

Learning mobility, learning from immobility: Spatialized transitions before, during and after the COVID-19 pandemic

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**Youth - Education - Work. How Space and Origin
Structure Integration in Education and Work**

Learning mobility, learning from immobility

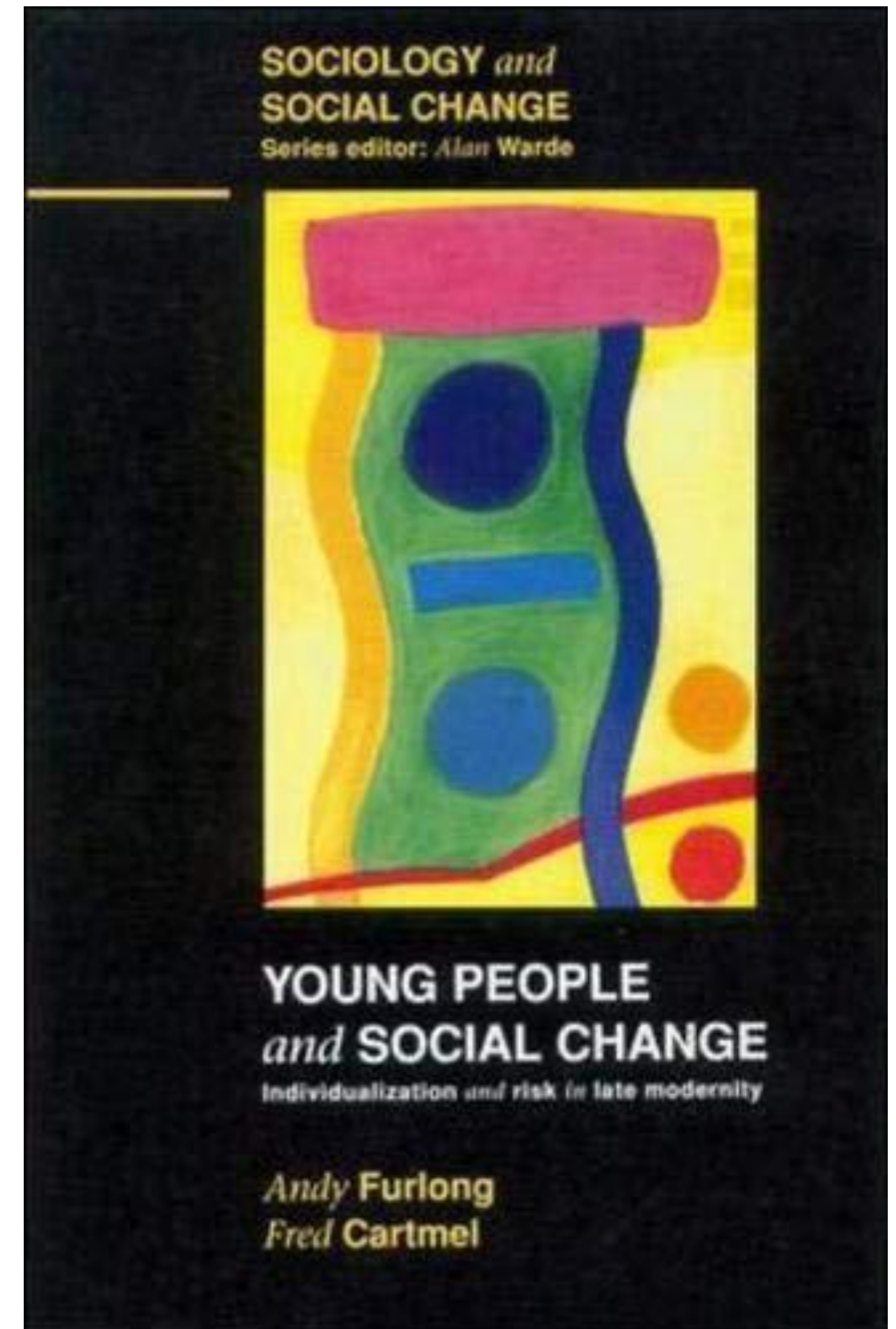
Aims

- Reflect on mobility in transitions among the highly qualified in Europe
- Outline the pedagogical approach to learning mobility, consider the problems created by the pandemic and the lessons to be learnt from a prolonged period of immobility
- Look towards future directions in the (de)spatialization of higher education



