



Editorial

# Introduction to Crises, (Im)mobilities and Young Life Trajectories

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## 1. Introduction

This Special Issue on *Crisis, (Im)mobilities and Young Life Trajectories* examines the intersections of developmental trajectories and (im)mobility amidst crises, with a focus on ruptures, transitions, disruptions and continuities in the life course of children and young people who have been forced to move due to various man-made and natural crises. The impacts of these ruptures are multi-layered; they are felt across a range of domains, including psychological, relational and cultural domains.

In recent times, two trends that examine the interactions between developmental and (im)mobility trajectories amidst crises have become evident in research. Firstly, there has recently been a progression from understanding displaced, refugee and migrant children in isolation (Kandemir et al. 2018; Thommessen et al. 2017; Thoresen et al. 2017) to viewing children and young people as embedded in the social ecologies of their family, friends, community and culture (Donà and Veale 2011; Pontalti 2021).

Secondly, research has moved beyond static, single-sited research to capture migrant, refugee and unaccompanied children across time and space, including examining children on the move and multi-sited fieldwork (Kaukko et al. 2017; Kordel and Weidinger 2019; Veale and Donà 2014).

In negotiating transitions of time, place, developmental stage and role, recent research increasingly highlights the open-ended and ongoing negotiations displaced and migrant children and young people face as they strive to build their lives amidst crises and (im)mobilities (Chase and Allsopp 2021; Johnson and Gilligan 2021).

This Special Issues contributes to this emerging body of literature on the intersections of developmental and (im)mobility trajectories in different ways. It seeks to highlight the non-linear developmental paths of migrant, displaced and refugee children and young people, exploring how these children and young people negotiate multiple transitions within their overall life trajectories. This Special Issue focuses on the ruptures brought about by crises and displacement, removing young people from the normative pathways into adulthood or destroying them entirely. Therefore, young people are forced to navigate a zigzagging, twisting pathway through education, work/livelihoods and family life toward their adult lives.

The Special Issue uses the term *trajecto-making* (see Donà and Veale, forthcoming) to capture the ways in which children and young people navigate the intersections of crises, (im)mobilities, and developmental trajectories. By *trajecto-making*, we mean to capture the ways in which children and young people navigate complex, uneven and non-linear ruptures and transitions within broader continuities in developmental trajectories. This concept captures an awareness that natural and man-made crises force children to live lives that often are “out of sync” with normative age patterns and with their own personal, family and socio-cultural expectations. Yet, children and young people find ways to optimise opportunities to fashion some degree of synchronisation with their own desired trajectory, sustained by a sense of their “ongoingness” into the future.



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Having set the broad overarching themes of the Special Issue—crises, transitions and trajecto-making—in the next section, we proceed to examine the contributions of its papers in greater detail.

## 2. Contexts and Crises

The Special Issue addresses the pervasive nature of crises across diverse geographical locations in Africa (Jones, Pincock, Alheiwidi and Yadete; Ethiopia and Jordan), South Asia (Khan 2021; Nepal), Southeast Asia (Torok and Ball 2021; Malaysia), the Middle East (Jordan and Brun 2021; Lebanon and Jordan) and Europe (Hunt 2021; Greece) to document similarities and highlight divergences. It also points out their transnational nature, for instance, the movement of Sub-Saharan African migrants across European borders (Vuilleumier 2021). It brings together contributions that address not only the impacts and responses to singular crises but most often how different crises intersect. This is, for instance, the case for the financial crisis of 2008, the refugee crisis, and the COVID-19 pandemic (Hunt 2021); civil war, natural disasters, and the pandemic (Khan 2021); and displacement and the pandemic (Jones et al. 2021). Together, these studies show how a new crisis can exacerbate existing crises. For instance, these papers show how the recent coronavirus pandemic resulted in an acute crisis that exacerbated ongoing crises of displacement and economic precarity. Other papers capture a layering of “everyday” crises over time in protracted displacement such as disruptions to education (Jordan and Brun 2021), employment trajectories (Vuilleumier 2021) and opportunities to forge positive identities (Torok and Ball 2021).

While the impact of multiple crises downgraded the economic and social mobility trajectories of many young people (Jones et al. 2021; Hunt 2021; and Vuilleumier 2021), the papers explore other aspects in greater detail. Some papers found that the experience of a previous crisis acted as a resource for individuals to prepare for and adapt to later crises (Khan 2021) or opened up new opportunities (Torok and Ball 2021). In these global contexts of crises, the contributions to this Special Issue unpack the complex, non-linear transitions and forward-ways in which young lives unfold at the intersections of (im)mobility within broader life trajectories. This involves many tensions and contradictions as development proceeds amidst crises, as explored in the following section.

