

Migration and Young People

This special issue is focused mainly on young people, aiming to describe and interpret the experiences of those whose lives have been affected, either directly or indirectly, by life in diaspora/minority and/or migration. The contributions all deal with the situations of youth with migrant experience, or young people of migrant background, or rather, second-generation migrants who are young and have grown up in a diasporic/minority community relationship. Researchers think of migrants as people whose lives are shaped by circumstances that are specific. They locate migrants in relation to more than one geographical area and consider them affected by migration regimes, specifically. Researchers associate migrants with more than one social space as well, expecting migrants to work with (in the sense of making use of) multiple cultural registers which are then reflected in their identities, knowledge, practices and senses of belonging. Globalization and transnationalism then make their perspectives more visible (Szaló 2007).

These reflections on migration and young people are contextualized by the life-course trajectories in which such youngsters find themselves. What defines the position of any young person is, on the one hand, his or her dependency and, on the other hand, his or her open future. Childhood and youth are liminal phases that raise questions more about who one will become than about who one is. Young people of migrant background are in a position where who they are now, exactly, is just as crucial as who they will become, and not just in relation to their future choices, opportunities and positions, but precisely in terms of the cultural practices that contribute to their lives in the present (Bucholtz 2002).

There are different ways in which migration affects the lives of young people. Some are involved in flows of migration that are quite specific. Others migrate with their parents and/or are socialized in the new country. Scholars ask what the contribution of migration is to their development as people and what it is like to grow up in migration. On the one hand, scholars consider migration to be a kind of mobility that either opens up new opportunities for young people or does not do so, depending on what kind of migration regime they are experiencing; their development is being supported by their mobility, which redefines their social status. On the other hand, scholars address the position in society of such young people, what their cultural registers are, and what identities or senses of belonging they are negotiating. Scholarship offers concepts that locate such young people between two cultures at least. These include acculturation processes, biculturalism, hybrid cultures, the third culture

(Pollock van Reken 1999) or the “in-between” state (Levitt 2009). Scholarship thus creates an image of these young people with migrant experience or young people of migrant background, as “others”, their otherness is interpreted as part of the dichotomy of their knowledge of local societies and the practices of such societies, or rather, the practices of those not associated with migration. Although it is hard to abandon the idea of interpreting children/youth with migrant backgrounds and their socialization as involving some kind of “clash”, or as the management of choices and pressures within the framework of two or more cultures or sociocultural spaces, other approaches are being advocated. The scholars herein follow such interpretations. In their view, the descendants of families in migrancy do not choose between cultures, but are “seen as navigators through unstable social landscapes” (Seeberg – Goździak 2016: 4). Children from families living in migrancy are understood neither as objects who are passive, nor as those in charge (exclusively) of their own lives. They are reacting to the circumstances presented by their unstable social landscapes.

The studies published in this special issue answer the question of how young people whose life courses are associated either with actual migration or notions of migration direct their lives in the contexts of global society, national and transnational regimes, and these social landscapes. All are based on data interpreted qualitatively, but they use conceptual frameworks that vary: acculturation, integration, transnational migration. They present various fields and topics through which the authors consider these issues of migration and young people. In terms of fields, the studies published herein are predominantly about the Czech Republic, but they also cover Austria and Ireland. The special issue includes six studies specifically. Zita Skořepová’s contribution describes young men, members of a band, who construct their identities in relation to the Czech minority in Vienna, among other factors. Zuzana Terry researches Anglophone teenagers from migrant families in the Czech Republic and their participation in the project of a transnational Youth Theater, which creates a specific space for them to discover and experience their cosmopolitan identities. Zuzana Rendek interprets young Muslims of migrant background (the second generation) negotiating their social identities under the circumstances of their life in the Czech Republic. Authors Lenka Formánková and Marta Lopatková then analyze the Czech-language Facebook page “Confessions of the Vietnamese”, which has become a platform for the articulation of the acculturation gap between the first and second generation of Vietnamese in the Czech Republic. Niamh Donnelly’s study draws attention, in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic, to Irish young people’s return to their country of origin. She shows how such an interruption to

their migration, unplanned as it was, is also precarious when it comes to routing their life-courses. Similarly, the contribution by Ondřej Filipec and Lucie Macková endeavors to consider return migration as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic in the contexts of forced versus voluntary migration; their research does not just include young people, though. Several levels intersect across these studies that connect or frame the subject of migration and youth.

Young people associated with migration are seen as descendants and often relate to their parents in their practices and testimonies. The figure(s) of their parent(s) constitute their background – whether cultural, diasporic/minority, ethnic, religious, and/or socio-economic – and repeatedly come into play. It is anticipated that becoming independent is integral to the life-course of all youth. The context of migration, however, forces these young people to still include their parents in their declarations and trajectories, in various respects. The discursive practice of relating to their parents is, for many young people, one that can either be forced, or that can help them situate themselves as belonging to different social landscapes. Donnelly's study then discusses the existential dependence of Irish young people on their parents and shows how such dependence is repeatedly established with regard to migration regimes and their associated rhythms. Liminality is an emerging experience for young people with a migrant background, where this "rite of passage" (see Donnelly) is acknowledged, but need not necessarily be ultimately fulfilled.

