

Precarious Transitions: Unaccompanied Migrant young people becoming 'adult' in the UK (and beyond)

*'Migration, Social Inequalities, Inter-Generational Relations and
Life Course Transitions'*

01 February 2018

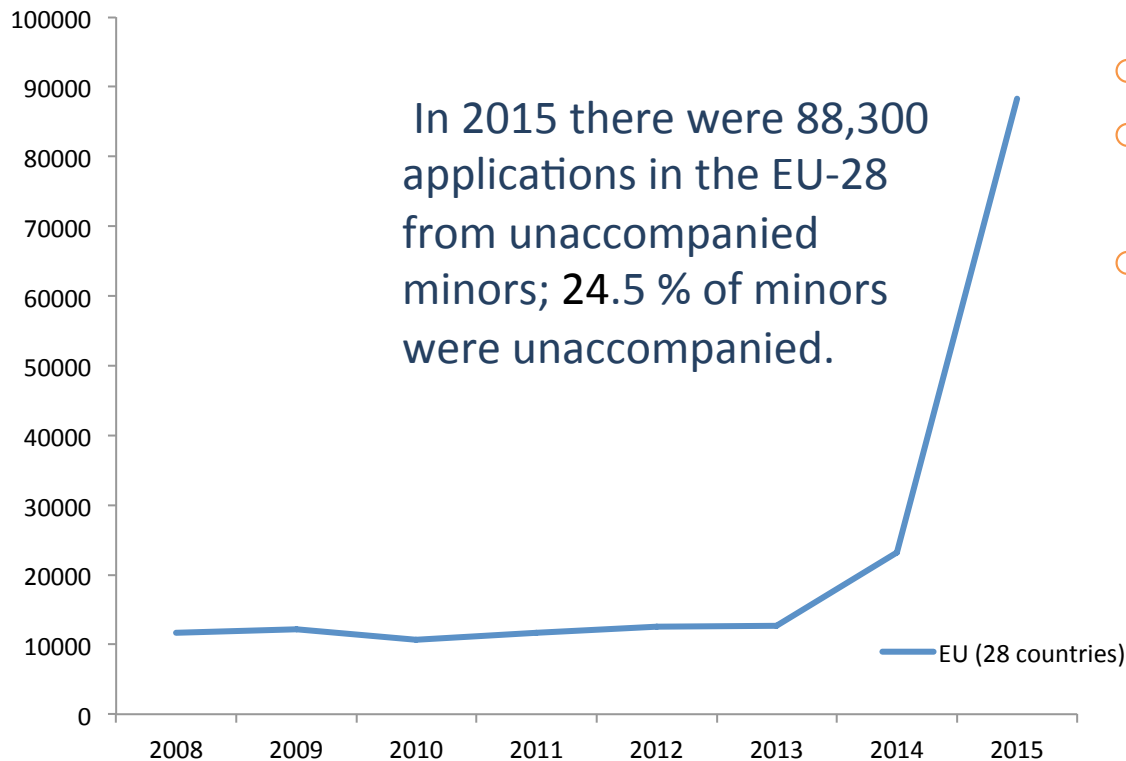
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- Unaccompanied migrant ‘children’ becoming adult - the policy gap
- Becoming Adult project
- Wellbeing and what young people value
- Different trajectories and outcomes
- Relational dimensions of transitions at 18