## 3. Trajecto-Making Amidst Crises

The contributions to the Special Issue highlight the ways in which children and young people navigate the non-linear developmental paths of migrant, displaced and refugee children who are confronted with complex, ongoing and multi-layered crises. A number of papers in this Special Issue show how refugee children and young people engage in trajecto-making (Donà and Veale, forthcoming) and act on their circumstances in the “here and now”. They are also guided by a future orientation which, although uncertain and open-ended, organizes their meaning making and agentic actions over time and across the geographical spaces and institutional systems (for example, legal, social, educational, family, etc.) with which they engage.

Jordan and Brun examine the narratives of of young people forced out of education. Their paper focused on this trajectory through a temporal lens of narrative time, calendar time, and the time of trace and generational time.

They found that exiting education is not a single event but rather an interrupted process of leaving and returning. Many young people step in and out of education in response to immediately present demands but manoeuvre their life choices to keep alive the possibility of returning to education. Others find themselves “out of synch” with age structured educational systems or “too old” to go back to formal education, and thus exit unwillingly, but have a transgenerational aspiration to pass on the value of education to their future children. This paper captures the uncertainty and multi-directional nature of trajecto-making where a clear pathway to a desired future is not clearly defined but

important decisional moments are guided by a vision of returning to education, rendered fuzzy by the intertwined crises of displacement and poverty.

Hunt similarly examined discontinuities and re-engagement in educational trajectories through a focus on post-15 education. She highlights the impact of bordering practices; encampment as a bordering of space, enforced waiting as a bordering of time, administrative barriers as a bordering of legal status, and how young people navigate the impacts of these practices, and what supports them in this process. Despite key institutional bordering practices, young refugees find ways to (re)construct adapted learning trajectories and negotiate a tension between striving for/capitulating on their dreams.

The roles of bordering institutions are also foregrounded by Vuilleumier's paper, which transnationally explores migration regimes and bordering practices, and their impacts. The paper identifies multiple ruptures/transitions that are articulated through advances and reversals in Sub-Saharan African migrants' economic and social statuses. For instance, even in a situation of extreme precarity in the bordering and transit zone of Libya, young people find resources in this period of waithood that enable them not only to survive but to thrive and have economic independence. However, this is altered following the crossing into Europe, where migration regimes that restrict access to the formal labour market mean that they have to start again, from a position of undone social and economic mobility gains, and reconstruct life anew, furthering their trajectory-making.

While the papers above draw attention to disjunctures, Khan's paper draws attention to a continuity of experience across different crises. He analyses the multi-layering of strategies learnt from one crisis such as civil war and applied to later crises, such as natural disasters and the COVID-19 pandemic. He emphasizes how young participants' use experiences from one crisis to analyse and respond to the challenges of another. Through a juxtaposition of memories of past resilience and use of the past in the present, they experience temporal continuity while also reframing past traumatic experiences as a source of strength for emerging adulthood, in the 'now' and into the future.

The ways in which ruptures and transitions are affected by other identity markers and not simply by age alone form an interesting research direction. Identity markers such as gender play an intersectional role in trajectory-making. For instance, Jones et al.'s paper on crises and gender inequalities shows how conservative gender norms in Jordan further entrench the restrictions on adolescent girls' mobility, and such restrictions were crystallized during pandemic-related lockdowns, especially for girls, and parents often pressure their daughters to marry.

Differently, Torok and Ball's paper shows how gender positions girls differently in Malaysia compared to their home country, highlighting how, for some girls, migration was a liberating experience. For boys and men, Vuilleumier captures the intersectionality of migration trajectories and masculinity, as the restrictions and losses experienced over time took young men further away from their gendered expectations of establishing a family, supporting dependents, and acquiring the material possessions, ultimately signalling the achievement of social status. Individually, Torok and Ball's and Vuilleumier's papers depict the dynamic, active ways in which marginalised migrants rework identity markers, either reconstructing identities for new scenarios or resisting identity change by holding on to identity markers that link their past selves with their wished-for future selves. Only one paper (Jones et al. 2021) addresses disability in trajectory forging, pointing to the need for further research on intersectionality beyond the dimensions of gender.

In conclusion, this Special Issue addresses the intersections between crises, (im)mobilities and young life trajectories, and thus contributed to integrated different bodies of work to show that: (a) Across geographical contexts, multiple and overlapping crises alter socio-cultural environments in which children and young people grow up; (b) young life trajectories amidst crises intersect with existing social systems such as families, education, employment; (c) rather than ruptures and transitions, the case studies in the Special Issue draw attention to the fact that trajectories are open and flexible; and (d) this agentially navigated trajectory-making, involving turns, advances and reversals, extracting oneself

to avoid a negative foreseen situation, and acts of resistance, take place within broader developmental trajectories.

Central to all papers in this Special Issue is that the experiences of children and young people's meaning making of their life experiences is brought to the fore, and in doing so, these authors show that the meaning of experience does not stay static but is constantly re-appraised and reworked within a dynamic and longer-term developmental trajectory-making.

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