LEAVING 'ROMA' BEHIND.
NOTES ON THE IMPACT OF HOUSING AND (FORCED) MOBILITY ON EDUCATION.

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Introduction

This paper is framed in a larger doctoral research focusing on the intersections between the housing practices and the educational careers of Romanian Roma youths (6-18 years old) living between Madrid and a rural village in southern Romania. The explorative ethnographic work realized until now (spring to winter 2014) has developed within a non-Romani speaking network of families currently living in squatted houses and apartments in an outskirt district of Madrid. Since the first arrivals, in 2007, the residential patterns of these families were characterized by a high heterogeneity of conditions and strategies employed: the self-construction of shacks, the use of motorhomes, the occupation of empty houses or apartments, and the rent. Due mainly to forced evictions, most families went through all these conditions more than once, reaching a high urban mobility. During my fieldwork I have been also observing international circular migration patterns, consisting in households or some of their members moving back to Romania for limited periods of time, and (above all in the last period) more or less definitive returns motivated by the decrease of working/sustenance opportunities in Spain, or other family reasons.

Both (wanted) international mobility and (unwanted) urban mobility seem to negatively affect the life of the youngest members of these families, both academically and behaviorally: temporary withdraws, changes of school, absenteeism, low attainment and dropout have become the norm. Also, the ethnicity of these young migrants has (at this stage of research) still unobserved educational consequences. Roma students are often very sensible to the perceptions of teachers, since these – as in the case of other discriminated minorities – are mainly filtered through stereotypes (Carrasco 2003; Gamella 2011). In this respect it may be argued that, since mobility represents an important element of stigmatization of the Roma, both attitudes and interventions of teachers may be influenced by a stereotyped and culturalized idea about the real and perceived mobility of these students as indissolubly linked to ethnic origins. Such approximation could easily underpin the normalization of low attainment and absenteeism, and also frustrate the development of school and classroom practices able to address the real needs of these students.

The main purpose of this paper is to examine relevant literature on the interactions between housing, mobility, poverty/class, and education, without taking into account the 'Roma' variable'. Performing and perceiving ethnicity has important consequences on education, since it shapes the relation of trust/mistrust between minority students and majority schools, and also because it conditions the way educators perceive minority students' academic and social behavior and, consequently, develop their practices (Abajo and Carrasco 2004; Bereményi 2011). On the other hand, the descriptive characteristics of students, such as ethnicity itself, reveal very little about the underlying processes that influence school achievement and dropout behavior (Rumberger 1995: 585). Rather, the focus should be put on school institutions and school systems minority students are enrolled into. Thus, moving from this approach, and following Leventhal and Newman (2010: 1166), this paper will not considered housing as "home environment in terms of interactions and experiences that are available to the child" (where ethnicity become somehow visible), but rather: housing in terms of the physical, financial, and psychological features of the house itself. [1]

This choice has three important implications, both conceptual and methodological. In the first place, considering the intersections between housing and education of Roma migrants in the larger frame of

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[1] In order to analyze the impact of housing and mobility on children's development and education, Leventhal and Newman (2010) adopt an ecological theoretical model, which highlight the joint influence of multiple social contexts, such home environment, neighborhoods, schools. They identify six features of housing that have a direct influence on children development (physical quality, crowding, residential mobility, homeownership, subsidized housing, affordability) and other characteristics that indirectly influence the features of housing (mainly the family socio-demographic and the macro-level forces: direct discrimination, neighborhoods, social networks, schools).

sociological and anthropological researches on housing, mobility, poverty/class, and education (rather than on specific literature on Roma) allows de-ethicizing both political and academic discourses about Roma, and also consider other categories for analysis and comparison. In this sense, Romanian Roma migrants students in Spain could be compared to Mexican migrants in the US, since they share with them the same sources of mobility, such as unaffordable housing and periodical returns to the country of origin (see Nakagawa et al. 2002: 116), rather than to Spanish Roma (or *Gitanos*), with which they share, more than anything else, an alleged pan-European 'Roma identity'. In the second place, this approach allows isolating the unique association between housing and education and, at a later stage of the research, to contrast these findings with ethnographic data that would illuminate on the role played by the 'ethnic variable' both on the housing and migration-related family decision-making processes, and on the teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and interventions. In the third place, taking into account "the physical, financial, and psychological features of the house itself" requires both researchers and policymakers to stop over-focusing on ethnic categories and lay eyes on situations similar to those of Romanian Roma migrants but experienced by other groups or individuals.

The economic crisis turned Spain into an ideal test site for rethinking both the academic approach and the general political attitude towards the 'exclusion of the Roma'. The housing issue has shifted there from a social-exclusion issue to a national problem, resulting in the middle and lower class undergoing the same housing problem of Roma migrants (homelessness and forced evictions in particular). The traditional profile of homeless or shantytown people has adjusted to the characteristics of 'new homeless' people (FEANTSA 2014). Therefore, educators, public servants, and policy makers facing the effects of the housing crisis in their territories, have now the opportunity to compare new situations of destitutions with those experienced by groups that have been always considered entirely responsible for their own 'marginalization'. In this perspective, the traditional housing problems of homeless people, marginalized *Gitanos*, Roma immigrants, and other shantytown population becomes nothing but the silent evidence of the weaknesses of the state to deal with social inequality: an evidence that today has become quite noisy. On the other hand, research on low-income and immigrant Roma should be able to shed light on broader neoliberal practices of "punishing the poor" (Wacquant 2009) in modern welfare/workfare states. Surveys on destitution and homelessness should start to incorporate the concerns of low-income immigrant Roma: the recent "Study on Mobility, Migration and Destitution in the European Union" (European Commission 2014), which analyses the situation of Roma in Italy and France, *together* with that of third country workers in Poland and Spain, and undocumented migrants in the Netherlands and Greece, is a good example in this sense.

Moved by the principle of "transcending the 'ethnic' frame of reference" (Stewart 2010: 2) when researching Roma minorities, and following Tremlett (2009, 2014), during my ethnographic work I decided to research, alongside Romanian Roma youths also non-Roma youths living in the same districts, attending the same schools, and sharing similar housing problems or migration patterns. Tremlett (2014) argues that this methodological approach would allow "to ensure [not to] fall into the trap of assuming what [we see or hear has] to do with 'being Roma' and not just 'being from that neighborhood' or 'being quite poor' […]" (ibid: 843). In continuity with this purpose, this paper attempt to examine the processes that 'leave Roma behind' in education only by focusing on the intersections between mobility, housing, poverty/class and education: 'Roma ethnicity' will be conceptually left behind.

