Guest Editorial:

Introduction to Special Issue on Inequalities and Youth Mobilities in Europe from Comparative Perspectives

Şahizer Samuk[1,¥], Emilia Kmiotek-Meier[1], Birte Nienaber[1], Volha Vysotskaya[1]

Why inequality and youth mobility?

European member states have extinguished most internal borders, but some unseen boundaries and barriers to mobility might still exist, such as socioeconomic resources, regional disparities and social "rootedness" in a place of residence. EU mobility within itself is a unique example of an entity enabling almost unrestricted movement of people. However, only a few EU citizens are involved in and benefit from free movement; for example, 84% of EU citizens have never lived or worked in another EU state (Eurobarometer 2010). Moreover, the idea of mobility, especially within the EU, is particularly presented to young people in a positive light by the knowledge economy (Allen and Hollingworth, 2013). "Characterized by freelance, networked and project-based employment, the creative industries demand 'knowledge workers' who are flexible, entrepreneurial and mobile" (Allen and Hollingworth, 2013: 500). Inequalities follow youth with their intersecting dimensions of gender, ethnicity, class and race. It is widely recognized that youth are expected to "incorporate mobility options into their life plans" (Skrbis, Woodward, and Bean 2014; Cairns 2015). However, it also matters how, and under which circumstances, young people are involved in these mobility options during their life courses.

Moreover, as Robertson et al. (2018) argue: the focus on youth transitions tends to account for mobility only as a means to improve education and employment prospects. Mobility is thus typically treated as a short-term strategy that enables young people to stay 'on track' for a conventional pathway to secure work or a career (in S. Robertson et al. 2018, p. 207). Such a normative stance on youth mobility has brought to the surface more inequalities, both geographical as well as socioeconomic, with the EU's eastward enlargement in 2004 and economic crisis in 2008-2010. The apparently potential mobility after 2004, therefore, brought forward questions such as equality and obstacles regarding youth mobility within the EU. Although mobility has become a possibility compared to migration after the enlargement in the EU, some characteristics of migration would still apply to these mobilities from east to west and south to north (Favell 2008).

The concept of "mobility" might imply being free from certain restrictions that are otherwise implied by the concept of "migration" for third country nationals within Europe. When distinguishing between mobility and migration, Cohen and Sirkeci (2011) draw attention to the flexibility embedded in mobility, highlighting "the changing, floating, fluid nature of this phenomenon" and how it "captures the regular as well as irregular moves of people on the ground

---

¥ Corresponding author: Sahizer Samuk, University of Luxembourg, Luxembourg. E-mail: ssamuk@gmail.com.
[1] University of Luxembourg, Luxembourg.

regardless of time or destination" (p. 7). However, it does not mean that mobility is without individual burdens imposed by existing migration policies. The restrictive character of borders is removed for those countries that signed the Schengen Agreement to the benefit of EU citizens. However, organisational borders (welfare state, social and economic inclusion, etc.) and conceptual borders (being a part of the community, tolerance, interculturalism, political inclusion, etc.) (Geddes 2005) are still quite a dominant presence in the lives of both EU and non-EU citizens.

Where does youth mobility stand in the complex picture of diverse types of inequalities that affect youth and the content of their mobilities? In the light of this question, with this special issue, we look at the hindering and fostering factors in the mobility of young people, and examine different facets of mobility (social networks, transnational activities, agency, gender, household decisions) in different types of mobility (considering mobility for volunteering, vocational education and training, higher education including both credit and degree mobility, and employment). The analysis presented in the papers of this special issue will enable the identification of inequalities accompanying youth mobility at different levels.

The articles in this issue reveal that when it comes to possibilities for becoming mobile, many other types of inequalities apart from the solely economic ones must be considered (Oxfam, 2016, p. 7; Hargittai and Hinnant 2008), including legal, political, social, moral inequalities (White, 2007) together with gender inequality. This special issue on "Inequalities and Youth Mobilities in Europe from Comparative Perspectives" serves the purpose of revealing how diverse types of inequalities can exist within seemingly equal societies.

In this brief introduction, we will first draw attention to what is currently known about equality and youth mobility within policy frameworks and the academic literature. Secondly, we will analyse why this topic is still relevant for researchers, policymakers and communities at large, elaborating on the current research, EU policies, institutional approach and agency. Thirdly, we will summarise the articles in the special issue that provide multi-faceted contributions to work on inequalities and the mobility of young people. Finally, in the concluding remarks, we will deliberate on the future research agenda, and consider which important research questions need to be asked in light of the articles presented in this issue.

What do we know about youth mobility in Europe?

What does youth mean? Who is young? Within a changing cultural context, "youth and young adults are flexible categories" (King et al. 2016). Considering the diverse cultures, Europe(s), regions, localities and traditions that form the unique contexts, it is hard to provide an answer to these questions of who is young. Six articles in this special issue which considered this as a part of their method adopted the age range of 18 to 29 to limit the research field (MOVE D6.7, p. 16-18). Youth is not only about age, though: for instance, Sorrentino's famous film Youth (2015) focuses only on young people, also but on the relational and contextual aspects, such as the good old divergences between older and younger people, generational differences between fathers and daughters/sons, as well as changing nature and understanding, perception of life, love, friendship, beauty and achievements.

"Youth is best understood as a period of transition from the dependence of childhood to adulthood's independence and awareness of our interdependence as members of a community. Youth is a more fluid category than a fixed age-group" (UNESCO definition 2018). Considering this fluid definition of youth, focusing on youth mobility is even more difficult. However, there is a similar fluidity of these two terms, "youth" and "mobility": fluidity, transition and transformation rather than stability, sameness and conservation.

