New European Youth Mobilities in the light of ‘Brexit’

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• The challenge of migration to Europe
• YMOBILITY, a Horizon 2020 programme of research on ‘New European Youth Mobilities’ – the intersection of intra-EU migration with ‘youth transitions’
• As part of YMOBILITY, the UK evidence, based on 120 interviews with young migrants aged 18-35 before and after Brexit
Europe’s Migration Challenges

Europe faces multiple challenges – but also opportunities – relating to migration:

• The **demographic** challenge of the inevitability of an ageing population, and the extent to which this can be ‘rejuvenated’ by young migrants who are net fiscal contributors and reproductively active.

• The **economic and developmental** challenge of the spatially uneven distribution of resources, wealth and labour-market opportunities, contrasting areas of labour deficit (typically, booming urban-industrial-leisure regions) with regions of high (youth) unemployment and limited job opportunities (rural, peripheral regions and old industrial areas) – and the extent to which (youth) migration can equalise these disparities

• The **political and humanitarian** challenge of the 2015-16 ‘refugee crisis’ emanating from Syria and other Middle Eastern ‘hot spots’, which challenged the ability of Europe to respond to the influx of > 1 million refugees within a short span of time

• The rarely-discussed **ontological** challenge of the role of migration – both from within Europe, and from outside – in shaping the European societies of today and tomorrow
The word ‘crisis’ was mobilised and instrumentalised to connote the urgent and unforeseen nature of these challenges (sic), at both EU and individual national levels. Its use is often dubious and deliberately hides where the true responsibility lies and the fact that the ‘crisis’ was predictable and is solvable.

- **demographic crisis or time-bomb**: this is likely to generate a graduated response which combines labour-market adaptations (longer working lives, rearrangement of the pensions deficit) with continued immigration

- **economic and financial crisis** produced by the excesses of the pre-2008 boom and the failure of the banks in several vulnerable countries of the ‘peripheral’ EU – new migration flows (along with the politics of austerity) were the main result/solution’ for the most affected countries (GR, I, ES, P, IRE, LV, LT).

- **structural or systemic crisis** of long-term youth unemployment in many poorer regions of EU; progress also blocked by entrenched systems of power over the allocation of jobs and other resources

- **refugee crisis** has been the most obvious ‘crisis’ event in EU migration in recent years, where Germany claimed the moral high ground, but few followed this example, the reaction being especially negative and unhelpful in several Eastern EU countries.
Youth Mobility/Why Mobility? 2015-18, Horizon 2020: **keywords** are youth migration, life-course transition, education, labour market, economic crisis, regional development, (+‘Brexit’)

**Key objectives**

- identifying and quantifying the main patterns and trends of international youth migration in the EU for three migrant categories – students, higher- and lower-skilled workers
- understanding individuals’ motivations for moving – their decision-making strategies, information sources and migration channels
- analysing individuals’ outcomes in terms of education, skills, careers, welfare/wellbeing, identities, and youth-to-adult transitions
- mapping the territorial outcomes for countries/regions of origin and destination – economic, demographic, cultural – including the impact of return migration
- Highlighting implications for policy – migration, labour market, education, housing, services etc.
Countries and Partners

Receiving countries
UK: University of Sussex, University of Surrey
Germany: University of Bielefeld
Sweden: Malmö University

Sending countries
Latvia: University of Latvia
Slovakia: Slovak Academy of Forecasting
Romania: University of Bucharest

Countries which both send and receive
Italy: University of Rome ‘La Sapienza’
Spain: University of Almeria
Ireland: University College Cork
Work Packages

WP1 Youth mobility: definition and typologies (Sussex)
WP2 Specification of research methodologies (Slovakia, Surrey)
WP3 Data and information collection (Surrey, Sussex)
WP4 Information sources, channels, motivations and risks (Bucharest)
WP5 Economic and social outcomes – skills/competences, welfare, identity (Malmö)
WP6 Territorial and regional outcomes (Almeria, Latvia)
WP7 Scenarios and simulations of the future (Rome)
WP8 Policy recommendations (Bielefeld)
WP9 Dissemination of results and citizens’ engagement (Rome)

WP1, 3 Sussex team: Russell King, Aija Lulle, Laura Moroşanu
Objectives of the overview:

- To provide a comprehensive survey of the main types of youth mobility in the EU, defined a priori as students, less-skilled workers and higher-skilled workers.
- To assess the main geographical and temporal patterns of the flows, based on existing datasets and primary survey data.
- To provide a systematic overview of the different socio-economic, demographic and psychographic characteristics of mobile vs non-mobile youth (aged 18-35 at the time of moving, and staying abroad for > 6 months to qualify as a ‘migration’).
- To evaluate existing and new theoretical frameworks for ‘explaining’ New European Youth Mobilities (NEYM), including their relationship to ‘youth transitions’.