The first section set the international mobility and the forced urban mobility of low-income Romanian Roma migrants in the context of both the general intra-European westward mobility and the Spanish economic and housing crisis. Section two tries to find a definition for student mobility. Section three describes the potential costs and benefits of moving for students. Section four examines the impact of unwanted mobility and homelessness on both academic achievement and children's development. Section five shows the way schools and educators use to problematize student mobility. Finally, section six

anticipates insights into possible solutions. The Conclusive notes is that research on mobility and education is urgently needed in order to rethink educational systems in the European Union, taking into account the change in the mobility/migration flows, the increased social tension, and the economic crisis.

Moving mainly from a sociological perspective, most studies considered in this paper use quantitative and, to a lesser extent, qualitative data. Although they succeed to identify to what extent mobility predicts dropout and academic achievement, they say little about the underlying processes, such as school and classroom practices and programs, that turn mobility into a predictor of low achievement and dropout. However, they represent a precious starting point that needs to be complemented with further qualitative and ethnographic data. [2]

1.   Transnational and urban mobility in Europe and Spain at the times of the crisis

Research on the interdependence between housing and education has widely developed in the United States since the 1980s (literature reviews have been made by Brennan 2011; CHP 2007; Kaase 2005; Lubell and Brennan 2007) but is almost missing in Europe. This is due to the fact that, compared to other western countries, mobility in the US is generally higher: change of residence involves 11.7% of the US-American population and is mainly due to housing-related issues (48%), family reasons (30.3%) and employment (19.4%) (Ihrke 2014). The 2.4% annual mobility rate between US-American states is pretty high compared to Europe, where annual mobility *between* EU-27 countries is 0.35% and inter-regional mobility *within* EU-15 countries is 1% (OECD 2012: 64). The high geographical mobility of the US society considerably affects the younger population. Research shows that about 50% of the school age population moves at least twice before 18 years old, and 10% of it at least six times (Wood et al. 1993: 1335). In 2001, 16% of all students changed residence (Schafft 2003). These figures have an impact also on school enrolment: according to a national longitudinal survey, in 1988, 31% of US students between elementary and middle school, and 10% in high school, changed school two or more times (see Rumberger and Larson 1998: 1). Similarly, Astone and Mclanahan (1994: 578) found that 35% of US students in middle school, change school more than once because of residential mobility.

In recent years mobility has increased also in Europe, due to both free movement regulations and economic crisis. Nonetheless, with the exception of some studies carried out in the United Kingdom (Gibbons and Telhaj 2011; Rodda, Hallgarten, and Freeman 2013; Strand and Demie 2006, 2007) and Catalonia (Carrasco et al. 2012), the phenomenon of student mobility has been mainly ignored, both conceptually and politically. Although movements between regions of the same country still represent more than 85% of the movements in the European Union (Gáková and Dijkstra 2008: 6), mobility *between* EU countries has increased considerably during the last years, in particular after the 2004 and 2007 enlargement. Between 2006 and 2010 mobility within the EU passed from 0.14% of the EU15+8 working age population to 0.35% of the whole EU27 population (Gáková and Dijkstra 2008: 2; OECD 2012: 64). [3] As a consequence, the stock of non-national EU citizens resident in other Member States has considerably increased during the last years: nationals from Eastern EU countries (EU8+2) residing in Western EU (EU15) passed from 1.6 million in 2003 to 4.8 million in 2009, being the half of them Romanians and Bulgarians (OECD 2012: 65). Thus, Eastern EU citizens represent about one third of the whole non-national EU citizens resident in other Member States, which are about 1.7% (13.6 million) of the whole population (506 million) (Eurostat 2013).

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[2] Most of the studies considered focus uniquely on primary (6-10 years) and/or middle school (11-13 years). Secondary school (14-18 years) is however considered in the half of the studies, either together with middle school, or in all-encompassing analyses.
[3] These are approximate data because the figures for 2006 and 2010 are not completely comparable (the former consider the working age population, the latter the whole population); and the values consider the population legally resident, which means, that increased rates are partially due *de facto* to the regularization of persons already present.

Due to recession, all types of migration flows, both within the EU and from outside, seem to have slowed (OECD 2012: 65). During the immediate crisis period in 2008-2010, both general and labor mobility within the EU decreased sharply by 40% (Eurofound 2014: 17); in Spain, for instance, inflows of Romanians declined with the beginning of the crisis. This downward trend was also conditioned by the reintroduction of restrictions on labor market access in July 2011 (Eurofound 2014: 25). Furthermore, both country-specific abolition/reintroduction of the restriction to EU2 nationals and specific regulations related to the residence permit registration (which has been recently tightened in Spain), might have produced temporary return and circular migration patterns of long-term EU migrants affected by the crisis, as well as changes in the mobility/immobility patterns. [4] Although a rebound in the mobility rate of EU migrant workers was recorded after 2011, today mobility rates within the EU remain lower than before the crisis (Eurofound 2014: 59). [5]

The recent economic crisis did not only shape mobility between EU countries, but also residential mobility at a local/urban level. This change has mainly to do with unemployment and the crisis of mortgages. In Spain, the terrific increase of unemployment rates (24% in October 2014) has dropped the purchasing power of many families and has threatened their capacity to access affordable housing. [6] Foreclosure evictions turned into a national problem, passing from about 26,000 in 2007 to 93,636 in 2010. Only during the first semester of 2012 about 48,000 foreclosures have been reported. Also evictions for the impossibility to pay the rent increased from 68,500 in 2010 to about 75,500 in 2012. Between 2007 and the end of 2014 more than 600.000 households (3.5% of the total) were evicted in Spain. [7] At the same time, due to budgetary constraints, housing subsidies have been reduced (Laparra et al. 2014: 28) while the progressive decline in the construction of social housing could not meet the increasing demand of this good (Sánchez-Mora, Clavero, and Manzanera 2013: 72). Today, according to the European Federation of National Association Working with Homeless (FEANTSA 2014) an increasing number of people are confronted with homelessness in Spain. Housing problems, which used to be confined to low-income families, have reached up into the middle class: more people became homeless as a consequence of job loss (from 30% in 2005 to 45% in 2012) or failure to pay the rent (from 11.4% in 2005 to 26% in 2012).

