Citizenship Education for a Divided Nation:
The case of Eastern European young people in Brexit Britain

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Briefing 1: Eastern European Young People in Brexit Britain: Racism, anxiety and a precarious future
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Briefing 5: Eastern European Youth Identities in Uncertain Times
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BREXIT AS RUPTURE

- 600,000 EU nationals in the UK are children and young people (3.6 million EU nationals in total)

- Youth transitions and ruptures - Horschelmann (2011) - changing structural conditions (changes to labour market, consumerism, globalisation)

- One group clearly voiceless in the Brexit Referendum were EU nationals - they continue to be excluded denizens - (Standing, 2011) - voiceless in the Brexit vote, yet the vote is about them

- Their sense of belonging clearly altered by Brexit

- Emotional aspect of Brexit - explicit denial of a sense of belonging and acceptance - ‘kick in the teeth’ - but also some direct consequences to their everyday lives - we heard about emotional aspect of engagement in politics yesterday
IDENTITY RECOGNITION AND CITIZENED

- The process of identity formation - not static, but in constant flux, negotiable, and consisting of multiple identities – gender, age, nationality, class, race etc.

- Young people’s transitional position between childhood and adulthood relegates them to a marginal role in society in terms of rights, participation and ‘voice’; also, ‘caught between cultures’ – of home, school, wider community, media, online communities

- (Minority) Young people as fixed marginalised category - characterised as apathic, disengaged, ‘at risk’ - ongoing austerity and Brexit-centred discourses on migration - likely to impact on how young people see themselves and their position in society
IN/SECURITIES IN YOUTH TRANSITIONS

- ‘Youth’ is less seen as an age-defined life stage and more of a process of personal transformation and ‘becoming’ in Beck’s ‘risk society’

- This process is shaped by contemporary structural barriers- neoliberal policies of precarious work, uncertain career pathways, reduced options of stable employment, crisis in housing- youth becomes a stage of ‘rupture’ with frequent ‘reverse’ and ‘yo-yo’ transitions (Lopez Blasco et al., 2003; Biggart and Walther, 2006)

- Giddens (1991)- modernity ‘produces difference, exclusion and marginalisation’- So how are young people building identities subjected to ongoing exclusions, for example through classed practices of schooling
CITIZENSHIP AND YOUNG PEOPLE

- Citizenship as ‘embodied category’ (Yuval-Davis, 2011) interlinked with ideas of identity and belonging- with individuals differentially situated in terms of gender, class, age, ethnicity, sexuality etc.- de-homogenising the liberal notion of citizenship in a nation-state (‘citizen’ as abstract category)- citizenship as lived experience

- Who is the citizen? Citizenship often discussed in terms of tensions and contradictions between citizenship and the state (exclusion versus inclusion, rights versus obligations), and between nationalism and capitalism (inward versus outward movements, social cohesion versus accumulation)- implication that only nationals (esp tax paying) are citizens

- States are still the primary source of entitlements and rights- young people, as fixed (often) marginalised category, may be left out from certain rights, especially when signifiers of citizenship such as nationality, class, ethnic and racial markers, influence who is seen as ‘deserving’- or as ‘citizen’
Youth voters are often described in terms of apathy, alienation, and lack of interest in politics. Yet, in the Scottish independence Referendum, 85% of 16-18-year-olds voted! It is true that young people say they feel uninterested in politics and that politicians don’t represent them, seeing new channels of ‘acts of citizenship’—like volunteering, social activism, and online campaigning.

Evidence shows that young people assimilate political messages from 5-6-year-olds and want to discuss politics at home (Abendschon & Vollmar, 2011).

At the age of 10, children show political allegiances and a good understanding of principles of political representation (Hess and Torney-Purta, 2009).

Our sample consists of young people without voting rights in the UK because of their age and nationality.
1120 young people took the survey; 806 fully completed submissions.

Polish (56%); Romanian (10.4%); Lithuanian (9%)

In total, respondents originally came from 16 Central and Eastern European countries and the ex-USSR territory, while a small minority were born in 14 other EU or non-EU countries.
BREXIT

Feelings on Brexit

Uncertain 56.4%
Worried 54.1%
Sad 16.2%
Hopeful 18.6%
Scared 27%
Angry 18.4%
BELONGING – EUROPE

- 92% of those who answered the question on European identity stated that they felt European.

- The sense of connection and belonging to Europe – many said a European identity will always be part of who they are and how they see their place in the world - this is in contradiction often with identities they were asked to adopt in the school (‘we only speak English here’).