The meaning of youth mobility goes beyond simply moving from one's home country to another country to gain experience and understanding of the new surroundings and cultures. Cuzzocrea and Mandich (2016) provide an enlightening vision of youth mobility: "Mobility is first of all a possibility in the transitions to adulthood" (p. 553). Drawing our attention to the intrinsic value of mobility, Cairns (2008) suggests that "mobility in work and study, and even in the leisure sphere, can be an important motivational tool and an asset in maintaining a positive self-concept" (p. 243). Hence, youth mobility has a very significant meaning beyond building a career, investing in one's capital and achieving academically.

Especially, when mobility takes place in a concrete period such as during the transition to adulthood, youth mobility gains an even more important meaning from an interdisciplinary perspective. Adolescence and early adulthood are times of exploration, and mobility becomes more easily embedded in the life-course of young people. On the other hand, mobility has also become a way of postponing the transition to adulthood, in order to gain global experiences (Yoon 2014). Youth is the time when the stay abroad is more feasible and affordable than at other stages of life, as young people are not bound by work and family, or by settled occupational obligations (Fischer and Malmberg 2001). At the same time, mobility has become a part of youth culture, which can create the illusion that every young person is becoming mobile in Europe. Not all young people move and not all mobile young people break the unseen boundaries of culture and nation by moving (Favell 2008).

Nonetheless, drawing our attention to class and inequalities, "youth is not a homogeneous group and certain young people are more affected by inequality than others" (Oxfam, 2016, p. 3). Following these remarks, how do different types of inequalities thus affect the mobility of young people in Europe? Which of these factors determine the quantity and quality of mobility in the first place?

Inequalities shadowing youth mobility

The facts reveal that young people are the most mobile sectors of their society (Robertson et al., 2018, p. 203). They are also most likely to take the risk of moving abroad for education and/or work-related reasons, and to contribute to social and economic development with innovative business strategies (Eurofound 2011, p. 6).

However, class perspectives are still observed when youth mobilities and inequalities are considered. On class perspectives and future possibilities, Tevington (2018) states that "the decline of the manufacturing sector since the mid-twentieth century, the growing importance of higher education, and rising costs of living are all structural forces that are not recession-specific and will be likely to continue to affect the trajectories of young adults in later generations" (p. 228). Within this structural and projective framework, inequalities also shape who becomes mobile and who remains non-mobile. In this section, we will underline some the inequalities that cause unsatisfactory mobility experiences or that lead to immobility.

Youth mobility may be characterised by holding a social position in the host country that is relatively equal to that in the home society. However, young people sometimes find themselves in vulnerable and unequal positions in the labour market as they migrate. Vysotskaya (2017) draws attention to the inequalities that young people face when they want to find employment as they move to a new country. Her article underlines the fact that existing hierarchical patterns and young people's employment in precarious jobs (as they are thought to be inexperienced, in need of being deskilled, or having to undertake training despite their previous background) causes them to start at an unequal position in the labour market when compared to natives.

In a similar vein, Bygnes and Erdal (2017) also underline the fact that due to liquid migration, where most of the young people moving from Poland and Spain to Norway develop individual strategies of mobility for themselves, young people escape from work circumstances that are hierarchical in their home countries. Their research draws attention to the fact that young people who are in search of opportunities do not always look for better salaries, but more equal and less hierarchical working conditions.

Being in an urban or rural place also makes a difference in relation to aspirations for mobility and emotional reactions to being rooted in the home country. Cairns (2008) finds in his study that "urban young people in the sample have more positive orientations toward mobility, particularly in Europe, and also perhaps are less deeply embedded in or attached to the local communities in which they currently reside" (p. 237). In his case study, he focuses on urban and rural differences in Northern Ireland youth, and observes that these young people feel that they need to move, but that they do not want to see it as an education-to-work transition; they rather conceive of moving as more of a geographical mobility experience (Cairns 2008). However, there is a need to question the structural factors behind these distinctions.

Regarding the structural questions, Allen and Hollingworth (2013) underline the idea that "rootedness to place is thus antithetical to the kinds of subjects demanded by the creative economy and associated with, or productive of, creative places" (p. 501), as a result of their interviews with young people from different class backgrounds in Stoke-on-Trent and Nottingham. Within their work, they deconstruct the distinction between the "stickiness" of people and "cosmopolitan habitus" (p. 503). Regarding this work, which mostly focuses on youth mobility and class, they show that the trend that divides young people into mobile and non-mobile needs to be reconsidered within a critical and contextual light, taking into consideration diverse pre-existing inequalities.

For jobless young people in particular, moving is seen as a method for finding employment, and they are encouraged to move by various policy initiatives. For instance, in Australia, similarly to the EU, there is a policy to tell people to move if they cannot find jobs (Farugia 2018). On the other hand, David Farrugia himself is disapproving of promoting mobility of young people in cases where the local attachments are those that provide them a sense of belonging and locality-based qualifications.

As indicated in the beginning, not all inequalities are economic and not all inequalities are stagnant to the extent that agents' empowerment is limited. "Bounded agency", a term used by Evans (2007, p. 93), shows that young people try to seek some solutions to shape the situations they find themselves in. These situations or living conditions might also comprise other inequalities such as regional inequalities, which is the cause of outmigration from small towns to big cities, first internally and then internationally. For instance, Bloch (2017, p. 60) examines the gender inequalities and gender discrimination faced by mothers that is also reinforced by the lack of state policies to support childcare. Gender inequalities can therefore intersect with other types of labour market inequalities. However, escaping from certain inequalities or using opportunity structures can ultimately create further critical circumstances, where there is demographic shrinkage and an absence of young people in small towns (Makkai et al. 2017), which in turn can perpetuate inequalities that already exist.