Moving from these observations, we can identify two key developments *vis-à-vis* the change in the mobility patterns within the European Union. First, an increased westward mobility, slowed down by the crisis, statistically not significant, but still important compared to European standards. Second, an increased residential instability, which mainly concerns southern European countries, Spain in particular, provoked by the loss of income of low and middle class families. Similar to United States, both forms of mobility are considerably affecting the school age population in Europe. According to an on-going study realized by the EMIGRA (2015) research group on the effects of the mortgage crisis on both Spanish and non-Spanish underage population in Catalonia, the rising unemployment and the worsening working conditions of their families, together with the reduction of the levels of public spending on childhood (education, recreation) and social protection, is worsening the academic and emotional development of what has been already called the 'foreclosure generation' (Bowdler, Quercia, and Smith 2010).

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[4] With respect to Roma migration, Sardelic (2015) argues that some Romani populations (in particular Slovenian and Croatian Roma) became increasingly less mobile with the emergence of the economic crisis. On the other hand, Vlase and Preotesa (2012: 75) argue that due to a flexible transposition of the Free Movement Directive (2004/38/EC) in Spain, Romanian citizens have been obtaining residence permits quite easily and that, therefore, Romanian Roma in Spain adopted more circular migration patterns, compared for example, to Italy.

[5] The increase of 15% in the mobility rate recorded in 2011 was due to the rise of the traditional North-South mobility as well as to the regularization of EU2 nationals after the country-specific periods of restrictions (Andor 2014; Eurofound 2014: 18, 23, 25).

[6] In Spain unemployment is the highest in the EU after Greece: 13% in 2008, 28% in 2013 (Eurostat 2014a, 2014b, 2014c).

[7] Website of the *Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca* (http://afectadosporlahipoteca.com/2014/10/10/los-datos-del-cgpj-confirman-que-siguen-aumentando-los-desahucios-en-espana/) and *Barometro Social* (http://barometrosocial.es/archivos/320);

2. Youth on the move! Academic and political definitions of 'student mobility'

There are two different types of mobility affecting children's education: *residential* mobility and *school* mobility (or transfer). The former consists into moving to a new home, while the latter consists in changing school. Residential and school changes are not synonymous: "some students change schools without moving, whereas other students move without changing schools" (Rumberger and Larson 1998: 19). Individuals may decide to change residence voluntarily, following their own needs, lifestyle, or employment opportunities (Kaase 2005: 2). In these cases, mobility is perceived as an investment in one's human capital, that brings people to move "where the highest return on their investment may be realized" (Lichter and Costanzo 1987, cited by Schafft 2003: 3). In more unfortunate situations, mobility can be associated to negative events such as family break-up, foreclosures, forced evictions, loss of income, or even warfare and persecutions. Except when these moves take place within the same district or between neighboring districts, residential mobility is likely to provoke a change of school. But school transfers may also occur when parents pursuit higher quality schools or school system, better matches for their children, or a more supportive learning environment (see Gibbons and Telhaj 2011; Ream 2003, cited by Langenkamp 2014; Rumberger and Larson 1998). Hanushek and colleagues (2004) defines the change residence as a consequence of the process of seeking to better quality school as 'Tiebout mobility'.

Irrespective of the reason beyond mobility, academic research usually refers to 'student mobility' as the unscheduled school enrolment after the regular period (see Carrasco et al. 2012; Schafft 2003; Strand and Demie 2006). Outside academia, in Europe, the phenomenon of student mobility has been politically ignored and very little conceptualized. At a school level, student mobility is often problematized and assimilated to the arrival of foreign/migrant students. For this reason, schools tend to support activities that focus on the 'cultural integration' and on the official language proficiency, rather than on the effects of the school transfer itself on academic performance (Pérez-García et al. 2008: 12, 19). A study conducted in Catalonia (Carrasco et al. 2012) found that, despite about half of in-year enrolments in compulsory cycles concerns non-national students, mobility is mainly caused by changes in the labor market, difficulties to access decent housing, and family enrolment strategies and aspirations, rather than by migration itself. On the other hand, education policies in the EU incentivize student mobility between Member States as a means to create educational and professional opportunities. 'Learning mobility' has become the flagship of the strategic framework for the European cooperation in education and training ET 2020 (Council of the European Union 2011), and has been previously encouraged by specific programs, such as the Comenius and Erasmus programs, and the most recent Youth on the Move program. Looking at United States, Langenkamp (2014) emphasizes the contradiction between the incentive of school mobility by educational policies, and both risks and problematization of student mobility. Also in the European Union doubts remain about the procedures through which student mobility outside of these programs is ordinary managed in school districts, both in terms of inter-district school changes and in terms of recognition of titles and curricula between country of origin and countries of destination. [8]

Moving from this context, the final report of an isolated European research project – qualitatively poor, but still unique in the intention – titled 'MobiKid: Geographic mobility and children's school performance in Europe' (2005-2007) identify three kind of student mobility in the European Union: (1) the school transfers as a consequence of migration within the EU or from third countries; (2) the temporary changes of school in the context of European exchange programs; and (3) the school transfers within national, regional, and urban boundaries (Pérez-García et al. 2008: 15). The project defines student mobility as the move from one school to another during the same cycle, and not necessarily after the regular enrolment

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[8] For instance, the latest report on the education system in the Community of Madrid (Comunidad de Madrid 2013) refers to mobility only in terms of European educational programs.

period. In conclusion, a common conceptualization of student mobility is totally missing in Europe. The academia defines student mobility mainly as the in-year change of school, with or without residential mobility. Policy documents in Europe consider student mobility as the move from one school to the other during the same school cycle, mainly as a consequence of European exchange programs.