Theories and Typologies of Youth Migration: Defining ‘Youth’

• **Key point:** Youth, like ‘older age’, is a *socially and culturally constructed* category which is *plastic* – it can be moulded to fit individual circumstances and varies from one society/culture to another, and over time. It is also *relational* (eg. in relation to other social groups or generations), *situational* and *contextual*.

• There is tending to be an extension of the youthful way of life into later chronological age, partly as a result of (‘Western’) *youth-dominated culture* (40 is the new 30, 70 is the new 50), and partly as a result of *external economic and cultural factors* – the delayed transition to full adulthood because of the difficulty of getting secure job, and hence access to housing, starting a family etc.

• To be *pragmatic*, ‘youth’ for YMOBILITY starts late teens and extends to, say, mid or even late 30s (18-35?)

• Hence a *general question* for YMOBILITY: How is Youth Mobility embedded in the wider ontological meaning of Youth in its externally ascribed and self-identificatory transitions into the subsequent life-stage?
Youth Groups and Transitions

We have three groups, each with its stereotypical ‘ideal type’

- **students** – the ERASMUS effect? Distinctions between credit and degree mobility, between undergraduate and postgraduate study; relative importance between study-abroad as economically motivated vis-à-vis ‘cultural experience’

- **higher-skilled young professionals** – Eurostars? (Favell 2008)

- **less-skilled workers** – the ‘Polish plumber’?

These types can become blurred or combined; either simultaneously or sequentially – eg. the student is also a part-time worker, or the student becomes a worker after graduating

We also have three main transitions:

- education to work (can take place at different ages)
- unemployed to employed
- youth to adulthood (the latter implying, but not dictating, partnership formation, children, setting up ‘home’)

Other transitions?

- precarious employment to more stable employment
- low to high skill employment; or high to low – compensated by higher income (the ‘status paradox’ of migration, Nieswand 2011)
EU Youth Mobility: some macro-structural factors

- Facilitated by EU Free Movement provisions, and the progressive expansion of the EU over the past nearly 60 years. Key enlargements for YMOBILITY were 2004 (A8) and 2007 (A2) which brought 10 ‘Eastern’ countries in, most of them with substantially lower incomes and living standards.

- The ongoing structure of core-periphery within Europe. Core countries have traditionally received migrants, peripheral countries have supplied migrants, especially during the postwar era of mass labour migration 1950s-1970s. The core-periphery pattern faded in the 1980s and 1990s, and a new group emerged as a kind of semi-core (Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Ireland, Finland) which were the new receiving countries.

- The economic cycle effect: cores and peripheries wax and wane according to the economic climate. The post-2008 recession has re-activated the spatially differentiated core-periphery contrast and triggered new/old migration flows. This time the migrants are not unemployed rural labourers going to work in large factories, but unemployed or precariously employed youth who are often highly educated. Questions arise about brain drain (and waste, circulation, re-gain etc.)

- Now it seems we have a threefold typology of countries:
  - traditional core countries – NW Europe, receivers of migrants
  - semi-core (or semi-periphery) countries – Southern Europe, Ireland, senders and receivers
  - periphery countries – mostly Eastern European, senders of migrants
Frameworks for Decision-Making

Most migration/mobility decisions are a combination of economic, social, cultural and personal/psychological factors. We also need to recognise how the decision to migrate is a staged process, as follows:

*aspiration* to move → *ability* to move → *decision* to move → *where* to move

- **Economic factors**: these comprise employment (hence *employability* of the migrant), income, job security, promotion prospects, career development etc. Migration as investment in human capital, especially if combined with education, training, acquisition of experience, *skills and competences*

- **Social factors**: existing *family and social ties abroad*, social networks, and other channels of organising migration; attractions of *different kinds of society* (open, meritocratic, multicultural vs closed, nepotistic, xenophobic, homophobic etc.)

- **Cultural factors**: ‘*culture of migration*’ of the sending society (eg. Ireland, southern Italy); or the cultural attraction of *different ways of life* – quality of life, objective and subjective well-being; lifestyle migration?