Youth transitions

- Metaphor for conceptualizing movement from school-to-work and childhood-to-adulthood
- Strong theoretical roots in Anglophone youth studies, and European-oriented approaches centred on youth work
- No consensus on meaning of 'transitions' but often typified as fragmented, prolonged, individualized and unpredictable

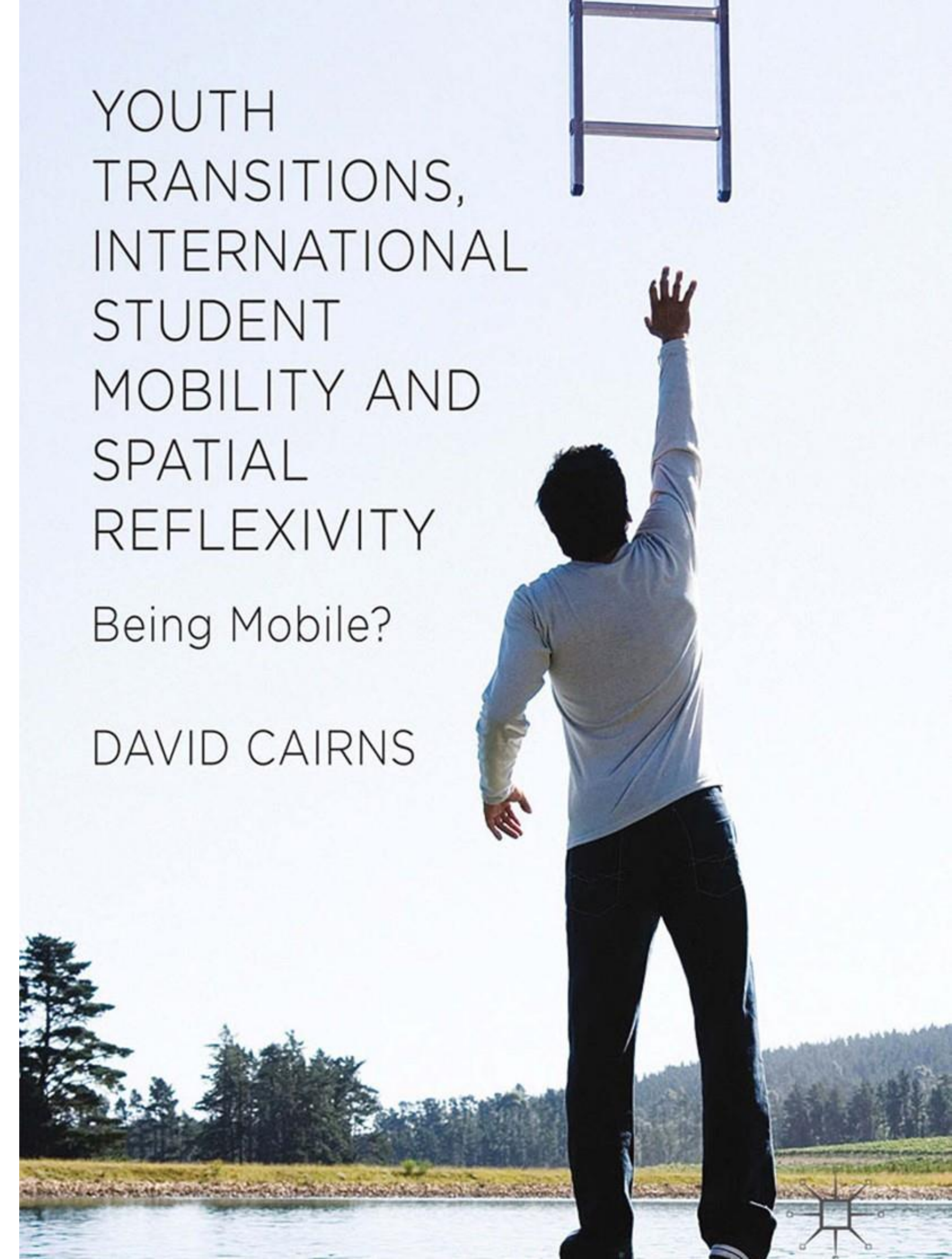


Spatialized transitions and the mobility paradox

- International travel for the highly qualified traditionally seen as a means of generating distinction for the children of elites (Murphy-Lejeune, 2002)
- More exceptional is the idea of mobility as an 'escape' mechanism from regionally-situated disadvantage
- Recent expansion of mobility opportunities in higher education, professional training and skilled work a potential means of strengthening skills and generate forms of mobility capital such as international employability and interculturality
- However, expansion in the numbers of young people circulating potentially devalues mobility due to the loss of distinction, creating something of a paradox

Question of who actually benefits from mobility:

- For institutions, expansion of mobility part of broader processes of Europeanization, internationalization and globalization
- Spatialized transitions also seen as embodying 'European values,' generating political capital for institutions like the European Commission
- For individuals, mobility becomes more problematic, and precarious, due to high costs and the unpredictability of outcomes






Learning mobility

- Some ideas relating to spatialized transitions have coalesced into the idea of 'learning mobility,' especially in the European context
- Can be defined literally, but also pragmatically, as a tool for addressing social inclusion
- Central to this process is the integration of non-formal learning, alongside formal and informal education
- Moves the focus of mobility beyond credit and diploma mobility (Brooks and Waters, 2011), into civil society projects and youth work


**LEARNING MOBILITY,
SOCIAL INCLUSION AND
NON-FORMAL EDUCATION**
Access, process and outcomes




Youth Knowledge #22

Youth Partnership

Partnership between the European Commission
and the Council of Europe in the field of youth



EUROPEAN UNION



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Theorizing learning mobility

- Dynamic blend of formal, informal and non-formal learning, typified by the approach taken within programmes such as Erasmus+ (Cairns, 2023)
- Crudely typified as a ‘learning bubble’ (Cuzzocrea et al., 2019), mirroring the development of the Brussels-based European institutions, utilizing a particular kind of de-territorialized internationalization
- The use of peer-to-peer interactions also make learning mobility a ‘low cost’ approach, but create vulnerabilities due to reliance on intensified forms of internationalized conviviality