UNACCOMPANIED ASYLUM SEEKING MINORS IN THE EU

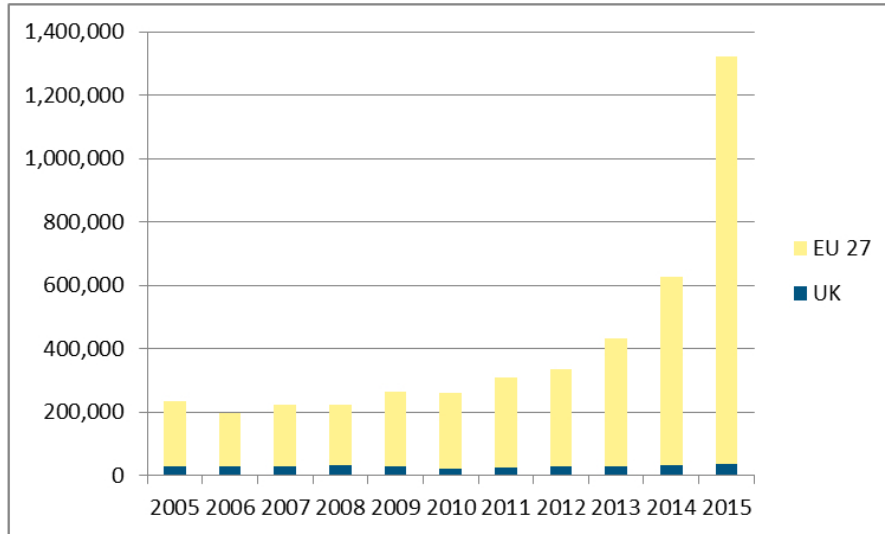
UASC applications in the EU, 2008-2015



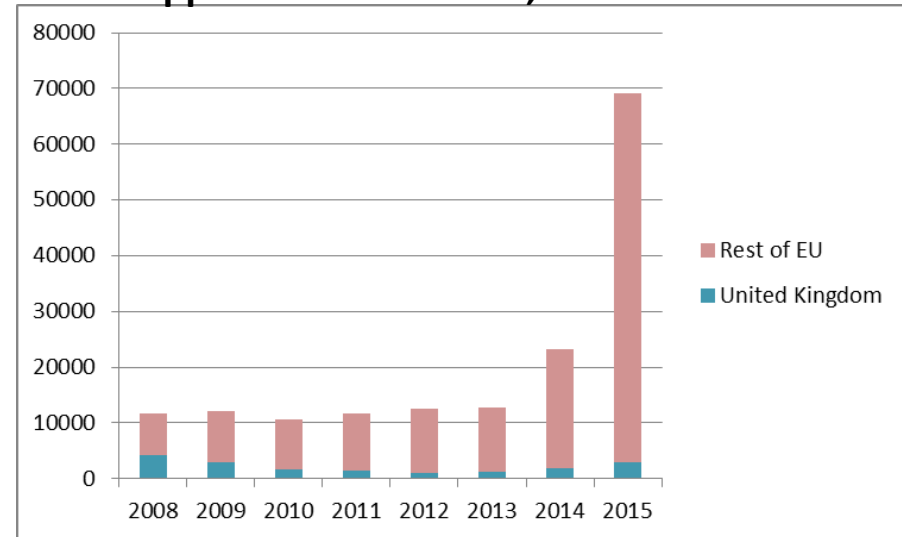
- Large increases Germany, Sweden (+ Norway)
- 91% of them were **males**
- 57% were between **16-17** years old (→ aging out)
- 51% of UASC were from **Afghanistan**

The UK In Europe

Asylum applications in the EU 2005-2015



UASC applications in the EU, 2008-2015



- 3,043 applications in 2015
- 62% applications from **16-17** year olds, mostly males (91%)
- Majority discretionary leave ('UASC' leave since 2013, but **what next?**)
- **Other routes into undocumentedness in the UK may be more relevant:**
Unaccompanied minors not claiming asylum [practically no data, see Sigona and Hughes 2012]
- Similarly, scarce data across EU on unaccompanied minors not claiming asylum

The 'European' response

- Much criticism from NGOs and civil society stakeholders about notable absence of attention to experiences of young migrants over the age of 18:

- Common European Asylum System (1990s ->) - 'harmonise' reception, integration and return
- Extensive financial and political commitment in search of 'durable solutions'
 - 2010-2014 European Commission Action Plan UAMs
- European Return Fund (676 million Euros 2008-13)
- ERPUM (return pilot 2011-2014)

LIMITATIONS/BOUNDARIES OF UNCRC

- **Life Project Planning** Framework, (Council of Europe, Recommendation 2007)
- *Life Projects for unaccompanied migrant minors: A handbook for professionals* (2010):
 - ‘contribute to finding **lasting solutions** for and with unaccompanied migrant minors that will help them to build **life projects** guaranteeing them a ‘**better future**’
 - Respect human rights and rights of children BUTNot deny states the right to control their borders

Assumptions

1. Migrant young people can be made to comply with institutional processes
2. Independent migrant young people 'belong' in their countries of origin
3. Returning young people is a 'durable solution' and guarantees a 'better future'

<http://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/publications/future-citizens-of-the-world-the-contested-futures-of-independent-young-migrants-in-europe>

BECOMING ADULT

Becoming **Adult**: Conceptions of **futures** and **wellbeing** among unaccompanied youth