Considering other types of inequalities, higher education as a privilege can also be discussed. Powell and Finger (2013) focus on the Bologna process and find out that the dimensions of spatial mobility correlate quite well with social mobility and social inclusion, which means that some inequalities can be reproduced if dimensions other than economic equality are not taken into account whilst fostering higher education mobility within the EU member states.

In line with the structural perspective, for instance, Rodriguez (2013, p. 568) underlines the importance of social structure as consisting of "discourses, public policies, and institutional practices that variously empower or disempower social groups." Although his focus group is migrants in the article referred to here, the "social group" could also be "young mobile people". According to the dominant discourses, public policies and institutional practices, young people might be blamed for their failures, although these "failures" could be a part of their life course and they might indicate directions other than how the social structure places them within the accepted societal roles and expectations.

Considering the remarks above, Farrugia, Smyth and Harrison (2016) are critical about "the figure of the self-responsible individual of neoliberal capitalism" (p. 242). They focus on homeless youth and how inequalities marginalise them within their society, via degradation and stigmatisation. According to their analysis, the transition to adulthood is equated with earning money, having a job, and being responsible, independent, etc. Farrugia, Smyth and Harrison (2016) underline the idea that "during the youth period, young people are expected to accumulate the personal capacities to become productive, independent, responsible adults" (p. 241). However, this kind of expectation and understanding of adulthood posits the notion that if young people fail to achieve this typical adult status, it is assumed to be their fault that they have become homeless, jobless, etc. (Farrugia, Smyth and Harrison 2016). On the other hand, in some cases, youth internalises the neoliberal idea of predominance of hard work and the role of their agency (rather than external circumstances) regarding their failures and successes (Franceschelli and Keating 2018).

The following three dimensions of inequality regarding youth mobility that have direct effects on how and why people move are explained in the following section, i.e. EU policies and policy gaps, institutional reasons for inequalities and the agency perspective.

Perspectives and policies: youth and EU policies in the context of mobility

EU policies have played a central role in youth migration and mobility (O'Reilly et al. 2015), in addition to influencing factors such as labour market flexibility, mass education, migration patterns within a border-free Europe and family legacies. In this section, how EU policies aim to view, review and shape youth mobility will be briefly discussed.

EU policymakers have been concerned with youth mobilities and the relevant vulnerabilities that young people encounter. These vulnerabilities are defined in diverse ways and include "disability, health problems, educational difficulties, cultural differences, economic obstacles, social obstacles and geographical obstacles" (EC 2014, p. 7). The European Commission adopted diverse strategies against unemployment in 2012, named the "youth employment package". The Council recommendation of 2013 (CoE, 2013) underlines schemes for youth welfare and providing employment. The Youth Guarantee was established under this scheme and has been considered a successful attempt at a solution, as it targeted young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs). Moreover, the Youth Guarantee has been seen as a solution for improving employment security for young people in their transition from school to work (EC 2013: Social Policies).

The EU has taken many measures to ensure social inclusion and social mobility, as well as to underline socially inclusive economic growth and labour market integration. For instance, a dashboard of EU youth indicators provides detailed information about the health and wellbeing of young people in Europe, early leavers of education, social inclusion and many more youth-centred themes. The European network of Public Employment Services (PES) also boasts multiple initiatives to help young people find employment, and the EU aims to increase the efficiency of

these services. Besides these, sustainable development goals (UN 2017) at the global level have taken on the role of ameliorating the conditions of youth.

Another strategy to combat inequality has been promoting youth mobility, so that young people with economic crises in their home countries can benefit from youth mobility schemes to find jobs, receive training and engage in educational opportunities in other EU countries. For instance, the Erasmus+ program aims to be more inclusive of diverse groups who might face inequalities in their daily lives. The numbers of youth mobility participants vary; under the Erasmus+ umbrella, the rates of participation in higher education are much higher than in other levels of education (Erasmus+ Annual Report 2016). One of the most important schemes is Erasmus+, which has been influential in the lives of not only European youth, but non-European young people have also been able to train and study in European member states. Despite the fact that there is a common EU strategy regarding youth mobility (e.g. Erasmus+), among young people not all mobility types are popular, with some mobilities proving more preferable or familiar (e.g. higher education-related mobilities) than others (vocational education and training, and entrepreneurship).

Despite all these initiatives, there are policy gaps regarding youth and mobility. Some of the gaps arise from the fact that diverse types of inequalities (cultural, economic, social, moral and gender-related) are ingrained deeply within institutional backgrounds. Moreover, there is a gap between the economic vision of European society (efficient and functional whilst fostering high economic growth and vibrant, flexible labour markets) and how young people actually prefer to express their dreams (curiosity, creativity, transnational political participation, intrinsic value of mobility, diversity, stability and equality) beyond simply finding jobs or constantly moving in search of opportunities. It is important to understand that "raising people's aspirations without creating labour market opportunities is dangerous" (Allen and Hollingworth, 2013, p. 514); the next section will hence analyse some institutional constraints that cause inequalities in the lives of young people.

Institutional background and inequalities

Inequalities are often revealed in national legal frameworks and linked to the institutional settings. The perspectives and policies regarding youth and youth mobility are quite diverse in different EU member states (Cairns 2010). Möhring (2016, p. 128) defines several welfare state regimes and she shows how these "different welfare regimes translate into specific qualities of individual employment histories." Institutions and governmental life course policies can shape young people's trajectories: "As young people's orientations and strategies reflect the resources and opportunities they can 'normally' expect and the 'legitimacy' of their aspirations, transition regimes represent the different realities in which young people's biographies are embedded and become visible in their accounts of experiences with institutional actors in transition systems" (Walther 2006, 136).