The articulation and performance of intergenerational relationships is another area into which dependency on parents is projected. Formánková and Lopatková present the "struggle" of young Vietnamese from migrant families for social recognition from their parents. The Czech-language Facebook page "Confessions of the Vietnamese" is a platform where these Vietnamese youth perform both their dependency on their parents and their distancing from them in order to comprehend and defend their place in the social landscape of which they are a part. The parental issue is also mentioned by Rendek in her description of faith as individualized and Muslim young people's path toward that mode of religiosity.

The subject of identities and senses of belonging repeatedly surfaces in these studies. The authors discuss the forming of hybrid identities and multiple senses of belonging among migrant background young people. They describe this as a dilemma arising from not being accepted by or anchored in a setting, socially, and from questioning that experience. The example of Anglophone migrants (Terry) shows how they are embedded in cosmopolitan, transnational contexts and lifestyles, do not find identities in the destination country's social landscape with which they can

identify, and therefore welcome transnational institutions that offer them adequate space for practicing their identity. The exclusion of families in migrancy who are Muslim is felt to be due to their religion, according to stigmatized youth (Rendek). Attributes connected with Islam by those around them also play a role when they are visible. To become acceptable and comprehensible socially, ethnic labels are used instead by such youth. They construct their ethnic identity, when negotiating their place, as the one that is relevant for society. To a certain extent, and despite the fact that these people grow up in the institutions and spaces of the nation-state to which their parents migrated, such tactics further support their “otherness”, though. The dilemma of “us versus them” is heard on the Czech-language Facebook page “Confessions of the Vietnamese” (Lopatková – Formánková), where the parents’ generation is associated with being Vietnamese, while the young people are joining the Czechs. The articulation, construction and declaration of their common identities all happen through the platform of these new media. The polar opposite to these studies is the contribution about musicians from Vienna in the younger generation (Skořepová). Although these young men locate their sense of belonging in different cultural, geographical and social spaces, they do not feel questioned or rejected in relation to them. For that exact reason, they do not experience their sense of belonging as involving any conflict or dilemma. Czechs from Vienna in the younger generation do not have to fight for their own place in the landscape of society because they relate to identities that constitute that landscape already.

Three contributions point out the role of art and other performative platforms in the construction, declaration, experience and negotiation of social identities (Lopatková – Formánková; Skořepová; Terry). The aspect of “acting”, which is present in music production, theatrical performances, and in discussions on the Internet that feature hyperbole or joking, release their performers from everyday life and locate them in the “safe” game of a landscape that is not a serious one. This allows them to be the people they cannot completely be in normal reality. For the young people living in diaspora/minority who are (in)directly linked to migration, such platforms positioned outside their everyday regime can and do play an important role.

The building of a career, in one’s life-course or in a profession, is an important issue linked to migration and young people. Donnelly’s study explicitly reviews this subject. Growth is, for Irish young people who migrate, inherent to this opportunity, both in personal and professional terms. The decline they experience in the labor markets of their target countries as far as mobility in society goes is interpreted by them as a de-

velopment and learning opportunity. Be that as it may, in the context of a forced return to their country of origin, their human capital remains underappreciated and untapped, frequently. Czechs of different ages undertaking return migration are described by Filipec and Macková as experiencing something similar. For those who have situated themselves in different landscapes, socially speaking, re-migration becomes relevant.

It is no accident that the related subjects of careers, lifestyles, life-course trajectories and migration(s) are being considered by these authors in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has again sharpened our view of migration and its precarity. Both studies on this topic (Donnelly; Macková – Filipec) show how the pandemic has not just interrupted (young) people's careers and changed their lifestyles, but also given rise to different levels of dependency that render such migrants vulnerable. Surprisingly, the fragility and vulnerability of their lives in migration is actually tied to their country of origin, the country to which they return to draw on a citizenship-based solidarity. This brings back the question of the nation-state's role in the lives of its citizens (and not just theirs). The crucial subject of globalization and transnationalism is recalled thereby. The authors consider how such processes contribute to distributing knowledge, to feelings of belonging, and to the relative accessibility of mobility for the global North's inhabitants in almost all of these studies.

The six studies in this special issue on the subject of migration and young people augment and interact with each other differently in terms of their focus. They demonstrate the plurality of such young people's experiences and lives. The ways in which those associated with diaspora/minority or with migration then co-create the social landscapes are outlined by these targeted views of these varied terrains.

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Dana Bittnerová
Faculty of Humanities
Charles University
e-mail: dana.bittnerova@fhs.cuni.cz

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