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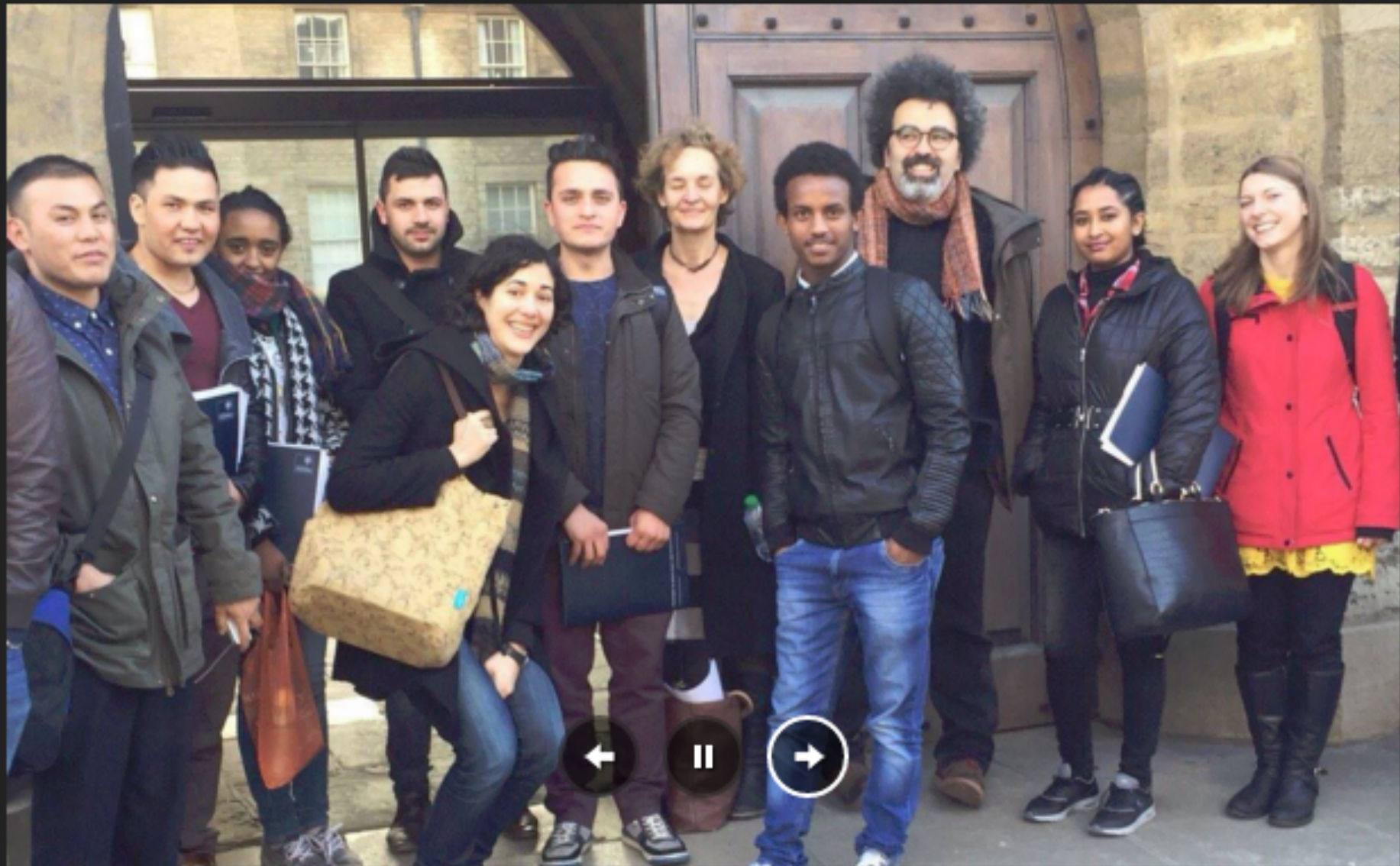
Maranata Geday; Daniel Muhr;

Shafiq Hussaini; Other young advisors

TWO MAIN COMPONENTS:

- How young people understand and experience **‘wellbeing’**; **‘futures’** and **‘becoming adult’** – LIVED EXPERIENCES
 - Biographical narrative interviews; social network mapping; ‘wellbeing’ outcomes over time.
- How policies engage with **‘wellbeing’**; **‘futures’** and **‘becoming adult’**
 - Analysis of policies; interviews with international, national and local stakeholders; freedom of information requests on outcomes for young people.