Closely related to these welfare systems, young people participate in different educational institutional settings in an attempt to compensate social inequalities; however, as education and economy are interrelated and "structurally coupled with each other," these inequalities become exacerbated and legitimised via educational systems (Windzio 2013, p. 5). Despite some common pan-national (i.e. EU) regulations, the organisational setting differs from country to country. Hence, many Europes exist within one European continent (Amelina and Vasilache, 2014). Additionally, mobilities are gendered at different levels in different countries (Uteng and Creswell, 2016) and institutions might contribute to gendered perspectives on youth mobility.

Finally, youth agency and youth life courses may be intertwined with the institutional and governmental life courses. Youth mobilities that are not realised for work purposes but rather for study purposes might be considered as a way of postponing the inevitable transition to adulthood, whilst institutions might insist that young people transfer to adulthood as soon as possible. This situation can create a kind of tension within young people, which relates more to the theme of agency and agentic behaviour.

We therefore briefly explain in a nutshell our answer to this question: within these institutional differences, constraints and openings, what is the role of agency?

Agency and youth mobility

Young people are aware of their resources and adjust their mobilities according to their cultural, economic and social resources. Using these resources, they envision a different future as they move within Europe for further opportunities. Cuzzocrea and Mandich (2016) underline the idea that youth mobility is characterised by this aspect of envisioning a different future, within which there are possibilities:

> "Agency and the future are intertwined: agency involves the idea of projection and implies anticipation; 'desired' and 'hoped for' futures have an impact on the ways in which youth act in the world today, as they represent the ways in which youth identify the resources (including symbolic ones) that they believe are available for them." (p. 553)

Young people do not move only for higher salaries and better welfare and education standards; they move because they are searching for "what people are able to be and to do, and not on what they can consume, or on their incomes" (Robeyns, 2003, p. 62). In other words, (young) people move because mobility creates new power structures, within which one has more say and broader options regarding future opportunities. Motives are not as crude as a better salary or better GDP; motivations and wishes are rather related to youth transitions and "becoming an adult", as well as being independent and achieving (strategies of) agency for themselves.

Young people move for the sake of capabilities as well. These capabilities make Europe a more open space for further future possibilities of self-realisation. In line with the view of Sen (1973), capabilities come before functionings; youth may imagine first functionings before mobility, but during and after mobility they enhance their capabilities: "Capabilities are people's potential functionings… The difference between a functioning and capability is similar to the difference between an achievement and the freedom to achieve something, or between an outcome and opportunity" (p. 63). Nussbaum (2000), for instance, lists some of the capabilities, such as life, bodily health, bodily integrity, senses, imagination and thought, emotions, practical reason, affiliation, living with other species, playing and control over one's environment. As indicated in the discussion above, policy gaps emerge from exclusively considering functionings but not the capabilities.

It is important to emphasise the dilemma of human security, as young people consider "well-being and their security as individuals as well as members of culture groups and societies… they are cultural agents and their decisions reflect larger cultural and social debates. Migrants seek to live well and this means they consider cultural, economic and social security in their decisions" (Cohen and Sirkeci 2011, p. 2). In some cases, this security is provided by the country's characteristics and institutional settings. In others, security comes from the household, which supports or is involved in the mobility of the young member of the family. On the other hand, mobility decisions can be the opposite, namely an escape from the insecurity and inequality within

the household. Other securities may be linked to social networks, as those who have more contacts than others have also the luxury of accessing information, relying on and being inspired by these (mobile) networks.

In the next section, we will discuss the contributions to this special issue and how they relate to the theme of "youth mobility and inequality" from multi-dimensional perspectives. Articles in the special issue participate in the discussion of youth mobility by linking the phenomenon to both youth studies and agentic decisions to become mobile and to migrate.

Contributions for the special issue: articles evaluated from a holistic perspective

This special issue of *Migration Letters* brings in new perspectives on comparative studies on mobilities and inequalities among young people within Europe. Social inequality, economic inequality, gender inequality, educational inequality, inequality in sociocultural contexts and inequality in terms of access to internationalisation and mobility are some of the topics that are examined in depth from a comparative perspective, using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Hence, this special issue offers an interdisciplinary perspective, as the authors bring expertise from different fields, namely sociology, economics, geography and social psychology. Furthermore, these contributions include a comparative look at the macro, meso and micro levels.

"The heterogeneity of the various forms of mobility requires new conceptual tools and empirical investigations into the nexus between mobilities and inequalities" (Amelina and Vasilache, 2014, p. 112); the contributors have therefore used diverse theories and methodologies to reflect on the multifaceted nature of youth mobility and various dimensions of inequality in our results. The articles rely on various methodologies: narrative and biographical interviews, and surveys. These methodologies help us understand the neglected, under-researched subdomains of youth mobility, especially motives for and discouragement from becoming mobile.

Each article in this special issue gives a voice to a different theoretical perspective, explaining mobility phenomena with spontaneous and descriptive structures as well as causal inferences. The articles complement each other and offer a broader picture of youth mobility, both within the EU and beyond: Schlimbach et al. (2019) underline the factors that affect the mobility experience from a temporal and institutional point of view; Kmiotek-Meier et al. (2019) focus on differences in hindering factors for four types of mobility; Hemming et al. (2019) contemplate the country-related macro-level factors centring on the concept of human capital; Dabasi et al. (2019) point out the important dilemmas regarding Erasmus+ and how it influences the mobilities of young people from Eastern Europe; Díaz Chrone et al. (2019) examine how actions take place at the transnational sphere when young people become mobile; Herz et al. (2019) try to understand how social networks become a supporting structure for mobility, including class perspective and family background; and finally, Bastianon (2019) draws our attention to household- and gender-related divergences in young people's choice to become mobile. The next section will explore each of them in greater detail.