- 78% said they visited their country of birth in the last year at least once (41%) or several times (37%), while 22% said they had not visited.

‘I still feel like I am Hungarian and that will always be my home - but I would never move back, because of the politics there. I love the UK and I’m happy we moved here, but I never felt like I belonged here. I’m not sure where I belong - but somewhere in Europe, for sure.’ (Bogarta, 16)
‘I don’t feel like I fully belong to Poland, but I also do not feel British. I feel like I’m some kind of alien.’ (Marek, 16, Polish)

I want to belong fully in UK that’s why I want to get my citizenship. (Julian, 17, Bulgarian)

I neither feel like I belong in the UK nor Poland; I always feel different when speaking to native British people and do not feel comfortable speaking Polish to many people due to the fact I do not speak the language often and forget things, making me feel like I’m not truly Polish. So, I can’t go back. (Marta, 16, Polish)
EVERYDAY RACISM AND XENOPHOBIA

XENOPHOBIA AS JOKES AND HUMOUR; NAME CALLING
‘They’d often call me Putin or terrorist’

MOCKING
‘They would often mock my accent, or my clothes, say made in Poland’

EXCLUSIONARY PRACTICES
‘They often exclude me, don’t even bother to look in my direction’

ATTACKS IN PUBLIC PLACES
‘Schools, streets, bars.. I’ve been called a prostitute, been told to go back to my country’

TEACHERS AS PERPETRATORS
‘Teacher often says people like me should not be in the country’

TEACHERS’ LACK OF ACTION
‘They hear racist comments and just ignore them or laugh themselves’
Q37 35. Has the amount of racism that you see changed in the last few months since the EU Referendum?

Answered: 758  Skipped: 197

- I have seen more racism...
- I have seen about the same...
- I have seen less racism...
- I don't know...
Young people tended to relate the concept of citizenship to nationality or the process of securing their nationality; they did not think they were learning in school about their rights or could discuss politics/ or Brexit.

Over half of sample (51%) said they were ‘quite’ or ‘very’ interested in politics.

12-15 year olds- more likely to say they wouldn’t vote (13%) or that they didn’t know who they would vote for (47%)

16-18 year olds- 1 in 10 said they wouldn’t vote, 1 in 3 didn’t know who to vote for
VOTING INTENTIONS SCOTLAND-ENGLAND

Voting preference for parties in Scotland:
- Undecided: 45%
- Scottish National Party: 20%
- Labour: 7%
- Green Party: 5%
- UKIP: 2%

Voting preference for parties in England:
- Undecided: 36%
- Labour: 24%
- Greens: 11%
- Lib Dem: 8%
- UKIP: 3%
- Cons: 2%
Voting Intentions

- Young people in Scotland more likely to say they felt Scottish (51%) than YP in England saying they felt English (35%)

- Young people in Scotland more likely to say they wouldn’t vote (18%) than those in England (9%)

- Overall, perceptions that politicians are not interested in EU nationals’ issues because they can not vote

- Some planning to secure citizenship and voting rights was part of their motivation

“Since I’m not a British national, I don’t have the right to vote and hence politicians don’t care about what I have to say. Really it’s a bit sad that despite feeling British and being completely integrated, I am denied this.” (Jakub, 17, Poland)
CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION WITH THE GENERAL PUBLIC
For young people, a sense of belonging to the school/country is key factor in relation to interest in citizenship education- schools can achieve this!

For many young people, citizenship education did not cover issues they were interested in – like their rights as EU citizens, how Brexit is going to affect them, political parties- citizenship education could have also addressed some of the prejudice-based discrimination they experienced

The lower rates of intention to vote and decisions on political parties make this group open to political influence- 1 in 2 undecided in Scotland, 1 in 3 in England

Barriers: lack of voting rights due to age and nationality, lack of information on political parties, uncertain over voting rights and intentions, perceived attitudes of politicians- we need citizenship education more than ever!
WHAT DO WE NEED...

- Recognition of citizenship education as essential to allowing young people an equal and fair chance to participate in society - the Scottish CfE does this, but it also dilutes responsibilities.

- Confident teachers who are willing to approach controversial issues in an unbiased way - this should be part of ongoing teacher education.

- Working with parents as citizens - to convey the importance of citizenship education.

- Create school environments where acts of citizenship are valued and acknowledged - genuine participation in decisions, calling out racism/bullying etc.
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Here to Stay?
Identity, citizenship and belonging among settled Eastern European migrant children and young people in the UK

Welcome to the Here to Stay? Project