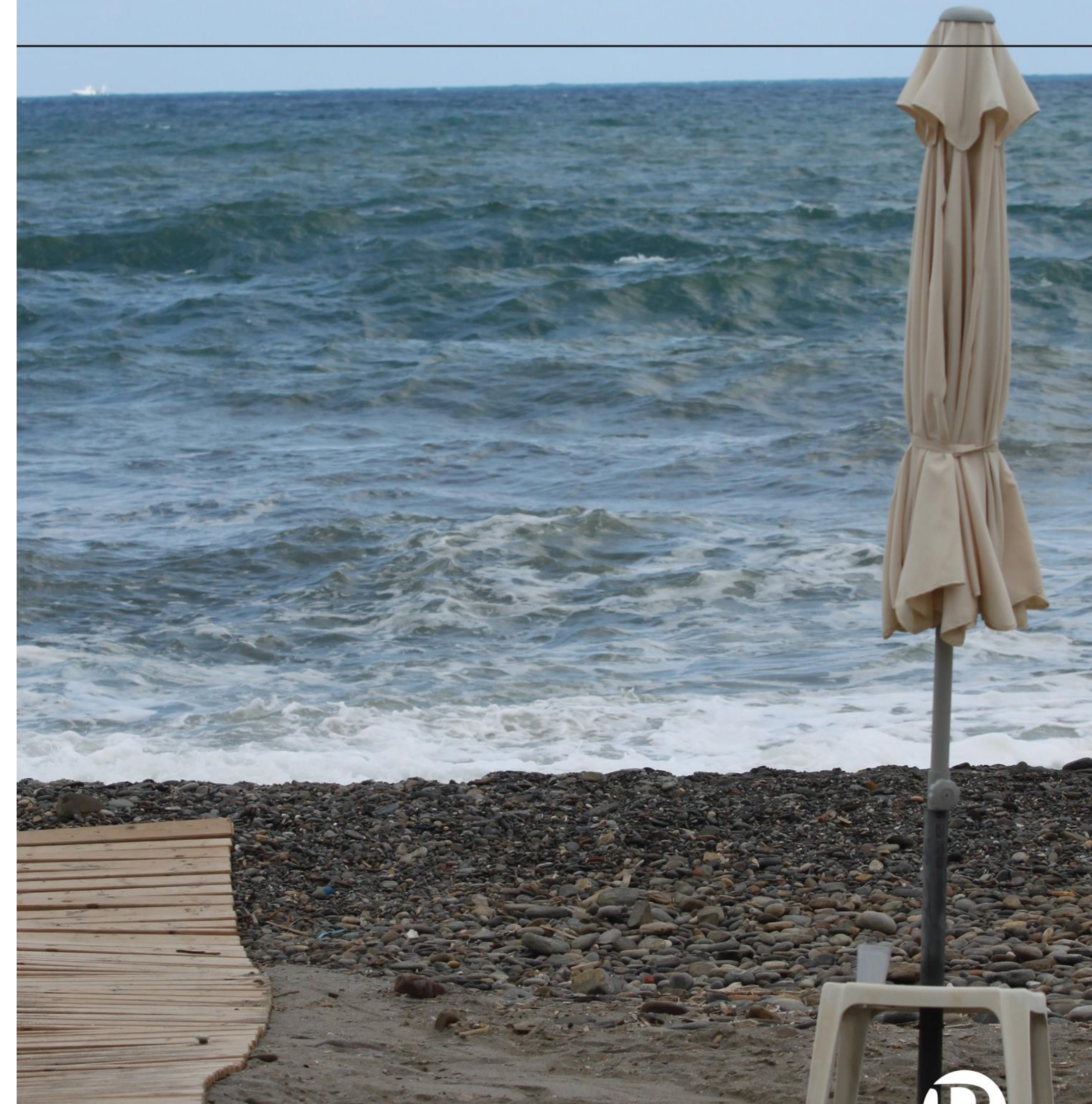
Learning from immobility?

- Widespread loss of the capacity to circulate during the pandemic, signalling the end of a long period of mobility expansionism
- The idea of an 'immobility turn' also connected to the environmental impact of international travel, and the critique of mobility from authors like Urry (2007)
- (Re-)emergence of blended learning modes and virtual mobility