- Four countries of origin
 - Afghanistan; Albania; Eritrea; Vietnam
 - Age range: 17-25
- Participatory research process
 - Former minors as key members of research team
- Longitudinal component
- Grant-linked studentship – Italy



- Loss of social, economic and educational rights
- Loss of the right to accommodation
- Loss of official representative/guardian
- Risk of detention
- Risk of deportation
- Lack of information about their rights as adults
- Lack of legal redress for violations of rights

Factors can be exacerbated by age assessments

‘Wellbeing’ : What young people value

- Safety, freedom and choice
- Legal recognition and integrity
- Belonging and becoming
- Building futures through education, learning, working
- Good mental and physical health
- Friendships, connections and ties
- A chance to make a positive contribution
- Being able to sustain a biographical narrative

Multiple 'wellbeing' outcomes

- Young people doing 'fine'
- Terrible time but now doing 'fine'
- Age disputed - adult services
- Moved to Italy from UK
- Deported to Afghanistan – re-migrate to UK; or Italy; Germany; Pakistan
- Deported to Afghanistan → re-migrate → Indonesia
- Become 'invisible' in the UK... 'stuck'
- Waiting – appeal; further appeal.....
 - Adverse impacts on mental health; social health and wellbeing
- Not 'deportable' but no recourse to public funds

GIVEN THE CHANCE YOUNG PEOPLE DO REALLY WELL....

(Often after years of waiting) ...

- Final year of four-year pharmacy degree
 - Masters in International Relations
 - Graduated ICT – onto Masters programme
 - Project Coordinator of large branch of British Red Cross
 - Accountancy
 - Nursing
- +
- Making contributions in communities
 - Assisting others/ volunteering

- Akram: Afghanistan–UK (2005: aged 14)
- Italy (2011: aged 20) and returned by Italian authorities to UK
- (removed to) Afghanistan (2013: aged 22)
- Australia (2014: aged 23) but intercepted in Indonesia

(next 18 months in immigration detention centre).

‘Making these journeys made me realise how hard life can be, I was risking my life to make all these journeys and crossing the borders to get to another country. It is really difficult to go from one country to other country illegally. The first journey I made to England I enjoyed it because I had high expectations and motivations but the second time I really hate it. When I arrived in the UK for the first time, I was really, really happy and I was thinking my life is sorted now and I was hoping for a better future. When I was refused, I was fearing for my life and running away from the government to avoid deportation to Afghanistan.’

Noor: Afghanistan–UK (2008: aged 16) –(removed to) Afghanistan (2010: aged 18); moved across provinces in Afghanistan for 5 years –Bulgaria (2016: aged 23) – (removed to) Afghanistan (2017: aged 24).

‘I have really, really done journeys you know, a hard time... It’s a bad situation. I have become old inside in my heart you know.’ (Noor, aged 24, currently in Afghanistan)

‘I am scared, they (Immigration officers) came looking for me but I was not where they thought I was. I stay with friends and find money but I can’t even pay taxes. I love X (name of city) but it can’t be my home.’

(Dalmat, Albania)

I was refused, and after I decided... they asked me to go signing for the reporting to the immigration office, which I didn't go. I left it, I left the house, I left everything. I ran away. For three years. I, just recently, I did a fresh claim and I got it. I got my residence permit.

And during those years where were you living?

So I was living with friends, one night here, one night there... it was rough. It was like feeling back in Afghanistan. And I had a problem with eczema on my hands, but I was scared to go to the hospital.' (Kamran, Afghanistan)

- Country of origin (Not just proof of ‘persecution’)
- The journey and port of entry
- Access to and quality of legal representation
- Local authority where placed
- How different services work together (‘best interests’ or not)
- How perceived by others e.g ‘believed’ / ‘not believed’
- Whether or not age disputed
- Access to informal as well as formal support provisions
- SERENDIPITY !

- **Precarity - '*Politically-induced*' vulnerability**

"[P]recarity" designates that politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of support and become differentially exposed to injury, violence, and death....' . (Butler, 2009)

- **Vulnerability is not a neutral state of being**

- Most young people are 16-17 when arrive – not ‘children’ for long
- Most no secure legal status (varies by member state?)
- Lack of media/policy discourse about post 18 - ‘adulthood’

WHAT HAPPENS TO YOUNG PEOPLE IN 12-24 MONTHS?

- Young people disengaging/ going ‘missing’
- DeportationDeportation gap
- Growing evidence that deportation -> remigration
- Lack of monitoring by governments of outcomes
- No re-integration support post-deportation

WIDENING POLICY GAP

- Paradox: young people become more ‘vulnerable’ as ‘adults’
- Social costs of growing numbers of ‘vulnerable’ youth in Europe

- Young people as connected beings
- Build and sustain strong connections and ties – local, national/transnational
 - Sons/daughters; partners; parents; friends;
- Create own support structures and systems
- Participatory research – building collective voice
 - Photography
 - Drama
 - Comedy
 - Music
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gfhr2KTUbMQ>

- www.becomingadult.net
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