Specific contributions of the special issue to youth mobility and inequalities

Inequality research in youth studies has been predominantly preoccupied with the role of socioeconomic backgrounds. The article by Schlimbach et al. (2019) contributes to the discussion around social inequality and education. This comparative work explores the variety of young people's actions in mobilities by contextualising them according to their institutional and biographical settings. It considers a wider range of mobility fields, thus contributing to a more comprehensive picture of the European youth mobility landscape.

The contribution from Kmiotek-Meier et al. (2019) provides details of obstacles in relation to four mobility types: pupil, vocational (training and education), higher education student (both degree and credit mobility), and employment mobility among young people from six countries: Germany, Hungary, Luxembourg, Norway, Romania and Spain. The article, based on quantitative and qualitative data, offers a cross-mobility type comparison, revealing inequalities among the different ways young people are mobile in contemporary Europe. On the one hand, it can be said that obstacles before and during mobility vary between work-related and educational mobility types, as they are situated within different organisational frames. On the other hand, the authors show that some obstacles are shared by all mobility types in focus: lack of financial resources (Van Mol and Timmerman, 2014), weak access to information and guidance, as well as incompatibility of institutional regulations within Europe. Drawing on comparisons of six countries, inequalities regarding diverse points of departure due to country contexts are demonstrated, with some young people on the move being "more equal" than others. The paper shows also that inequalities are apparent both before mobility (in accessing mobility or information related to it) and during mobility (in achieving the goals fixed before mobility).

Hemming et al. (2019) focus on national framework conditions and, along with that, linked opportunity structures and situational constraints, which are reflected in individual reasons and motivations for mobility. Using a comparative approach, this paper aims to relate a macro-level country typology concentrating on human capital to individual mobility motivations and reasons on the micro-level. Their results generate a four-category country-related typology, revealing social and spatial inequality and heterogeneity in the European context. The most important quality of this article is the interlinkage between given opportunity structures framed through the respective country type, and individual reasons and motivations for mobility (captured via semi-structured interviews and an online survey). The results emphasise negative effects of selective mobility flows within Europe, where some countries profit whilst others lose human capital. At the same time, the research reveals the existence of powerful non-economic motives for all observed youth, and corresponding varying motives across different educational/biographical settings in which mobilities are embedded.

Dabasi-Halász et al. (2019) focus on the political situation, historical past and economic development within the framework of youth mobility from Hungary and Romania within the framework of Erasmus+. The paper contributes to the common publication by looking at youth mobility from a regional perspective, comparing post-socialist and other countries, and provides a detailed analysis of post-socialist characteristics regarding youth mobility. Post-socialist countries are characterised by less mobility and an orientation towards work-related rather than study-related mobility. The youth mobility patterns from Hungary and Romania are thus different. However, in the case of Erasmus+, these differences do not manifest themselves in a clear manner. Thus, youth mobility connected to Erasmus+ is worth analysing as an example of European integration. This article suggests that further research is needed to understand how the mobility opportunities for and constraints on young people with different political backgrounds and institutions differ.

Diaz-Chorne et al. (2019) focus on the transnational aspect of mobility by looking at participation in social, cultural and political activities in both the host and home countries. They complement the previous two articles by analysing institutions and how they can be influential on transnational participation. Hence, they unite social, demographic and economic factors with simultaneity of transnational participatory action. Via regression analysis, they confirm the findings of the previous literature, namely that young people engage in both home and host country activities,

and that there is a mutual positive reinforcement between the two aspects. Transnational activity remains socioeconomically embedded, and their findings show that familial and institutional contexts remain both relevant and significant. It is not only inequalities that affect transnational participation, but transnationality also constitutes a societal heterogeneity or marker of differences, often resulting in inequalities.

The contribution on social networks' effects on intention to move in Europe by Andreas Herz et al. (2019) enhances the importance of personal networks in understanding how European young people consider moving abroad in the future. Diversifying network approaches on migration with recent research from transnational studies, the authors conceptualise mobility as a feature of the networks of young people. Any mobility experiences within young people's networks are thus analysed as a source for young people's consideration of mobility. The contribution embeds this enhanced perspective on the relevance of personal contacts into the current literature on unequal mobility intentions. Differentiating between four levels of networks (macro, individual, family/household, and social), the paper demonstrates the overall importance of mobility in young people's relationships. Based on quantitative data from the MOVE survey, including mobiles and non-mobiles from Europe (n=5,499), the authors show that young people's considerations of moving abroad differ between European countries, decrease with age, increase for youth studying, and increase with prior mobility experiences. Additionally, the mobility experiences of significant others with whom youth are connected (parents, partners, friends, other relatives) increase the probability that they will consider moving abroad in the future.

Bastianon's (2019) article shifts our attention from the EU to the neighbouring countries that have been directly affected by European mobility and migration policies. Despite all the investments made by the EU, in some cases via national schemes, the author highlights that at the micro-level not everyone has the same opportunity to become an emigrant. This is due to the fact that not everyone has adequate social, economic and cultural circumstances to prepare them for migration. This multi-level study investigates the influence of individual and household capabilities and aspirations, and how they influence young people's aspirations to move abroad. The results of this article complement what has been left unsaid in the previous articles: that household financial security, gender norms and residential satisfaction (national pride) affect youth migration aspirations. Individual and household-level factors affect males and females in starkly different ways: females are more influenced by household conditions and one's locus of control than males are. Since the special issue focuses mostly on the youth mobility aspect within the EU, this article expands the scope of research to include Georgia and Moldova, both of which are countries involved in the European Neighbourhood Policy. The article's main theoretical concepts and contributions emanate from psychological concepts such as autonomy and locus of control, which further relate personality traits to migration aspirations. Overall, this article complements the special issue in that the editors aim to include interdisciplinary work in understanding the decisions behind migration for young people as worth a try in youth mobility research.