- **Personal factors**: ambition, work-oriented, *risk-takers*, and other psycho-social characteristics such as desire to ‘escape’

**Big Question**: How to model the *return-migration decision*? How many of the above apply, or is there a completely new set of drivers? And *where* to return to? Other mobilities – circular, transnational, onward etc.
WP3: In-Depth Interviews

800 across the 9 countries, stratified by migrant type (student, higher- and lower- skilled), gender, in-migrants and return migrants

Interviews had questions grouped under 10 themes:

• personal and family background
• migration history
• migration motivations and decision-making; role of 2008 crisis
• education and employment experiences in migration
• life satisfaction
• identity issues
• social inclusion
• travel and remittances
• knowledge and suggestions for policies for migrants
• future plans

## Distribution of Interviews

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<th>COUNTRY</th>
<th>MIGRANTS</th>
<th>RETURNED MIGRANTS IN CORE REGION</th>
<th>RETURNED MIGRANTS IN PERIPHERAL REGION</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
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<td>10 SW/West</td>
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Some preliminary findings

• **Migration and return motivations**
  - The search for (better) work and career opportunities plays an important role
  - Students attracted by the reputation of host-country universities, and specific subjects/courses of study (e.g. migration studies, tourism, fine arts)
  - Other factors from personal to lifestyle considerations also emerge prominently alongside economic rationales
  - Pre-existing connections abroad, and responding to opportunities available (e.g. EU freedom of movement)
  - Return mainly driven by challenges to integration (social, linguistic, climate), career or work prospects, and family-related considerations

• **Employment experiences**
  - Evidence of deskilling and difficulties for CEE migrants to obtain highly qualified jobs that reflect their qualifications
  - Positive views about employment conditions, income, security, opportunities to progress in destination countries
  - In the case of return migrants, lower-skilled returnees seem to experience more difficulties than the high-skilled ones in getting back into labour market
Some preliminary findings (cont.)

- **Life satisfaction**
  - Both migrants and returnees seem to be relatively satisfied with their life abroad and back home
  - For many migrants, the home environment is more rewarding in terms of social life, quality of life or proximity to family
  - However, time matters, and so do migrants’ personality and family situations

- **Identity issues**
  - The ‘importance of national identity’ question often interpreted as ‘given’, hard to ‘change’ or ‘escape’, something which migrants don’t ‘conceal’ or are ‘ashamed’ of
  - Expressions of national pride but also mixed, ‘in-between’, local and European/cosmopolitan identities
  - Awareness of negative categorisation amongst CEE migrants, especially Romanians

- **Social inclusion**
  - Different experiences of adaptation or re-integration for different migrant groups (e.g. lower-skilled vs students) and returnees
  - CEE migrants seem to be relatively less included, and so do lower-skilled migrants compared to the high-skilled; stereotypical media and popular representations matter a lot!
  - Diverse social networks in many cases and countries, although not so often with locals (with some exceptions, e.g. Italians in Spain)
Some preliminary findings (cont.)

• **Travel and remittances**
  - Regular travel and visits home but also in the reverse direction and visits to third spaces (e.g. Spanish who live in the UK visit relatives in Germany)
  - The Irish in London seem to be the most mobile group
  - *Reverse remittances* (financial support from parents) more common amongst young migrants, especially in the initial stages and in the case of students, although CEE migrants (especially lower-skilled workers) often send money and gifts home
  - Social remittances (circulation of ideas, attitudes, values) facilitated via everyday communication and use of social media

• **Policies**
  - Little awareness of policies aimed specifically towards intra-EU migrants; some concern with anti-migrant discourses or neglect
  - The EU freedom of movement – participants well aware of this privilege but sometimes take it for granted
  - EU students eligible for scholarships, study loans (e.g. UK) or free access to education (e.g. Sweden)

• **Future plans**
  - A considerable number of migrant workers wished to stay or move to other countries/regions rather than return home, at least in the near future
  - Short-term plans tend to be closely related to the current situation
  - Five-year plans reveal crucial data on understanding youth transitions to full adulthood
According to ONS (2016), UK hosts 2.8 million EU citizens, with 1.4m from the ‘new’ (i.e. post-2004) member-states

To quote Adrian Favell (Eurostars and Eurocities, 2008), London is the ‘Eurocity par excellence’, the ‘Europolis’ or ‘EUtopia’ where young Europeans, especially those with higher education and career ambitions, want to move to, at least for a time

120 interviews conducted in the London area, 20 each with migrants aged 18-35 from ES, IRE, I, LV, RO and SK

Interviews conducted during period September 2015 to June 2016

And then came Brexit! 23 June 2016: 52% voted to leave the EU

We decided to re-interview quota-samples of 8-10 respondents for each national group: this process still ongoing
‘Brexit’ highlights