The Romanian Roma youths targeted in my doctoral research present a double profile. On the one hand they change school frequently as a consequence of changes of residence following forced evictions. Nakagawa and colleagues (2002) conceptualize these students as 'city migrants': they are urban students of lower socioeconomic status who, due mainly to unstable financial and housing situations, move short distances throughout the school year, normally from school to school within the same district or between neighboring districts. [9] At the same time, these Romanian Roma youths also moved at least once between national school systems as a consequence of migration. Consequently, for the purpose of this paper I will refer to 'student mobility' in terms of change of school, both within the same school year and within the same school cycle, as a consequence of both urban/inter-district and international mobility. I will also use the expression 'residential mobility' to indicate the simple change of residence, regardless of the distance traveled (inter-district or inter-national residential mobility is the same); and the term 'residential instability' to refer to the sources of financial and psychological housing-related stress, such as unwanted mobility, homelessness, overcrowding, and poor material conditions. In the next section I will examine whether and how mobility is a risk factor for educational achievement.

3.   Framing the problem. The effects of moving on the students

There is a widespread assumption among educators that student mobility is disruptive to education, either directly by disrupting curriculum continuity and progression, or indirectly, through domestic stress or poor social adjustment. Academic and behavioral problems are frequently associated with or identified as a consequence of high mobility. Some studies (Astone and Mclanahan 1994; Crowley 2003; Mueller and Tighe 2007; Nakagawa et al. 2002; Reynolds and Wolfe 1999) indicate that mobile pupils have an increased likelihood of school dropout, repeating grades, absenteeism, learning disorder, low achievement, and behavioral problems. Wood and colleagues (1993) report that children who move frequently (six or more moves by age of 18) are 50% to 100% more likely to experience a delay in growth or development, to have learning disorders, repeated grades, or occurring behavioral problems.

However, there are equally good reasons to expect pupil movements and high levels of turnover to improve attainment. European educational programs, for instance, were designed as a means to create educational and professional opportunities. Strand and Demie (2007) suggest that there is little evidence of a negative impact of school mobility on the children of high-income groups that moves for career purposes, such as business, diplomatic service, and army. Students may change schools in an attempt to find a more suitable or supportive school environment (Hanushek et al. 2004; Rumberger and Larson 1998); for this reason, some authors suggest that school transfer is to be encouraged if it improves academic performance (Gibbons and Telhaj 2011: 1157).

The linkage between mobility and school achievement seems difficult to define, since it relies on a compound of different elements: Gibbons and Telhaj (2011) define it 'compositional', while Pérez-García and colleagues (2008) identify more than 31 variables that influence the cause-effect relation between education and mobility. Consequently, the big debate among scholars is whether or not student mobility is disruptive *per se*, or whether this linkage is atributable to reasons that forego mobility. As Stiefel and colleagues (2010: 305) argue, "discerning 'the true effect' of mobility on student achievement is

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[9] They move short distances due to a number of factors, such as "[the] resources of local social and informational networks, the desire not to leave an area, and the attachments to family and friends" (Schafft 2003: 13).

challenging: while some research finds mobility is harmful to student test scores, other literature argues this is due to a confluence of 'at risk socio-demographic factors' mobility and poor academic performance".

3.1 School disengagement and dropout

Most studies considered in this paper define school achievement in terms of dropout or academic scores. Dropout is probably the best way to examine school failure since it is easy to record, it gives an idea of the cumulative nature of academic achievement, and also suggests the potential implications of school failure. The completion of compulsory and upper-secondary education, in fact, is widely recognized as a precondition for accessing decent work or well-paid employment (European Commission 2011b; Fundamental Rights Agency and UNPD 2012). In particular, Rumberger (1995: 584) found that dropouts receive lower earnings, experience higher levels of unemployment, are more likely to have health problems, to engage in criminal activities, and to become dependent on welfare programs. Since I am interested in examining the relation between residential mobility and school achievement, I will consider here two studies of Rumberger and colleague (Rumberger and Larson 1998; Rumberger 1995). Moving from the analysis of both family-related and school-related causes of dropout, these studies found that changes of school are both symptoms and causes of school/educational disengagement and may lead to dropout.

According to Rumberger (1995) the analysis of dropout can focus either on the individual, or on the school level. Looking at the factors that influence students' decisions to leave school, the author found that family socioeconomic status and family background (in terms of parental involvement and parenting style) were highly predictive of dropping out. [10] For instance, students with a low socioeconomic status were likely to dropout twice as middle-class students. With respect to the individual school experience, grade retention (above all in early grades) was identified as the single most powerful precursor to the decision to leave school. Change of schools, poor school performances, disruptive behaviors, absenteeism, and negative attitudes toward school were found to increase the probability of dropping out. Nonetheless, besides students' background characteristics, schools have their own characteristics that may either promote or reduce dropout behavior. These include the school climate and composition, the structural features of the school (size and resources), as well as the organization (rules and practices). These characteristics allow schools to mediate the potentially disruptive impact of the family background on educational achievement. Moving from these considerations, the author found that schools' structural features and climate explain most of the differences among students with a low socioeconomic status, showing how school policies and practices greatly influence student achievement, especially among disadvantaged students.

In a successive research, Rumberger and Larson (1998) examine the relation between mobility and school disengagement. They found that school transfer and school dropout reflect nothing but differing degrees of educational disengagement. According to the authors, changing school in the attempt to find a more suitable or supportive school environment is a less severe form of withdrawing from school, with the only difference that it concerns one single school and not the general school system. Wehlage (1989) and Tinto (1987), cited by the authors, argue that both enrolment changes are jointly influenced by the *social*

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[10] According to the author, parental involvement covers a range of activities, which basically concern the relation with the school community (participation to parent associations, attendance of school meeting, communication with teachers) and the support to high academic expectations of children (helping them with their homework, enforce family rules about doing homework and maintaining grades). Parenting styles, instead, refer to the way parents monitor and regulate their children's activities, provide emotional support and encourage independent decision-making and psychological maturity. Both processes vary widely by ethnicity, social class, and family structure (Rumberger 1995: 587).