All these contributions ensure that we investigate modes of agency (Schlimbach et al. 2019), the micro perspectives on youth mobility (Kmiotek-Meier et al. 2019; Hemming et al. 2019; Dabasi-Halász et al. 2019), household perspective (Bastianon 2019), effects of social networks on thoughts of moving (Herz et al. 2019) and the transnational aspect of mobility as delineated by Diaz-Chorne et al. (2019). Emphasising the layers of intersection between different levels of inequality, the authors in this special issue discuss the fact that inequalities cannot be explained by viewing through just one theoretical lens, e.g. pull and push factors, brain drain, or the centre and periphery of

Europe. Additionally, the contributions elaborate on how the micro and meso levels interact with the macro-level factors to better explain the discontents of youth mobility in Europe.

Concluding remarks

The main purposes of this special issue have been to consider socioecological perspectives of youth mobility and agency, to address the embeddedness of individuals within broader structures (be it a nation state, institution, family or peer network), and not to focus solely on the solitary subject, as has already been criticised in migration research (Manderscheid, 2014). The contributions argue that young people actively define the situations in which they live according to their beliefs and desires, their social backgrounds and given constraints specific to their stage in life (Elder 1995). Thus, young people are not objects, but subjects of the situation with which they are confronted (Bynner 2005; Elder 1995). Despite this, their options are influenced by the circumstances under which they live (Mills and Blossfeld 2006; Walther 2001), showing once again that all levels (macro, meso and micro) are relevant to the discussion of inequalities linked with youth mobility.

The special issue, via seven articles, reveals that youth mobility in Europe is still not devoid of inequalities. These inequalities can result from different reasons such as backgrounds relating to social capital, expansion of social networks, differences in transnational engagement, overbearing effects of household decisions, diverse approaches to gender in different cultural contexts, and regional inequalities that follow youth. The obstacles that follow youth mobilities such as lack of financial resources and lack of language skills are still predominant. Despite the fact that EU policies aim at overcoming obstacles via diverse policies and programmes, institutions in the home countries and host countries can still define experiences of youth mobility.

Institutional settings in interaction and in amalgamation with agency demonstrate various facets of liquid migration and liquid mobility. Mobility is a wish, desire, a norm, a criterion; however, non-return or losing human capital, defining lives based on labour market flexibilities, can create further precarious conditions for young people and reinforce unequal transformations in diverse localities. Challenges and opportunities are present when a mobility scheme has taken place: how young people interpret their mobility experience depends on "mobility cultures, institutional support, access to mobility funds, mobility windows/temporality, room to manoeuvre vs. institutional penetration" (Schlimbach et al. 2019). All these aspects draw attention to changing strategies to achieve agency before, during and even after mobility.

This special issue deconstructs mobility and immobility and then re-examines how complex youth mobility can be, and how many factors the researchers need to take into account when examining inequalities in youth mobilities. Youth is not just a matter of age, and mobility is not just a matter of moving from one place to another. Both are more dynamic, changeable and fluid as categories. And the best mobilities are the ones that give young people the opportunities to define their mobility experience, to feel empowered and to consider mobility not as a necessity but as an experience that helps them define their own "transitions", "participation" and "adulthood".

Outlook for further research

If diverse forms of inequality, hierarchy and gender discrimination continue to exist at a structural level in workplaces, economic inequality can thus be seen as not only the cause but also the symptom of other types of historically-embedded structural inequalities. Rather than quantifying mobilities, it is necessary to investigate the reasons for immobility and scrutinise the diverse types of mobilities in order to find solutions to the brain drain and inequalities that cause obstacles to

youth mobility both within and outside Europe. Moreover, a novel perspective in research and a creative approach in policymaking could also aim at erasing different types of inequalities that young people face before, during and after mobility.

In this vein, short-term mobilities might not be solutions to structural and long-term inequalities. Short-term mobilities that cause long-term stays on the other hand may accelerate unequal processes within different regions of Europe, where some towns and cities become devoid of their human and social capital as well as of their dynamic and energetic youth. In view of such a significant effect on the societies left behind, more research should be conducted on reasons for non-return and reasons for returning to localities (at national, regional and local levels), which have been addressed only cursorily in the research so far.

Some inequalities are not quantifiable but are visible in the form of discrimination, or in how cumbersome and slow long-term social mobility is in a city, region or country. One must thus look beyond simply creating a future for young people via finding employment, and considerations could go beyond mainstreaming youth policies regarding mobility. Future research also needs to focus on the intrinsic qualities of youth mobility concerning employment, (higher) education, volunteering, vocational education and training, pupil exchanges and entrepreneurship, as well as other mobility types. Inequalities might be present in some mobilities more than in others. In line with these thoughts, this issue represents a first step in illuminating the causes and consequences of various types of youth mobility, with special attention paid to inequalities.

