

## Youth and Young Adulthood: Transitions in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Decade of Life

2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference on Transitions in Youth and Young Adulthood  
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### Two track youth: The precarious youth life course

The restructuring of the labour market in industrial countries following the technological revolution of the 1970s coupled with periodic recessions culminating in that arising from the 2008 banking crisis has had massive effects on the timing and shaping of youth transitions – including the extension of educational participation and the postponement of independence. Such evidence of a new life course stage, 'Emerging Adulthood' based on the average time spent in education, tends to downplay dispersion around the mean value pointing to increasing polarisation of transitions and life chances. While those young people with strong family and personal resources can expect relatively secure prospects, not necessarily in the same occupations, those leaving education early without them, as typically characterised by 'NEET' status, may be laying the foundations for the life time insecurity identified with a growing *precariat*. These two tracks to adulthood cut across traditional concepts of age-based stages of development and socio-economic status based on occupations, presenting major challenges for the way youth transitions are conceptualised and managed.

Adopting a life course perspective, the talk examines these phenomena through examples taken from analysis of UK birth cohort study data in relation to cross cohort shifts in entry to higher education, the onset and outcomes of NEET, out of school activity and family worklessness. The talk ends with reflections on how, in exceptionally challenging times, effective youth transitions for all young people might be achieved.

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