The future of youth in rural areas
How can local and regional authorities help?

Dr Jayne Glass   and   Prof Mark Shucksmith
Scotland's Rural College   Newcastle University

Youth Transitions in a Risk Society

The world into which young people grow is changing in many ways.

- Protracted and complex 'youth transitions':
  - 'Extended transitions'; non-linear, 'fractured transitions'; 'yo-yo-ing'.
  - Individuals accountable for their own fates, even though these continue to be structured by class, ethnicity, gender and age.
  - Young people have varying resources: not a homogeneous group.
  - Sources of support: the 'welfare mix': labour market, state, family, etc.

- The cumulative effect of the Economic Crisis of 2007/08 and the Covid Pandemic has been a redistribution of social and societal risk, with young people particularly disadvantaged.

- Rural youth migration:
    Should I stay or should I go?
    What is the policy objective?

Diversity across Europe
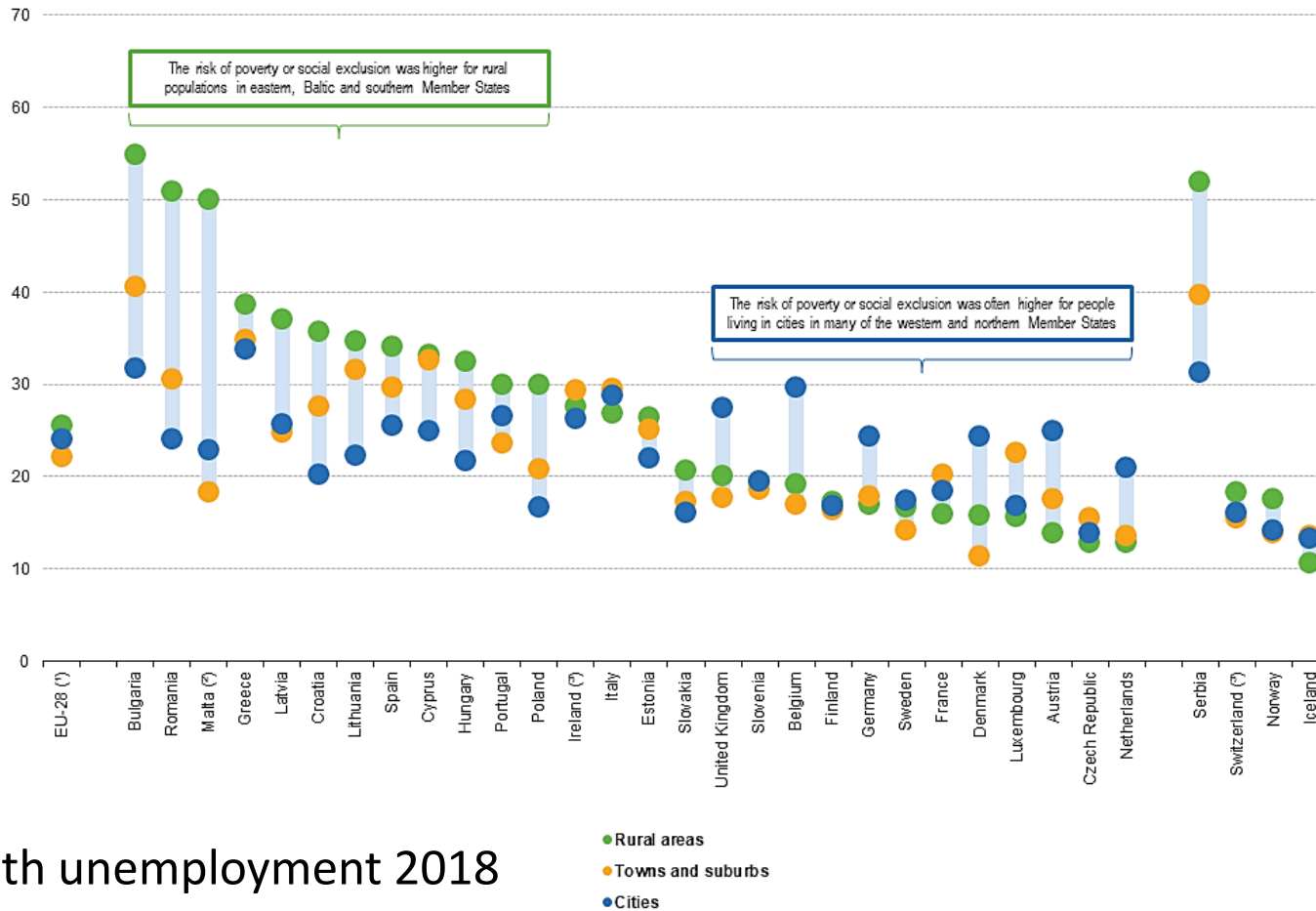
Youth unemployment 2018