THE IMMOBILITY TURN

Mobility, Migration and the COVID-19 Pandemic

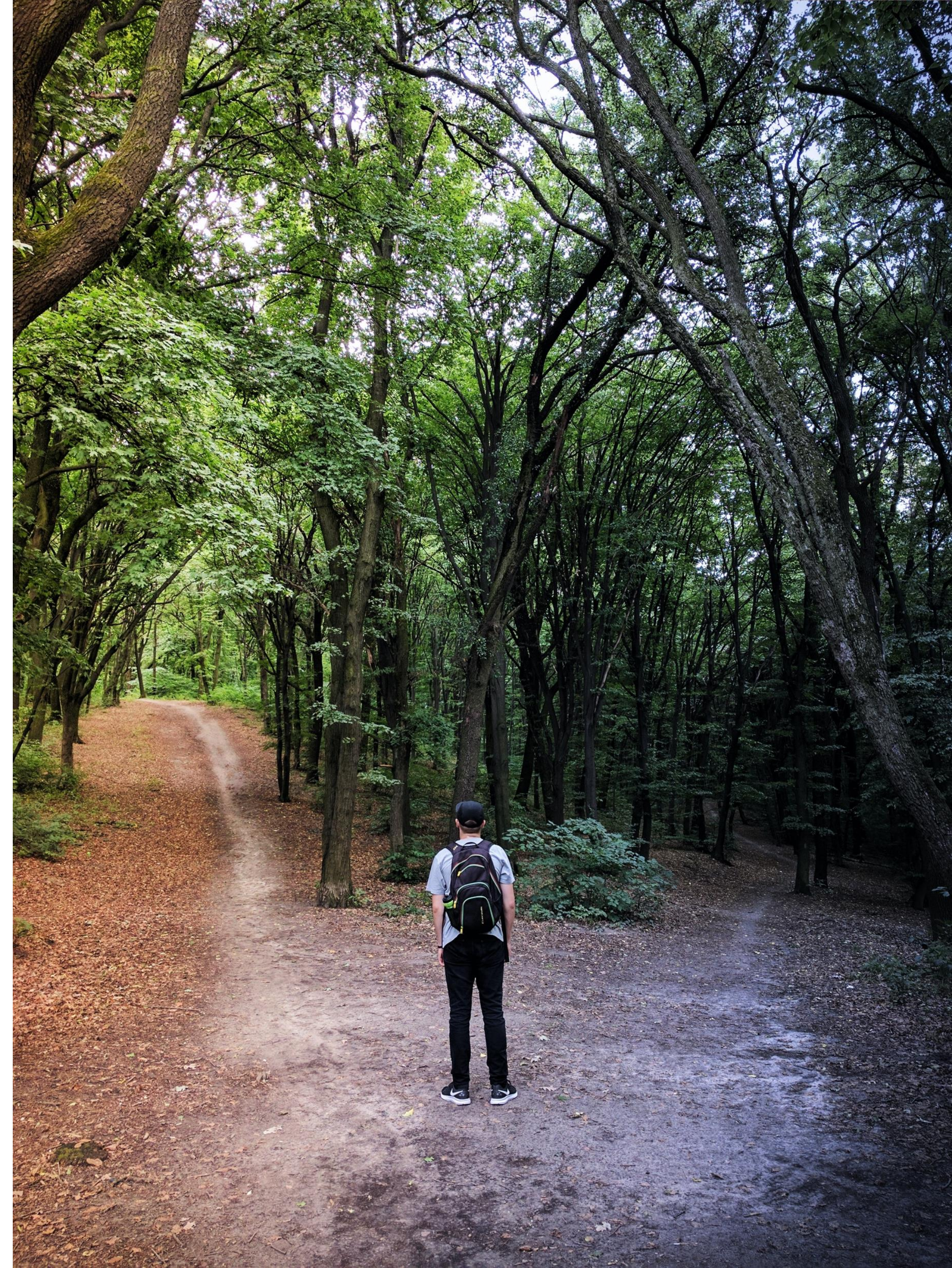
DAVID CAIRNS AND MARA CLEMENTE





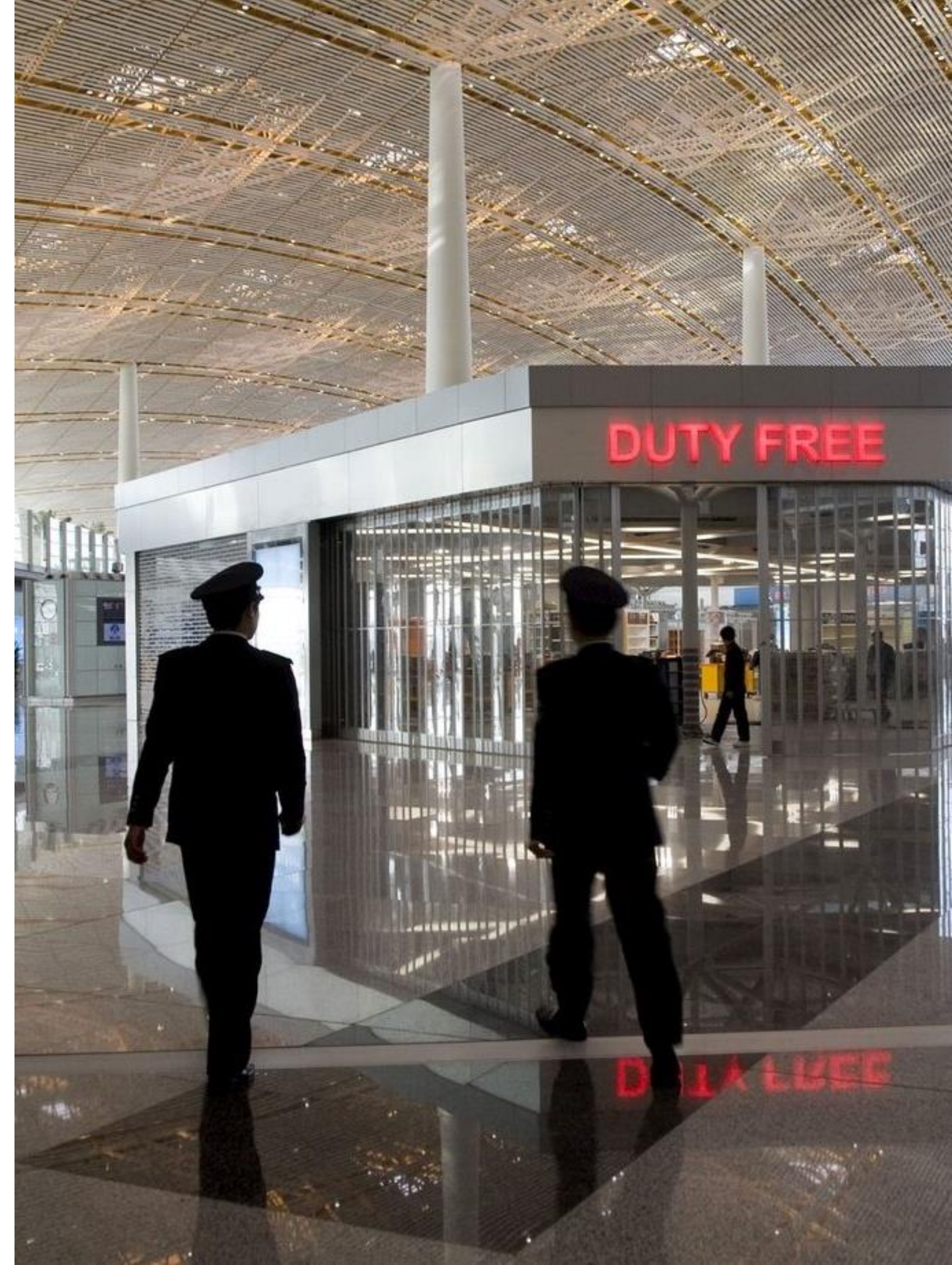
Present and future issues

- Learning mobility at a crossroads, particularly in regard to the place of international travel in transitions
- Difficult to balance costs and benefits - for travellers and hosts, and determine optimal levels of circulation - especially taking into account environmental impacts
- Also need to reappraise our assessments of what is essential and non-essential mobility, in order to preserve the former and decrease consumption of the latter



