mode – Audiobinger (0-25 seconds from the start of the song)*

Apart from the fact that I was aimlessly looking for a bus stop, I had just left a very good welcome party at The Danish School of Media and Journalism,

*NAT SOUND: Uptown Funk playing at the party (:06)*

And was very excited to start my semester abroad!

*NAT SOUND: Snippet from a vlog I did in Denmark of me saying, "I'm heading to school now, and this is my dorm over there!" (:05)*

I think I might've enjoyed partying, going out and exploring the city a little bit too much. It made me very happy, but it also worried me. I found a study from 1973 (which was before I was born) that showed that the more frequently students engage and communicate in the host country, the harder it is to readapt in their home country.

*MUSIC FADE OUT: Chill Mode – Audiobinger*

*NAT SOUND: Throwing keys on bed (:03)*

And, I'm back in Cairo, Egypt. Now what?

*MUSIC FADE IN: Unbox – Adrianna Krikl*

Now there's a problem. I've been trying to readapt in my home country, Egypt, for four months now, but it's actually quite hard.

*Noha El Nahas (NN): "Sometimes the problem comes because you are not used to the physical circumstances around you such as the smell, the weather, the temperature, the sights, the language. All of these things are going to make you imbalanced in a way or another." (:20)*

That was Dr. Noha El Nahas, a senior councilor at the Office of Student Well-being, and an adjunct faculty member in the Psychology department at The American University in Cairo.

I decided to know how my friends, who also spent a semester at the Danish School of Media and Journalism, are adapting to their home countries.

*Farah Tawfeek (FT): "Things that did not bother me at all before I traveled began bothering me when I came back." (:08)*

And answering your question of "Came back where?": came back to Egypt. Farah Tawfeek, an Egyptian student, went to Denmark in 2016.

*Laura Gomez (LG): "When I went back and lived with my parents for like a month then and oh god. It was kind of like... oh my god can I just go back to Denmark and live on my own?" (:18)*

Laura Gomez is from Catalonia, and we spent the entire semester together studying TV and Video Storytelling in Aarhus, Denmark. We used to cook together all the time.

*NAT SOUND: Cooking (:04)*

I still remember the nights we almost slept on the bus after long days of editing.

*NAT SOUND: Announcement on the bus in Denmark saying, "Next stop." (:05)*

Now, I believe, we all reminisce about our time Denmark. A lot of my friends and family ask me, "What was so good about Denmark that made you feel sad when you came back?"

*LG: "Like you could do anything you wanted, whenever you wanted and go wherever you wanted with whoever you wanted, you know." (:08)*

My Catalonian friend, Laura, is on point. Not that we're restricted in our home countries or anything but living there felt very liberating somehow. One thing that I've really enjoyed was walking in the streets of Aarhus and stepping on all the leaves that have fallen from the colorful trees.

*NAT SOUND: Stepping on leaves in a street in Aarhus (:05)*

I never had to worry about walking in the street alone, because there is no such thing as harassment there. We all found something special about living in Denmark, and held onto it, which made leaving quite hard.

*MUSIC FADE OUT: Unbox – Adrianna Krikl*

Let's start with Farah.

*MUSIC FADE IN: Memory Lane - Audiobinger*

She was a student at The American University in Cairo. She went to Denmark in 2016 and had no idea that she was about to meet Jacob, an Australian, who is also going to be studying in Denmark.

*FT: "OK, so I met Jacob at a bar at first. I don't drink, and Jacob's friend was nice enough to invite me to sit with a group of people and Jacob was one of them, and we started talking and I was telling them about my stories in Egypt. Jacob found them fascinating and we ended up talking a lot. And he walked me home and we got lost on the way because I didn't know the way to my own place. Funnily enough." (:25)*

Aww!

*SFX: Harp (:03)*

There was a spark, and the next thing she knows Jacob asks her if she'd like to hang out.

*FT: "And we went to old town because I was dying to see it. And when I arrived, there was this huge surprise. It was Valentine's Day and I honestly had no idea! So, everybody was like it was pink and everybody was offering me like, 'Oh flowers for the lady.' I was like 'Oh no!' We were just friends and anyway..." (:19)*

*SFX: Rotating music box (:07)*

Yeah right! After a few more outings, Farah and Jacob became the talk of the school, and as time passed by, their relationship grew stronger.

*MUSIC FADE OUT: Memory Lane - Audiobinger*

And boom!

The semester was over, and Farah headed back to Egypt, and Jacob to Australia.

*MUSIC FADE IN: Drenched with Sorrow - Audiobinger*

*FT: "I was used to spending a lot of time with him, and suddenly I couldn't see him at all, at all. So, it was like a withdrawal from seeing him every day to not seeing him at all. It made coming to Egypt very difficult." (:13)*

Just like Farah, this feeling of withdrawal has grown on me too, especially right after I came back. I looked back at history again, and found a study done in 1989 that says people who place a high value on personal relationships tend to suffer a greater sense of loss when they go back to their home countries.

*Ivan Olmos (IO): "I'm missing my friends from there. So sometimes when I see pictures of them in their own houses like in their own countries it's maybe difficult to channel this. OK. They are really far away from me." (:14)*

Ivan Olmos was one of my Catalonian friends in Aarhus, and he used to live a minute away. You'd always find him dancing to any song, anywhere!

*NAT SOUND: Party in Denmark (:05)*

Laura has been experiencing reverse culture shock, which according to a study done in the year 2000, might lead to an adjustment problem.

*LG: "Like I experienced all that and now I'm back like kind of in the same place I was but at the same time I'm not... I'm not the same person as I was since when I went abroad." (:14)*

And realizing that has added stress to our lives in a way. Having to explain that to family and friends has been quite draining, because they haven't seen the events that led to this change of our characters.

*MUSIC FADE OUT: Drenched with Sorrow – Audiobinger*

So again, we're all back to our home countries, what now?

*MUSIC FADE IN: Unbox – Adrianna Krikl*

*FT: "I'm back to my Egyptian self." (:03)*

Farah is working for one of Egypt's most prominent TV channels.

Whereas in Catalonia,

*LG: "What I'm doing now it's like completely different from what I was doing before going to Denmark." (:06)*

Laura is having an internship in Barcelona and is currently working as well. And for Ivan,

*IO: "I'm really calm in that sense like I'm just waiting for my soul to be ready for new challenges." (:03)*

And I'm still studying, I have a full-time job and a part-time one (which really help in distracting me.) I still talk to my international friends every once in a while. So, answering my question of "Now what?" I'm slowly allowing the readjustment phase to sink in, and I reminisce about Denmark, a lot!

*MUSIC FADE OUT: Unbox – Adrianna Krikl*

This audio documentary was produced by Nada Mawsouf for the audio production course at The American University in Cairo, taught by Professor Kim Fox in the Spring semester of 2018.

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Music pieces:

*Chill Mode – Audiobinger*

*Memory Lane – Audiobinger*

*Drenched with Sorrow - Audiobinger*

*Unbox – Adrianna Krikl*

All nat sounds were collected and are owned by me.

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