engagement (social ties, absenteeism, misbehavior) and the *academic* engagement (educational expectations, schoolwork) with the school: in order to remain in a certain school, students should be integrated to some degree in either the social system (as long as they maintain a minimum academic performance), or the academic system (as long as their social needs are met elsewhere). Moving from this model, Rumberger and Larson (1998) found that, even after controlling for the characteristics of the family and the schools, students who were socially and academically less engaged in middle school, were more likely to either change schools or drop out. [11] This means that school engagement predicts both enrolment changes, and that dropping out is the final stage in a dynamic and cumulative process of school disengagement. [12] At the same time, the authors also found that student mobility between middle and high school heightens feelings of academic and social disengagement and reduces the chance of completing high school. This is likely to increase as the number of school changes increases: "Students who made two or more school changes were more than four times as likely as stable students to not graduate and six times as likely as stable students to get a special education diploma" (ibid: 25). [13]

3.2   The loss of social capital

Mobility affects school/educational engagement primarily because it provokes disruption of social networks, peer networks in particular. In fact, mobile students face a number of challenges in adjusting to new school settings, including new academic curricula, standards and expectations, as well as to new teachers, friends, and neighbors (Fantuzzo et al. 2012: 398; Mehana and Reynolds 2004; Mueller and Tighe 2007: 374; Rumberger and Larson 1998: 8). In this context, social ties are particularly important for both emotional and intellectual development. According to Astone and Mclanahan (1994), who focus their study on children of single-parent and stepfamilies, the disruption of social ties that accompany residential mobility is a predictor of dropping out of school:

> "Teachers are less likely to invest in a child they do not know very well, especially if the record suggests that the child's family moves often. Also, children attending a new school may feel socially isolated or marginalized; therefore they may seek out other marginal students, such as those who are involved in antisocial activities or simply disengaged from the educational process" (ibid: 576).

A recent study by Langenkamp (2014) specifically examines the likelihood of school disengagement and dropping out of mobile students by exploring the effect of school mobility on the relationships of mobile students with new peers, teachers, and parents. The author defines school engagement as the feeling of belonging to a certain school, fostered by the relations with teachers and peers: since mobile students have less social ties and smaller peer social network in their new school, they are engage less and, therefore, experience greater academic difficulty, including dropout. Even after controlling for the general circumstances of the families – such as lower socioeconomic status, family structure and chronic residential instability – differences in school disengagement between mobile and stable pupils persist.

Leventhal and Newman (2010) underline that school mobility may lower academic achievement because it also reduces families' social and caring connections to their community, as well as access to information:

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[11] For example, "students with high absenteeism during eighth grade were 40% more likely as students with low absenteeism to change high schools but were almost three times as likely to drop out of school" (Rumberger and Larson 1998: 23).

[12] Moving from a psychological perspective, Finn (1989, cited by Rumberger 1995, and Rumberger and Larson 1998) identifies two models that focus on the emotional and behavioral components of school disengagement and dropout. The frustration-self-esteem model argues that the first reason for school withdrawal is early school failure, since it leads to low self-esteem and behavioral problems such as absenteeism. On the other hand, the participation-identification model argues that withdrawal is due to the lack of participation in school activities, such as homework and other non-academic activities.

[13] After control for background factors was introduced, these differences were reduced consistently but still present (ibid).

families who are new to a community have less information about the school and are less able than stable families to take full advantages of the school's resources.

4. The reasons beyond student mobility

Despite student mobility is associated with dropout and poor school achievement this nexus is not clear-cut. Quite the opposite: "For example, because poor children are more likely to be mobile and have problems in school, perhaps both their mobility and low achievement are due to underlying family problems related to poverty" (Rumberger 1995). The debate whether student mobility is disruptive *per se* or not may lead to divergent conclusions. On the one hand, some scholars emphasize that changing schools significantly increases the likelihood of school failure, even after controlling for differences in the family background. According to Temple and Reynolds (1999), for example, half of the difference in achievement between mobile and stable students relates to 'the true effects' of mobility. Other authors argue that these researches fail to properly control for other factors related to school achievement (Kaase 2005). For instance, according to two studies by Strand and Demie (2006, 2007), once controls for background factors (such as special educational needs, socio-economic disadvantages, and prior attainment) are included, the effect of mobility become irrelevant in primary school and only relative in secondary school. [14] Similarly, Pribesh and Downey (1999: 531) found that pre-existing background characteristics explain about 90% of the difference in test scores between movers and non-movers in high school and that mobility accounts for roughly 5% of the remaining difference. In other words, there is no indication that changing school alone has a negative impact on school attainment.

> "The *reason* a pupil moves school, rather than the change of school itself, is probably the most important factor in relation to attainment" (Strand and Demie 2006: 564) [emphasis added].

These findings are supported by the little evidence of a negative impact of school mobility on the children of high-income groups that moves for career purposes, such as business, diplomatic service, and army (Strand and Demie 2007). In other words, are the *circumstances* surrounding the changes of residence, and the *reasons* beyond them, that produce profound differences *vis-à-vis* the impact of mobility on students and families (Carrasco et al. 2012). If we look at most studies in the field, it becomes clear that the main factors behind student mobility are disruptive changes of the family circumstances: mobile students are more likely to come from low-income, discriminated minority, and migrant families (Carrasco et al. 2012; Gibbons and Telhaj 2011; Herbers et al. 2012; Kaase 2005; Nakagawa et al. 2002; Schafft 2003; Strand and Demie 2006; Wood et al. 1993). For instance, two longitudinal studies realized in 1988 and 1994 in the US found that student mobility was higher among Latino, Black, Native American, and poor children than among white, Asian, and middle/high-income families (see Rumberger and Larson 1998). A study by Schafft (2003) on the rural schools of the state of New York, found that student mobility is mostly a product of poverty, impoverishment and insecurity. Also Wright (1999, cited by Schafft 2003: 5) states that "there are strong correlations between poverty, high levels of mobility and academic underachievement". In England, one-third of in-year mobile students in primary schools and three-quarters in secondary schools arrive from schools outside of the country (Strand and Demie 2006, 2007). In Catalonia half of in-year enrolments in compulsory cycles concerns non-national students (Carrasco et al. 2012). Also family crises, such as a change in child custody or personal problems of the parents (abuse, separation, and divorce) are one of the cause of student mobility (Nakagawa et al. 2002: 98; Schafft 2003: 14, 17). According to Astone and Mclanahan (1994), children from single-parent families and stepfamilies are traditionally more likely than children from two-parent families to move during the school year.

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[14] According to the authors, the greatest effect of mobility in secondary school is due basically to more specialized curriculums, whose contents are difficult to learn outside of the school environment (Strand and Demie 2007).