References

Allen, K. and Hollingworth, S. (2013). 'Sticky subjects' or 'Cosmopolitan Creatives'? Social class, place and urban young people's aspirations for work in the knowledge economy. Urban Studies 50 (3): 499-517. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098012468901

Amelina, A., & Vasilache, A. (2014). The shadows of enlargement: Theorising mobility and inequality in a changing Europe. Migration Letters, 11(2), 109–124. https://doi.org/10.33182/ml.v11i2.233

Bastianon, C. (2019). Youth Migration Aspirations in Georgia and Moldova. Migration Letters, 16(1), pp. 105-121. https://doi.org/10.33182/ml.v16i1.596

Bloch, A. (2017). "Other Mothers," Migration, and a Transnational Nurturing Nexus. Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 43(1), 53-75. https://doi.org/10.1086/692441

Bygnes, S., & Erdal, M. B. (2017). Liquid migration, grounded lives: Considerations about future mobility and settlement among Polish and Spanish migrants in Norway. Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 43(1), 102-118. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2016.1211004

Bynner, J. (2005). Rethinking the youth phase of the life-course: The case for emerging adulthood? Journal of Youth Studies, 8, 367–384. https://doi.org/10.1080/13676260500431628

Cairns, D. (2008). Moving in transition: Northern Ireland youth and geographical mobility. Young: Nordic Journal of Youth Research, 16(3), 227-49. https://doi.org/10.1177/110330880801600301

Cairns, D. (Ed.). (2010). Youth on the move: European youth and geographical mobility. Springer Science & Business Media. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-531-92331-4

Cairns, D. C. (2015). Mapping the Youth Mobility Field: Youth sociology and student mobility and migration in a European context. In: Lange, Reiter, Schutter, Steiner (eds.): Handbuch Kindheits- und Jugendsoziologie, 1-16. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-05676-6_34-1

Cohen, J. H., & Sirkeci, I. (2011). Cultures of Migration: The Global Nature of Contemporary Mobility. Austin: University of Texas Press. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2435.2009.00589.x

Council of Europe (2013). Establishing a Youth Guarantee. Retrieved from https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:32013H0426(01). Official Journal of the European Union.

Cuzzocrea, V. & Mandich, G. (2016). Students' narratives of the future: Imagined mobilities as forms of youth agency. Journal of Youth Studies, 19(4), 552-567. https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2015.1098773

Dabasi-Halász, Z., Lipták, K., Kiss, J., Manafi, I., Marinescu, D.E., Roman, M., & Lorenzo-Rodriguez, J. (2019). International youth mobility in Eastern and Western Europe – the case of the Erasmus+ programme. Migration Letters, 16(1), pp. 61-72. https://doi.org/10.33182/ml.v16i1.626

Diaz-Chorne, L., Suárez-Lledó, V., Lorenzo, V. (2019). It's the taking part that counts: Inequalities and simultaneous youth transnational engagement from six European countries. Migration Letters, 16(1), pp. 73-91. https://doi.org/10.33182/ml.v16i1.628

Elder, G. H. (1995). "Life trajectories in changing societies", in A. Bandura (Ed.). Self-Efficacy in Changing Societies (pp. 46-68). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511527692.004

Eurobarometer. (2010). Geographical and Labour Market Mobility. No. 337. European Commission. Retrieved from http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/archives/ebs/ebs_337_en.pdf on 29 January 2018.

Eurofound. (2011). Foundation findings: Mobility in Europe - The way forward. Retrieved from https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef_files/pubdocs/2007/03/en/1/ef0703en.pdf

European Commission (2013). Social Policies. Retrieved from https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/4712c372-38f8-4f3b-b6d8-16f4cc2a6c85/language-en

European Commission (2014). Erasmus+ Inclusion and Diversity Strategy, in the field of youth. Retrieved from http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/youth/library/reports/inclusion-diversity-strategy_en.pdf

European Commission (2016). Annual Report 2016: Erasmus+ Enriching Lives. Opening Minds. Brussels

Evans, K. (2007). Concepts of bounded agency in education, work, and the personal lives of young adults. International Journal of Psychology, 42(2), 85-93. https://doi.org/10.1080/00207590600991237

Farugia, D. (2018). David Farugia is supporting the development of strong regional communities. Retrieved from https://www.newcastle.edu.au/profile/david-m-farrugia

Farrugia, D., Smyth, J., & Harrison, T. (2016). Moral distinctions and structural inequality: homeless youth salvaging the self. The Sociological Review, 64(2), 238-255. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-954X.12252

Favell, A. (2008). The new face of East–West migration in Europe. Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 34(5), 701-716. https://doi.org/10.1080/13691830802105947

Fischer, P. A., & Malmberg, G. (2001). Settled people don't move: On life course and (im-) mobility in Sweden. International Journal of Population Geography, 7(5), 357-371. https://doi.org/10.1002/ijpg.230

Geddes, A. (2005). Europe's border relationships and international migration relations. JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies, 43(4), 787-806. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5965.2005.00596.x

Hargittai, E., & Hinnant, A. (2008). Digital inequality: Differences in young adults' use of the Internet. Communication Research, 35(5), 602-621. https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650208321782

Hemming, K., Schlimbach, T., Tillmann, F., Nienaber, B., Roman, M. and Skrobanek, J. (2019). Structural framework conditions and individual motivations for youth-mobility: A macro-micro level approach for different European country-types. Migration Letters, 16(1), pp. 45-59. https://doi.org/10.33182/ml.v16i1.621

Herz, A., Diaz-Chorne, L., Díaz-Catalán, C., Alice, A. and Samuk, Ş. (2019). Are you mobile, too? The role played by social networks in the intention to move abroad among youth in Europe. Migration Letters, 16(1), pp. 93-104. https://doi.org/10.33182/ml.v16i1.622

Interview (2018). David Farrugia is supporting the development of strong regional communities. Retrieved from https://www.newcastle.edu.au/profile/david-m-farrugia

King, R., Lulle, A., Morosanu, L., & Williams, A. (2016). International youth mobility and life transitions in Europe: Questions, definitions, typologies and theoretical approaches. Working paper. Sussex Centre for Migration Research.