- came as a major national surprise, that even the leaders of the Brexit campaign did not actually expect
- revealed a diagnosis of a sharply divided population, with a substantial reservoir of pent-up anger and alienation, both with the ‘political class’ and with deteriorating life conditions, exacerbated by the politics and economics of austerity
- whereas the ‘Remain’ camp’s main message (fronted by PM David Cameron and Chancellor George Osborne) was based on the threat to the economy of leaving the EU, the real message which won the day was the ‘moral panic’ over immigration, stoked by the three ‘Brexiteers’ Nigel Farage, Boris Johnson and Michael Gove, and ruthlessly pushed by the right-wing tabloid media
- in an age of ‘post-truth politics’, ‘expert knowledge’ was vilified: ‘the experts: what do they know (about ‘real’ life)?’
- so, the slogans that won the day were about ‘taking back control of our sovereignty’ (from the EU) and especially ‘controlling our borders’ at a time of a perceived ‘crisis’ of immigration
BREAKING POINT
The EU has failed us all
We must break free of EU to take back control of our borders.
Leave the European Union
ON 23rd JUNE
08450 752 752
Six Post-Brexit Questions

1. Did you expect the result of the Referendum?
2. How do you feel after Brexit?
3. What do you think now as a [Latvian, Romanian, Slovak, etc.] citizen/passport holder in this new situation?
4. Has your sense of ‘home’ or ‘belonging’ or ‘identity’ changed in the light of Brexit?
5. Has Brexit changed your plans for the future? Referring here to short- and long-term plans about where you want to live/work and settle down?
6. Are you considering applying for British citizenship or a Residence Card?
Theoretical Frames

- **Liquid migration**, which has the following key features: it is predominantly *work and study* driven, it is envisioned as *temporary*, it is *invisible* due to open borders, hence it is *legal*, it is *spontaneous* and *unpredictable*, and its defining characteristic is the ‘migratory habitus’ of *intentional unpredictability* (Engbersen and Snel 2013).

- **Voiceless politics** and ‘*weapons of the weak*’ (Kallio and Häkli 2011; Scott 1985): irony that, although the Referendum was about ‘them’, they had no right to vote as EU citizens, so their reaction was to participate in discussions, including online, avoiding confrontation, enduring difficulties, at the same time emphasising their right to ‘belong’.

- **Tactics of belonging**: strengthening their ‘roots’ in London/UK, their ‘value’ to the British economy through study and work, applying for citizenship and residence card; although this sense of belonging was shaken by the Referendum result.
In the examples which follow, quotes are mainly taken from the post-Brexit re-interviews, but some are from the pre-Brexit interviews which took place in the weeks leading up to the Referendum.

Both before and after, almost no-one expected the ‘leave’ result. Here is a typical and well-argued response to the question about Brexit posed in a pre-Brexit interview with a Latvian student in London:

- Brexit is about the power-politics of some hungry and pompous politicians who see populism as the only way. The people voting for Brexit… should blame the government and not the EU – the British government should’ve prepared them with more skills… But instead they seem to blame immigrants and the EU – both of which are actually helping this country… So I’m worried that the attitudes that prevail regarding the EU can lead Britain down a very sad path where young people like myself will be the victims, but those who are already victims from globalisation will face even worse times ahead. I am worried, but I have the hope that Brits will not vote for something that will do no good to neither them nor us (Nils, M21, LV, student).
**Answers to the ‘Brexit’ Questions 1, 2**

1. **Did you expect the result?**

   Most said ‘No’, often emphatically ‘Absolutely not’; but a few said they ‘saw it coming’
   
   - Not at all: it was a big surprise for me (Matej, M30, SK, high-skilled)
   - I had been feeling it would happen for a while before it actually did. All those rational accounts of the economic and political costs to Britain if it was to leave just did not match the emotional narrative of the ‘leave’ campaign. I think I realised it was going to happen when Boris Johnston joined in on the ‘leave’ side. It was no longer just eccentric weirdo Farage calling for change. But I had been hoping I was wrong (Gabika, F30, SK, student)

2. **How did you feel when the result was announced?**

   The most recurrent words were ‘shocked’ and ‘disappointed’. Others were more outspoken and emotional, saying they cried. For a few it encouraged their thoughts to return ‘home’
   
   - Like shit… (Laura, F27, I, student), followed by several rhetorical questions: What have I done to deserve this? Why don’t you want me here? What have I done that is so evil?
   - It reaffirmed my decision to go back home (Marek, M27, SK, student)
3. **What do you think as a [SK, LV etc.] citizen of this new situation?**

May respondents were very critical and angry with the British voters, but were ambivalent about how they would react or how it would affect them in the longer term, not least because the nature of the ‘British exit’ is still unclear. Here we see evidence of the migrants’ ‘tactics of belonging’.