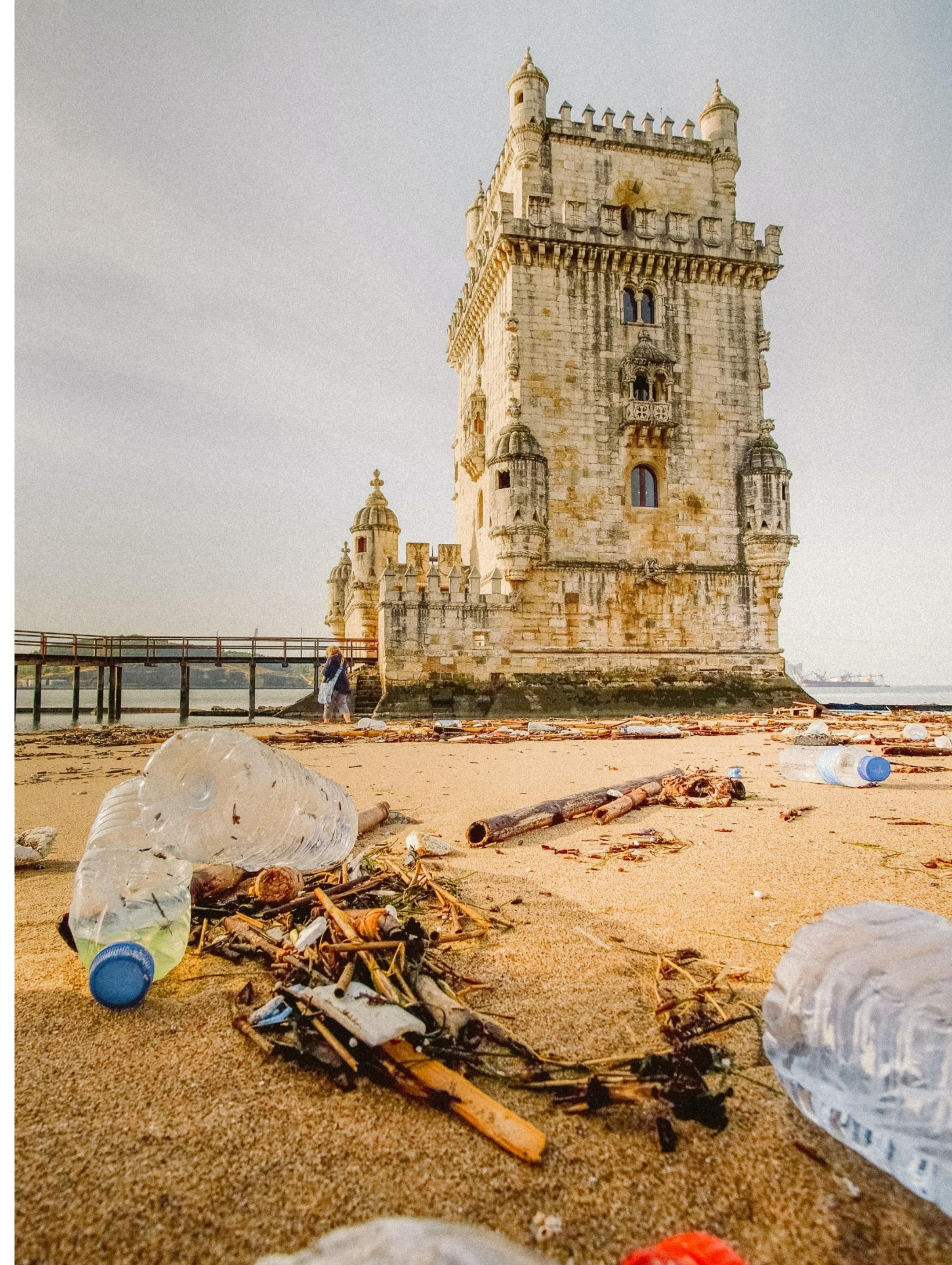
Other challenges

- Need to maintain the affordability of learning mobility, taking into account the need for inclusivity
- Learning how to make international travel non-extractivist
- Avoiding creating new hierarchies in making blended and virtual travel modes secondary options
- Coping with a loss of 'coolness' in certain destinations due to their popularity: suggests a need for diversification in directions of travel



Some conclusions about spatialized transitions

- Full accounting of the environmental impacts of all forms of international travel needed
- Addressing the growing reality of de-internationalization processes, especially in higher education
- Difficulty of integrating corporeal and virtual mobility
- We need to accepting that we may have moved past the point of 'peak mobility'



Further reading

Cairns, D. 2014. *Youth Transitions, International Student Mobility and Spatial Reflexivity: Being Mobile?* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Cairns, D. 2023. Outside learning: Blending formal, informal and non-formal higher education during the Covid-19 pandemic, in J. Wyn, H. Cahill and H. Cuervo (eds) *Handbook of Children and Youth Studies - 2023 edition*. Cham: Springer.

Cairns, D. and Clemente, M. 2023. *The Immobility Turn: Mobility, Migration and the COVID-19 Pandemic*. Bristol: Bristol University Press.

Cairns, D., França, T., Malet Calvo, D. and Azevedo, L. 2021. An immobility turn? The Covid-19 pandemic, mobility capital and international students in Portugal, *Mobilities*, 16(6), 874-887.

Thank you!

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