Kmiotek-Meier, E., Skrobanek, J., Nienaber, B., Vysotskaya, V., Samuk, S., Ardic, T., Pavlova, I., Dabasi-Halázs, Z., Diaz, C., Bissinger, J., Schlimbach, T. & Horvath, K. (2019). Why is it so hard? And for whom? Obstacles in the intra-EU mobility. Migration Letters, 16(1), pp. 31-44. https://doi.org/10.33182/ml.v16i1.627

Makkai, B., Máté, É., Pirisi, G., & Trócsányi, A. (2017). Where Have All the Youngsters Gone? The Background and Consequences of Young Adults' Outmigration from Hungarian Small Towns. European Countryside, 9(4), 789-807. https://doi.org/10.1515/euco-2017-0044

Manderscheid, K. (2014). Criticising the solitary mobile subject: Researching relational mobilities and reflecting on mobile methods. Mobilities, 9(2), 188–219. https://doi.org/10.1080/17450101.2013.830406

Mills, M., & Blossfeld, H. P. (2006). Globalization, uncertainty and the early life course. In: Blossfeld, Klijzing, Mills & Kurz (eds.): Globalization, uncertainty and youth in society: the losers in a globalizing world, 1-23.

Möhring, K. (2016). Life course regimes in Europe: individual employment histories in comparative and historical perspective. Journal of European Social Policy, 26(2), 124-139. https://doi.org/10.1177/0958928716633046

Nussbaum, M. (2000). Women and human development: the capabilities approach. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511841286

O'Reilly, J., Eichhorst, W., Gábos, A., Hadjivassiliou, K., Kurakova, L., Lain, D., Leschke, J., McGuiness, S., Nazio, T., Ortlieb R., Russell, H. & Villa, P. (2015). Five characteristics of youth unemployment in Europe: Flexibility, education, migration, family legacies, and EU policy. Sage Open, 5(1). https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244015574962

Oxfam. (2016) Youth and Inequality: Time to support youth as agents of their own future. Oxfam Briefing Paper.

Powell, J. J., & Finger, C. (2013). The Bologna Process's Model of Mobility in Europe: the relationship of its spatial and social dimensions. European Educational Research Journal, 12(2), 270-285. https://doi.org/10.2304/eerj.2013.12.2.270

Robertson, S., Harris, A., & Baldassar, L. (2018). Mobile transitions: a conceptual framework for researching a generation on the move. Journal of Youth Studies, 21(2), 203-217. https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2017.1362101

Robeyns, I. (2003). Sen's capability approach and gender inequality: Selecting relevant capabilities. Feminist Economics, 9(2-3), 61-92. https://doi.org/10.1080/1354570022000078024

Rodriguez, R. (2013). Action research with immigrants: working with vulnerable immigrant communities. In Routledge International Handbook of Migration Studies (pp. 578-589). Routledge.

Samuk, S., Nienaber, B., Bissinger, J. and Vysotskaya, V. (2018). MOVE Deliverable No. 6.7 – Final Public Project Report.

Schlimbach, H., Skrobanek, J., Kmiotek-Meier, E., Vysotskaya, V. (2019). Capturing agency in different educational settings. A comparative study on youth perceptions of mobility-framing structures. Migration Letters, 16(1), pp. 15-29. DOI: https://doi.org/10.33182/ml.v16i1.635

Sen, A. (1973). On economic inequality. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/0198281935.001.0001

Skrbis, Z., Woodward, I. & Bean, C. (2014). Seeds of cosmopolitan future? Young people and their aspirations for future mobility. Journal of Youth Studies, 17(5), 614-625. https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2013.834314

Sorrentino, P. (2015). "Youth" (film)

Tevington, P. (2018). Privileged to worry: social class, cultural knowledge, and strategies toward the future among young adults. Sociological Quarterly, 59(2), 204-233. https://doi.org/10.1080/00380253.2017.1389251

UNESCO (2018). Youth Definition. Retrieved from http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/youth/youth-definition/

United Nations General Assembly (2017). Sustainable Development Goals Report. Retrieved from https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/files/report/2017/thesustainabledevelopmentgoalsreport2017.pdf

Uteng, T. P., & Cresswell, T. (2016). Gendered mobilities: Towards an holistic understanding. In Uteng, T. P., & Cresswell, T. (eds.): Gendered Mobilities (pp. 15-26). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315584201

Van Mol, C., & Timmerman, C. (2014). 'Should I stay or should I go?' An analysis of the determinants of intra-European student mobility. Population, Space and Place, 20, 465–479. https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.1833

Vysotskaya, V. (2017). Is Luxembourg an attractive destination for European young workers for boosting their careers? The activation of young workers' skills in entering job markets abroad. Tér és Társadalom 14, 118-130.

Walther, A. (2001). Misleading trajectories: Transition dilemmas of young adults in Europe. Journal of Youth Studies, 4, 101–118. https://doi.org/10.1080/13676260120028574

Walther, A. (2006). Regimes of youth transitions. Choice, flexibility and security in young people's experiences across different European contexts. Young: Nordic Journal of Youth Research, 14(2): 119–139. https://doi.org/10.1177/1103308806062737

White, S. (2007). Equality (key concepts). Polity Press, Cambridge, UK.

Windzio, M. (2013). Integration and inequality in educational institutions: an institutional perspective. In Windzio, M. (ed.): Integration and inequality in educational institutions (pp. 3-18). Springer, Dordrecht. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-6119-3

Yoon, K. (2014). Transnational youth mobility in the neoliberal economy of experience. Journal of Youth Studies, 17(8), 1014-1028. https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2013.878791