- I think they made a big mistake, particularly when it comes to trading with other EU countries… Likewise the money coming from the EU to fund improvements in various sectors will probably be lacking now… Basically I don’t see any benefits in their decision to leave the EU (Marek, M27, SK, high-skilled)

- The UK government will keep those who work and contribute to the economy; they are not going to expel all of us, so I am not worried for the moment (Janka, F37, SK, high-skilled, in UK since 2001).

In answer to a sub-question about changes in daily life:

- Speaking of daily-life changes, not much… Because they haven’t even decided the terms of Brexit yet. We are still in Europe. Here we are in Brighton which, together with London, is the only place in the UK that voted 60-70% ‘remain’, and so you feel it less. Eh, but some friends living in Leeds for example said they feel it more… to the point that they had negative comments at work (Laura, F27, Italy, student)
4. Has your sense of ‘home’, ‘belonging’ or ‘identity’ changed?

Most said ‘No’ or ‘Not yet’; but many also said this made them think of their ‘identity’ and ‘where they belong’ more now. This tended to strengthen their ties to their home country, but in a few cases it worked the other way, cementing their sense of ‘home’ in Britain.

• Definitely! Although I always knew where my home is [Slovakia], but now it’s even clearer (Eva, F33, SK, higher-skilled)

• I don’t know whether it has changed specifically due to Brexit, but it definitely helped me to start thinking about home and belonging more (Marek, M27, SK, student)

• Sometimes I feel I am not welcome in the UK anymore (Martin, M29, SK, student)

• No, I still want to live and work here (Adriana, F28, SK, lower-skilled)

And as a more detailed evocation of ‘tactics of belonging’:

• I live in the UK already for nine years… and I feel myself as British as I can and want. I sometimes even feel I was born here. I pay taxes here, I totally love this country, absolutely love London, I belong HERE! But, in the meantime, all the locals, of course, see me as a foreigner. ‘Oh, where are you from?’ they ask. I really hate this question. My home is here… I do not see Latvia as some kind of sacred homeland. Well, yes, it is the country where I was born, but so what? (Irina, F27, LV, highly-skilled)
5. Has ‘Brexit’ changed your plans for the future?

Again, most said ‘No’, or ‘Not yet’ – it depends on how Brexit works out. Hence there was a lot of ‘Let’s wait and see’ discussion. At a more general level, this Q offers three potential migration options: stay put, return ‘home’, or move somewhere else (onward migration). For those planning to return anyway, either Brexit is irrelevant, or it accelerates the return. For those planning to stay, the future is more uncertain, and travel back home for visits is likely to be subject to more controls at airports etc. Particular challenges are faced by those who are married and settled in the UK with kids. Others planning to settle may defer these plans. Many quotes illustrated Engbersen and Snel’s (2013) ‘liquid migration’.

- Not strictly for me, but my friends wanted to buy a home, but decided to rent instead because of Brexit (Ondrei, M31, SK, higher-skilled)

- I am thinking about return, but not exactly to Latvia; rather to the wider region. In Latvia there are no regional hubs for finance and insurance. But my girlfriend is from Estonia; it might be that there are some better opportunities to continue our careers in Tallinn-based firms or in Scandinavia. Then, it would be so much easier to travel round the region. It does not really matter if I live in Tallinn, Stockholm or Riga (Alex, M27, LV, high-skilled).

- I imagine myself working in an international business… where there are branches across the world – in the US, in Japan, Australia, Switzerland, the Arab Emirates. It’s just a dream, but a great dream… I want to improve myself, expand my potential, stretch my boundaries (Gunita, F24, LV, lower-qualified, but highly ambitious).
6. Are you considering applying for British citizenship or a residence card?

Most said ‘No’, at least for the time being. The variable possibility for dual citizenship (possible for LV, not so for SK) also affects decision-making and plans. A few were thinking about applying for British citizenship; rather more were contemplating the ‘residence card’ (which involves a fraction of the expense).

- I do not want to lose my Slovakian passport; as Slovakia does not allow holding more passports, I do not think about British citizenship (Ondreij, M31, SK, high-skilled)
- I am not eligible for either at the moment; but eventually I will, provided I stay in the country (Gabika, F30, SK, student)
- Not sure yet. Possibly the residence permit if that would be necessary… But Slovakia does not allow dual citizenship (Janka, F37, SK, high-skilled)
- Not immediately, but this might change in the future. At the moment it seems that, as an EU citizen, my life in Britain is unaffected… I am happy to stay in London for the mid to long term.. But this may change, depending on the actual form that Brexit might take once the negotiations are over (Matej, M30, SK, high-skilled).


Thank you!

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