However, also in this case, low income explains a good half of the lower educational achievement of these children. In conclusion, most scholars suggest that student mobility is mainly provoked by changes in the labor market, difficulties to access decent housing, as well as by family enrolment strategies and aspirations. The next two sections examine the correlation between the background characteristics of the 'city migrants' (Nakagawa et al. 2002) – unwanted mobility and homelessness in particular – and their effects on school achievement.

4.1 Forced eviction and children's development

Low-income families are exposed to the possibility of forced evictions. A study on the effect of foreclosures evictions on Latino families in the US (Bowdler et al. 2010) shows that changing residence is a stressful matter which directly affect children emotionally, physically, and also academically. Threaten to residential stability exposes households to an unstable situation which may spill over onto the children: for instance, anxiety and depression of the parents may provoke suffering in the spousal relationship and disruption of supportive family interactions (Crowley 2003; EMIGRA 2015; Leventhal and Newman 2010; Schafft 2003). According to Bowdler and colleagues (2010), moving in with neighbor relatives or friends is the most common first step after eviction. However, families moving in with friends or relatives, or in cheaper but smaller homes, are concerned about crowded conditions that may contribute to rising tensions between family members and cause behavioral problems in the children, including aggression with peers. Crowded housing may also exacerbate pre-existent health diseases, by facilitating the transmission of infection-based illness and also provoked mental or emotional health issues (depression, anger), which resulted in physical symptoms (irregular sleep). This is true in particular for younger children, that spend more time in the house (Leventhal and Newman 2010: 1167). Academically speaking, stressful relocations and chronic crowding results in frequent absenteeism, loss of interest, grade retention, low task engagement, and absenteeism (Mueller and Tighe 2007: 374). Also behavioral problems, such as fights with peers and suspensions, are common during and following the foreclosure.

In general terms, forced evictions are detrimental to children since they contribute to a sense of instability, consisting in the anxiety provoked by the suspect that in a near future the household would have to move again. Based on a review of literature that deservingly look outside of the European and US-American world, Bartlett (1999) draws attention to the indirect impacts of evictions on the academic performance of children living in poor urban settlements: according to the author, forced evictions are a traumatic experience threatening children's emotional security, that might produce long-term psychological disturbance, above all for the younger children. A research conducted in Manila, mentioned in the review, shows that the general sense of fear (nightmares, panic) observed among evicted children is similar to that among children in situations of armed conflict. [15]

Evictions also force families to change school. The abovementioned on-going study realized by the EMIGRA (2015) research group on a sample of 905 families victims of foreclosure in Catalonia, show that 20% of the families were forced to enroll their children in new schools as a consequence of the change of residence or due to economical reasons. According to the authors, this is a considerable proportion because normally families tend to avoid school transfers even at great costs.

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[15] Dizon, A.M. and S. Quijano (1997), Impact of Eviction on Children, Urban Poor Associates, Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR) and United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN-ESCAP).

4.2   The effects of homelessness and non-adequate housing on education

Although all children living in poverty are at risk of poor academic achievement, this is particularly true for children experiencing homelessness and residential instability. Herbers and colleagues (2012) found that homelessness, residential instability, and early reading skills are strong predictor of future school achievement. Since students who experience homelessness and residential instability are more likely to begin school with poor readiness skills, the author argue that early achievement is a protective factor, as well as a strong predictor, for future achievement above all for homeless and poor mobile students. These findings are consistent with research demonstrating the cumulative nature of academic achievement. [16] The authors invite educators and policy makers to promote early educational success for homeless and mobile students with appropriate actions to avoid discouragement and disengagement from school. Furthermore, they add, since low-income families and homeless are more likely to change school, schools need to make efforts to coordinate among them and with districts, shelters and community-based programs. These recommendations are underpinned by figures indicating that the gap in the academic scores with other students tend to remain the same, or may even increase over the school years.

Fantuzzo and colleagues (2012) examine the unique and combined association of homelessness (in terms of shelter stay) and intra-district school mobility with academic achievement and classroom engagement. Classroom engagement is defined in terms of both *task* engagement (the ability to complete tasks and to work independently) and *social* engagement (the ability to cooperate with peers and teachers, and to ask for or receive help). They authors found that homelessness alone (without residential instability) is only associated with problem in classroom engagement, in particular social engagement. Instead, residential instability alone (without homelessness) is negatively associated to both academic achievement and classroom engagement, in particular social engagement. Instead, experiencing homelessness and school mobility together was found to be detrimental to both achievement and engagement, compared to either homelessness or school mobility alone. Nonetheless, once absenteeism was considered, problems in task engagement partially decreased. In general, the stronger association of residential instability and homelessness with problems in *social* engagement, rather than *task* engagement, shows that residential instability has more harmful effect on the development of positive peer relationships, than on individual attention to task. According to the authors, these findings support previous research showing that homelessness result in *externalizing* behavioral problems (such as aggression and lack of attention) rather than *internalizing* ones (such as anxiety and depression). [17] In general terms, mobile and homeless children often become disconnected from their social support systems, such as family, peers, and neighborhoods. This appears to be very problematic, because early social ties and classroom engagement are buffers against school dropout.

In conclusion, evidence suggests that homelessness and residential instability are detrimental to educational performance. Nonetheless, "despite the volume of relevant research, it remains difficult to translate these findings into estimates of the positive impact that the provision of stable, quality housing could have on educational performance" (Mueller and Tighe 2007: 374). According to Agnew (2010), the educational consequences of poor housing condition can be measured by contrast by examining the impact of improved housing conditions:

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[16] In their extensive qualitative surveys on school attainment among the *Gitano* population in Spain, Abajo & Carrasco (2004) show that disruption in secondary education derives almost always from primary school. Also EU policy texts, such as the 2011 EC communication on early childhood education and care, reaffirm the primary importance of early childhood education as "crucial element for subsequent successful school participation" (European Commission 2011b: 3).

[17] Looking at the previous data (section 4.1), it seems that children who are victims of foreclosure evictions are more likely to experience *internalizing* behavioral problems while homeless and high mobile students undergo more *externalizing* behavioral problems. This difference could be explained with quality of the move: exceptional in the second case, chronic in the second one.

