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# Unaccompanied minors A geographical approach to the migration of teenagers

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# Unaccompanied minors

## A geographical approach to the migration of teenagers

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### Some elements about the general context

- Unaccompanied minors are "children, as defined in article 1 of the Convention, who have been separated from both parents and other relatives and are not being cared for by an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible for doing so." (Committee on the Rights of the Child, General comment NO.6-2005) ;
- These minors are under the State's protection according to the International Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) : article 20 : "A child temporarily or permanently deprived of his or her family environment, (...) shall be entitled to special protection and assistance provided by the State."

### French particularity

In France, the term "Unaccompanied Foreign Minors" is currently used. The emphasis on "foreign" underlines the fact that authorities are also considering these minors as future regularization seekers. Even if they should be considered like other national minors, special treatments exist in some *départements* defining themselves as "saturated" like Paris.

### In France

- There are approximately between 4000 to 8000 Unaccompanied minors in France. These estimations are directly linked with the mobility of these children ;
- They mainly come from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, West-Africa, Maghreb ...
- Most of these Unaccompanied minors are between 14 and 17 years old, they are children but should be more considered as teenagers in research studies ;
- Unaccompanied minors' migration is mainly composed of boys. Girls are part of the movement, however they are more invisible ;
- The reception and the administrative procedures are the responsibilities of the *département*.

Département	Effectifs sept. 2011	Rang national
Paris	1637	1
Seine-Saint-Denis	1000	2
<b>Ille-et-Vilaine</b>	<b>294</b>	<b>3</b>
Rhône	219	4
Nord	176	5
Oise	160	6
Somme	160	6
Isère	128	8
Bouches du Rhône	127	9
Loire	123	10

The ten departments most concerned by the presence of Unaccompanied minors

Source : Press file Ille-et-Vilaine, october 2011



Source : Sarah Przybyl & Youssef Ben Tayeb, Tanger (Morocco) 2013

Two Moroccan minors in the port of Tanger, watching tourists on their ways to cross the Strait of Gibraltar by ferry.

Some Unaccompanied minors are from Morocco and hide in buses to Spain, or in the cavities of this kind of boat. Other unaccompanied minors use this technic to go to Europe.

### What kind of scientific approaches can be used to analyze this migration?

- The focus on their migratory projects and their agencies allows to study this juvenile migration without using a systematic point of view which always considers Unaccompanied minors as victims. The aim of current studies is to show their capacity to act in a migration process ;
- Spatial approaches directly illustrate how youths can renegotiate and adapt their roads and their objectives when they meet someone or learn something new about the travel they are going to do ;
- Understanding Unaccompanied minors as "teenagers" instead of "foreigners" is fundamental and requires a multidisciplinary approach : sociology, psychology and history allow the development of innovative concepts in order to understand aspects of this migration;

### Methodological issues

Classical techniques cannot be applied, as teenagers are stressed during interview sessions;

Giving a large priority to long-term research and repeating exchanges with Unaccompanied minors in order to establish a relationship based on trust;

Proposing unusual tools used in migration studies : photography, video, artistic creations.

=> Main goal : adapting methods to the age and stories of these minors in a migratory process.