

Young lives on the move

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PROPOSITIONS

accompanying the dissertation

Young lives on the move

The mobility trajectories and transnational affective engagements of Ghanaian-background youth living in Belgium

by Sarah Anschütz

1. Young people's transnational lives need to be understood in relation to the people, places, and events that they encounter 'on the move' across multiple contexts. These encounters shape meaning-making processes, resources, and future pathways.
2. Literature on young people with a migration background has oversimplified their mobility by either assuming youth to be immobile, focusing on isolated moves, or overemphasizing their or their parents' first international migration. Yet to better understand the impact of youth mobility, it is important to capture all types of mobility, trace their timing and duration across the life course, and explore their embodied and emotional nature.
3. Analysing family reunification from a youth mobilities perspective shows that policy definitions of family reunification as happening within the nuclear family and within the destination country do not necessarily coincide with the experiences of migrant youth. Rather, migrant youth often have caregivers beyond the biological parents, can experience a reunification as a separation from a significant other, and can go through multiple reunifications in both origin and destination countries.
4. Applying the same theoretical frameworks to transnational mobility of young people with and without migration background contributes to a 'de-migranticization' of migration research and brings out the personal growth elements of visits to the country of origin.
5. Young people do not merely maintain their parents' transnational ties but draw on digital media and country-of-origin visits to forge their own transnational affective connections.
6. Migration is not a distinctive point in time but should rather be seen as an unfolding process. Focusing on young people's mobility trajectories over the life course provides insights into these temporal dynamics.
7. Studies on transnational mobility benefit from multi-sited ethnographic research that moves with the participants. Such an approach provides insights into the embodied, multi-sensory and material aspects of mobility *as it happens*, as well as into how people give meaning to their transnational lives and mobility experiences.
8. Transnational migration research typically foregrounds family ties, long lasting relationships, and adult perspectives. Yet to understand the emotionalities, temporalities and impacts of youth mobilities today, there is a need to go further and investigate peer relationships, fleeting encounters, and young people's views.
9. There is no scientific evidence that supports common assumptions in policy and practice that travel of migrant youth constitutes a problem for their emotional well-being and educational outcomes. Increasingly, studies show the positive impacts of visits to the country of origin for youth with a migration background. Mobility of migrant youth to their or their parents' origin country enriches their lives and equips them with valuable resources.
10. "Stories are a communal currency of humanity. [...] My father used to tell me that stories offer the listener a chance to escape but, more importantly, he said, they provide people with a chance to maximize their minds. Suspend ordinary constraints, allow the imagination to be freed, and we are charged with the capability of heightened thought. Learn to use your eyes as if they are your ears, he said, and you become connected with the ancient heritage of man, a dream world for the waking mind." – Tahir Shah, *In Arabian Nights: In search of Morocco through its stories and storytellers*