"Most studies of the effect of housing quality on education do not necessarily posit a direct *positive* link between quality affordable housing and improved education outcomes. Rather, they find *negative* education outcomes associated with poor housing conditions such as overcrowding and exposure to toxins. Presumably, affordable housing that is higher quality would result in improved education outcomes to the extent that it results in improved housing conditions for persons previously exposed to poor housing quality" (ibid: 21).

5.   The perspective of schools: student mobility as a burden

Student mobility is a worry for teachers, school counselors, and administrators, especially when it concerns low-income or immigrant families (Carrasco et al. 2012; Clark, Dyson, and Millward 1999; Kaase 2005). Research show that highly mobile students not only tend to be low socio-economical status, but also move to poorer districts and enroll high-mobility and low achievement schools (Bowdler et al. 2010: 12; Gibbons and Telhaj 2011; Nakagawa et al. 2002; Schafft 2003). [18] This means that school mobility is not only linked with the characteristics of the family, but also to the quality of the school of origin and destination. Thus, high-mobility schools and schools in poorer districts, in addition to meeting the educational needs of a very diverse student population, have more demands placed on them, including the added responsibility of addressing the heightened emotional needs of these students (Nakagawa et al. 2002).

Popular wisdom among educators maintains that the detrimental impact of moving also affect the school attainment of stable classmates, as well as the performance of teachers and administrators. Student movement is usually perceived as an extra burden for schools because it changes the characteristic and composition of the school community (see Crowley 2003; Gibbons and Telhaj 2011; Kaase 2005; Nakagawa et al. 2002; Reynolds and Wolfe 1999; Schafft 2003; Strand and Demie 2006). Educators often problematize high student mobility rates, since these interfere with the way school systems are built: "schools have established practices, which are difficult to change, and which may not be appropriate for pupils with significant difficulties [including housing problems]" (Clark et al. 1999). An educator interviewed by Schafft (2003: 22) declared, "schools are curriculum-driven. [They] run in a much more businesslike way with the bottom line in mind" and, the author add, mobile students clearly challenge that bottom line. According to Gibbons and Telhaj (2011), research needs to consider also the external effects of student mobility on other pupils, and on the performance of the school as a whole. The authors demonstrate that stable pupils who experience high pupil entry rates in their class progress less well academically than pupils of the same school who experience low mobility. Although the impacts of these "disruptive externalities of mobility" (ibid: 1156) are quite small, data show that student mobility may be detrimental to the general school achievement. The explanation advanced by the authors is that mobile pupils take time to assimilate and require a larger share of teacher attention.

Also Schafft (2003) warns about the external consequence of chronic residential mobility of low-income families by focusing on smaller rural districts with less fiscal resources. In rural schools with very limited resources even small enrolment changes can have significant fiscal and administrative consequences. Under these circumstances, school administrators tend to complain the characteristic of unpredictability of the moves, since these complicate both planning and budgeting processes. The author also account that

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[18] In their research, Nakagawa and colleagues (2002: 106) found that schools with high mobility have six times as many students eligible for free or reduced meals (which is an indicator of low-income), as well as greater numbers of ethnic-minority students, as do low mobility schools.

teachers often make the arrival of new students responsible for decreasing the regular teaching time, creating classroom management problems, and affecting social cohesion within the classroom. [19]

6. The 'meaningful association' between families and school

Rather than exploring the connection between student mobility and academic underachievement, some scholars are more broadly concerned with the community context within which student mobility occurs. Their studies suggest that both the academic/task engagement and the social bonding within schools jointly influence the educational outcomes of highly mobile students.

Nakagawa and colleagues (2002), for instance, report that mobile families have usually weak social ties with the school, since their children are not at school long enough to allow for educators to develop a relationship with their parents. For that very reason, the authors argue that schools should contribute to greater student stability by improving the connection with and families, and obtain that children remain in the same school even if they change residence. This is what Kerbow (1996, cited by Nakagawa et al. 2002: 99) calls the 'meaningful association'. According to the authors, the development of community-building programs and practices would represent the best way to create this relationship: in particular, measures aimed at encouraging parental involvement and support mobile families were the primary ways to build community, and to avoid parents of mobile students feeling uncomfortable at school. Similarly, Leventhal and Newman (2010) emphasize how parental support fostered by educators attenuates the negative association between residential mobility and adjustment to new schools. According to the author, such initiatives should be able to improve relations within schools as well as communication between families and schools, and "re-frame the school-community as ecology of people and events that interrelate" (Henry 1996, cited by Nakagawa et al. 2002: 99). Educators should be then encouraged to listen to the voices of parents and community people as well as to develop practices that allow members of the school community to know each other (Nakagawa et al. 2002). [20] Related to this, parental time and availability is a critical issue: on the one hand it is central to child well being, since it affects children's development at least partially through provision of support and supervision; but many times unaffordable housing result in parents working long hours, thereby being less available to their children (Leventhal and Newman 2010: 1168; Nakagawa et al. 2002: 115)

Nakagawa and colleagues (2002) also emphasize that despite the number of innovative programs that high-mobility schools or school in poor districts usually have, these are not generally seen as a means that would solve the problem of mobile student. Similarly, Rumberger and Larson (1998) report that educators are often reluctant to tackle the problem of student turnover, because they interpret the reasons behind residential and school mobility as an inevitable result of family circumstances that schools can do little about. The authors suggest that some school practices aimed at encouraging parental involvement (such as support professional making home visits, or the signature of written commitments) may even reinforce the idea among educators that parents are a problem rather than as a resource and a partner. Thus, the effort of the school to engage with mobile families and students could be effective only when educators make attempts to build caring relationships with the families. As Nakagawa and colleagues (2002)

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[19] Schafft (ibid) reports that teachers assert that they need to re-teach material so that new students could catch up academically; at the same time new students need to learning new rules and adapt to new peer groups.

[20] Examples of programs and practices mentioned by Nakagawa and colleagues (2002) include services for mobile students and families (counseling services, classroom buddy' for newcomers, school tours, and adult education classes); general school programs (preschool and afterschool programs, community partnerships); and supportive school and teacher practices. This last group include staff person assigned to address parent involvement; family support professional such as social workers; parent organizations; teacher asking parents to sign a written commitment; teachers regularly calling or inviting parents to school, sending information home, providing activities for parents to do at home, or creating homework assignments that require parent involvement; teacher training.

conclude, "schools should not assume that parents are unable or unwilling to be involved. Instead, they must take greater responsibility to reach those parents who are least involved" (St. John et al. 1997, cited by Nakagawa et al. 2002: 121).