Transitions: Education into Employment

- The inflexibility of educational systems
- Distance to educational institutions
  - Centralisation of services; digital exclusion; transport.
- Policy challenges for local and regional authorities:
  - Access to good quality school/vocational/further education
  - Individual guidance and support
  - Access to desirable training places and to good jobs
  - Support for non-linear pathways
 - New entrants to farming

Experiences of young people

- Employment: often low-paid, part-time, seasonal and precarious. Migration/ travel necessary for further and higher education, and to find better jobs.
- Housing: often unaffordable for young people.
- Transport: one of young people's main areas of concern.
- Digital connections are a necessity but lacking in many rural areas.
- Lack of public space, free from adult surveillance.
- Voice – rural youth are rarely listened to nor included in decisions.
- Welfare mix: the main source of welfare and support is the family and close social networks. State support has declined, with services centralized.
- Secondary impact austerity: where families can no longer offer support.

A toolkit for local and regional authorities
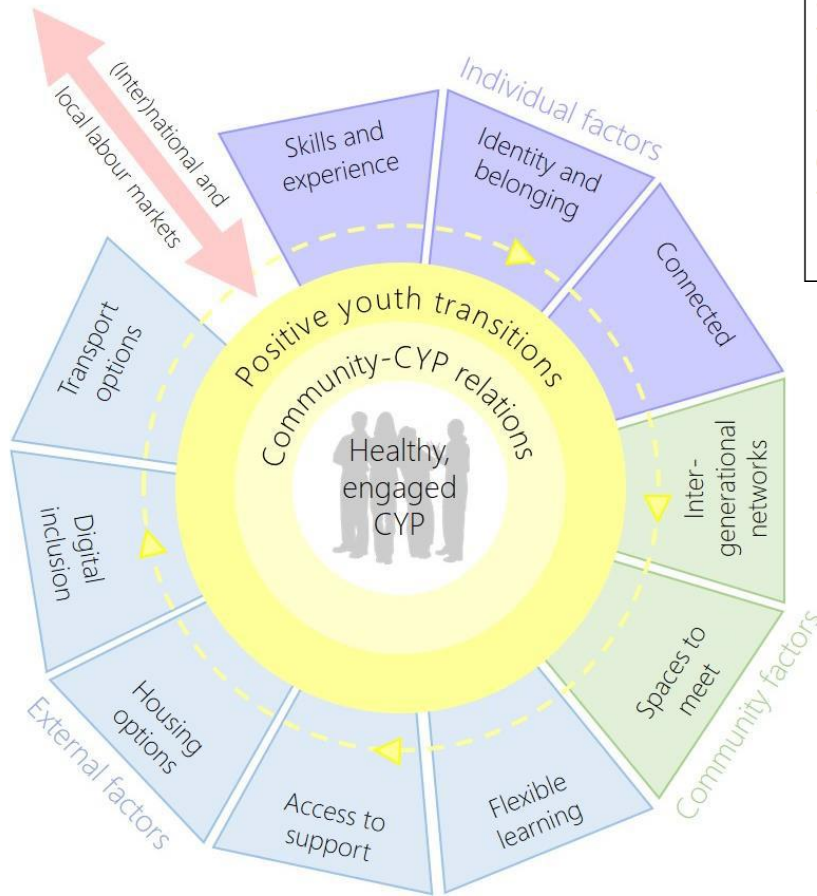
Individual factors	Community factors	External factors
Skills and experience → *Resilience to non-linear transitions* Identity and belonging → *Address marginalisation and visibility issues* Connected → *Strong personal network in the community*	Inter-generational networks → *Embedding young people in the idyll* Spaces to meet → *Opportunities to socialise and reduce isolation*	Flexible learning → *Increase opportunities* Access to support → *Health, employment* Housing options → *Accessibility/cost* Digital inclusion → *Infrastructure and devices* Transport options → *Public/private*

This diagram offers a toolkit for local and regional authorities to adapt to their own place context, working through the multiple ways in which youth transitions can be supported – with better structures and through developing their own agency.

More details in Dr Glass's 2020 report.

Conclusion

- Rural youth transitions to adulthood face low pay, unemployment or insecure employment, declining services, unaffordable housing, digital exclusion and outmigration of better school performers, with too little 'support to stay'.

- Reliance on family for support compounds inequalities through 'secondary impact austerity'.

- The transfer of social risk and the deepening of poverty appears greater in rural regions because of poorer services.

- Young people often feel ignored by those in authority – there is an issue of accountability to young people and their rights as citizens.

- A toolkit has been suggested which offers a framework for local and regional authorities to provide better 'support to stay'. Flexible and creative support structures should address each young person's individual and diverse needs.