Conclusive notes

The loss of social capital Some scholars identify the loss of social ties following the change of school, as well as the difficulty to build new social networks in the new school, among the most relevant reasons that explain the disruptive impact of mobility on education. Their findings show that school mobility has harmful effects above all on the development of positive peer relationships (Fantuzzo et al. 2012) and consequently that mobile pupils are less engaged in school compared to stable pupils (Langenkamp 2014). Student mobility would then increase the chance of dropout because it intensifies feelings of academic and social disengagement (Rumberger and Larson 1998). The loss of social capital would also affects mobile families, which have usually weak social ties with new schools and communities (Nakagawa et al. 2002).

The background characteristics of the family Other scholars (Astone and Mclanahan 1994; Bowdler et al. 2010; Crowley 2003; EMIGRA 2015; Pribesh and Downey 1999; Schafft 2003; Strand and Demie 2006, 2007) are more concerned with the background characteristics of mobile students and their families. Their findings show that student mobility is mainly a product of poverty, forced evictions, and other disruptive changes in family circumstances, that mainly affects families with lower socio-economical status and belonging to discriminated minorities. They argue that are mainly the reasons beyond mobility, rather than the change of school itself, which have a negative impact on school attainment. This means that the loss of social capital following the change of school may aggravate pre-existent academic and behavioral problems associated to residential instability, homelessness, overcrowding, and forced evictions.

Supporting early school attainment Both the sample chose in the analyzed literature (mainly primary and middle schools) and the results of these surveys substantiate the importance of early school achievement as a protective factor and predictor for future achievement above all for homeless and poor mobile students. These concerns have been already incorporated in some relevant EU soft-policy documents, such as the 2011 Communication on early childhood education and care (European Commission 2011b) and the 2011 call to Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020 (European Commission 2011a). [21] It remains to see how these recommendations work in practice. In this respect, Herbers and colleagues (2012) invite educators and policy makers to promote early educational success for homeless and mobile students with appropriate actions aimed to avoid discouragement and disengagement from school, including intensive and specialized interventions to accelerate learning, community-based programs, and coordination among different schools.

The 'caring circle' Langenkamp (2014) suggests that the creation of caring relations with parents and students is an important way to reverse some of the process of disengagement associated with student mobility and residential instability. Abajo and Carrasco (2004: 187) argue that any educational approach is not as decisive as the affective-relational relation developed within both family and school. Also Valenzuela (2008) identifies a sustained relationship built on support and mutual respect between teachers and students as the main precondition for any learning process. Given that residential instability leads to a loss of social ties, and that social ties are buffers against school dropout, the build of a "circle of caring" (ibid:

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[21] The 2011 Communication on early childhood education and care states, "early childhood education is a crucial element for subsequent successful school participation" (ibid 2011b: 3). Also the apparently low-expectation formulation of the 2011 call to Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies, whereby "Member States should, as a minimum, ensure primary school completion [of the Roma]. They should also widen access to quality early childhood education and care […]" (ibid 2011a: 5, 6) has to be interpreted in this perspective.

504) is chiefly important when it comes to mobile and homeless students. In addition, Langenkamp (2014) suggests that schools should be able to help mobile students rebuild social solidarity relations after mobility between institutions, mainly through gatekeepers (teachers and classroom buddies). On the other hand, Nakagawa and colleagues (2002) emphasize the need for schools to build a 'meaningful association' with the families of highly mobile students.

The double standard of learning mobility Education policies in Europe incentivize student mobility between Member States as a means to create educational and professional opportunities. Nonetheless, when student mobility is practiced 'spontaneously' outside of pre-existent EU programs it is often problematized. The procedures through which student turnover is ordinary managed are likely to be weak in practice, both in terms of inter-district school changes and in terms of recognition of titles and curricula between countries of origin and destination. Besides administrative impediments, teachers are often reluctant to tackle the issue of student turnover, because they interpret the reasons behind residential and school mobility as an inevitable result of family circumstances that schools can do little about (Rumberger and Larson 1998). School mobility also tend to polarize differences between the wealthier and poorest families: the families of higher socioeconomic status tend to change school because they seek for better quality schools, while low-income families are assigned less desirable schools (especially if they move after the regular enrollment period) or enter less prestigious schools in districts where housing prices are cheaper (EMIGRA 2015).

The culturalization of mobility Schools and educators also tend to misunderstand the reasons behind mobility. Perceptions of educators about the reasons of student mobility play a central role in the development of school programs for mobile students. In the case of non-national students, mobility is often interpreted as a consequence of migration. Consequently, educational systems tend to support intercultural programs, rather than focusing on the effects of school transfer and housing conditions on academic performance (Pérez-García et al. 2008). Schools also tend to treat issues such as absenteeism, school dropout, underachievement and misbehavior in isolation, by outsourcing the 'solution' to professionals and organizations, or by creating special groups (Bereményi 2011). When it comes to Roma and *Gitanos*, great expectations are placed on the implementation of 'cultural mediator' projects (see European Commission 2011a). However, it is doubtful whether impoverished Roma and *Gitano* students, and other students living in shantytowns, segregated areas, or squatted apartments, are really in need of these programs.

A challenge for schools Before emphasizing 'cultural diversity' and placing high expectations on intercultural programs, schools and educators should enquire into the underlying processes that influence school achievement and dropout behavior of low-income, mobile, and homeless pupils. The descriptive characteristics of the family, such as ethnicity, reveal these processes only partially. More than anything else, the educational outcomes of these students are influenced by the effectiveness of the school to reorient their practices in order to meet the needs of this student population (Clark et al. 1999). Therefore, than demand these students to adjust to the school, or outsource the task to deal with them, schools should be aware of the central role they play in creating the conditions that increase or decrease classroom and social engagement, mobility, dropout, achievement and absenteeism. In conclusion, research on mobility and education is urgently needed in order to rethink educational systems in the European Union, taking into account the change in the migration flows, the increased social tension and especially the economic crisis.

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