Key challenges faced by contemporary young people: considerations for the development of youth policy

Steven Roberts, School of Social Sciences
June 2017

twitter: @steveroberts_
#youthpolicy2017
JOINED UP THINKING

WIDER CONTEXT

1. Belonging
2. Agency & Empowerment
3. Participation
4. Volunteering
5. Learning & training
6. Working & Creating
• What immediately comes to mind when you see this image?:

a) Avocado
b) Breakfast
c) Luxury
d) No thanks
e) Something else
‘I have seen young people order smashed avocado with crumbled feta on five-grain toasted bread at $22 a pop and more. I can afford to eat this for lunch because I am middle-aged and have raised my family. But how can young people afford to eat like this? Shouldn't they be economising by eating at home? How often are they eating out? Twenty-two dollars several times a week could go towards a deposit on a house’

Bernard Salt, Partner @ KPMG, Columnist @ The Australian, October 2016
Millennials are entitled, narcissistic and lazy - but it's not their fault: Expert claims 'every child wins a prize' and social media has left Gen Y unable to deal with the real world

- Simon Sinek will be touring Australia and New Zealand following viral video

Interns: Don't Bother Uniting, You Have No Chains to Lose

"When I was trying to buy my first home, I wasn't buying smashed avocado for [AU]$19 and four coffees at [AU]$4 each." — Australian millionaire Tim Gurne

Interns are naïve whelps who are rising up off their swivel chairs, shaking off their imaginary shackles, and demanding what is not rightfully theirs: a workingman's wage. And I wish they’d just shut up.
YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE RESISTED…

I Stopped Eating Smashed Avocado And Now I Own A Castle

Given I’m allergic to avocado and cannot enjoy smashed avo lunches it is particularly galling that I’m not a property mogul already

I was gonna put a down payment on a house last year but then I spent $44,000 on avocado toast

Millionaire to millennials: Stop buying avocado toast if you want to buy a home
‘In my region, there is a symbol that underpins the notion that young people are lazy or are to blame for making the wrong choices’

a) Agree
b) Maybe
c) Disagree
PROBLEMS WITH ‘GENERATIONAL CONFLICT’ DEBATES

• Inequality **within** generations falls from view (France & Roberts, 2015, 2017)

• This happens with research, too. E.g. Aus research emphasises new conditions and general trends

• No denying that the world is different for young people today than it was during their parents’ youth… But in my view social class matters and acts as a ‘shock absorber’
In your area or region, the new ‘hostile landscape’ of the economy causes problems for...

a) Most/all young people
b) Particular groups of young people
c) Not all, but more young people than ever before
d) Other
SUBSTANTIVE THEME #2

Challenges in changing economies
THE CHANGING WORLD OF WORK

1.1 Automation:
Ever-smarter machines performing ever-more-human tasks

1.2 Globalisation:
Our workforce goes global and the global workforce comes to us

1.3 Collaboration:
Many jobs, with many employers, often at the same time

2. Opportunities
> Lower barriers
> More flexibility
> Wider markets and more specialisation

3. Risks
> Unemployment
> Inequality
> Insecurity

• Source: Foundation for Young Australians, 2016
The Global Financial Crisis is primarily responsible for the unemployment situation facing young people in your region/area’

a) Agree
b) Disagree
c) Don’t know
YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT: A PRE-CRISIS, CRISIS

(OECD Social Indicators 2016)

Figure 1.6. **NEET inactivity has not been influenced by the crisis**

Unemployed, inactive and overall NEET rate, OECD average, 1997-2014

Note: The OECD average is based on 25 countries for which data for a sufficient number of years is available.
Source: OECD Education Database.

StatLink: [http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933404855](http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933404855)
UNDEREMPLOYMENT

• Understood as:
  i) time related – working fewer hours than one desires
  ii) skill related – mismatch between worker skill level and skill required for job
Figure 1: Youth underutilisation and its components in Australia, February 1978 to February 2017

Source: ABS 2017, Labour force Australia, February 2017, Cat. no. 6202.0, Table 22, trend data.
INCREASING PART TIME WORK (BSL, 2017)

Table 1: Employment conditions of youth aged 15–24 in Australia, 2001–2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% in part time jobs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>50.4</td>
<td>52.5</td>
<td>53.8</td>
<td>52.6</td>
<td>49.5</td>
<td>50.4</td>
<td>49.5</td>
<td>46.3</td>
<td>50.9</td>
<td>48.4</td>
<td>56.6</td>
<td>56.8</td>
<td>60.7</td>
<td>60.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>90.7</td>
<td>92.7</td>
<td>93.7</td>
<td>95.0</td>
<td>90.7</td>
<td>89.6</td>
<td>88.8</td>
<td>86.8</td>
<td>89.6</td>
<td>88.9</td>
<td>88.3</td>
<td>88.4</td>
<td>90.9</td>
<td>88.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-students</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>27.1</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>25.1</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>27.2</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>31.8</td>
<td>34.4</td>
<td>35.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% in casual jobs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>53.7</td>
<td>55.9</td>
<td>54.5</td>
<td>54.4</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>51.6</td>
<td>50.3</td>
<td>48.5</td>
<td>50.3</td>
<td>51.1</td>
<td>56.1</td>
<td>55.1</td>
<td>57.6</td>
<td>57.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>81.7</td>
<td>87.0</td>
<td>84.9</td>
<td>84.6</td>
<td>80.7</td>
<td>81.3</td>
<td>81.5</td>
<td>78.9</td>
<td>78.7</td>
<td>81.0</td>
<td>78.8</td>
<td>78.4</td>
<td>78.5</td>
<td>76.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-students</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>35.4</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>35.6</td>
<td>30.9</td>
<td>34.1</td>
<td>30.6</td>
<td>30.9</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>32.2</td>
<td>36.6</td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td>39.1</td>
<td>39.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% on permanent contracts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>40.2</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>41.5</td>
<td>43.5</td>
<td>46.7</td>
<td>44.8</td>
<td>44.7</td>
<td>47.7</td>
<td>43.0</td>
<td>41.1</td>
<td>38.5</td>
<td>39.0</td>
<td>38.1</td>
<td>37.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>19.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-students</td>
<td>57.0</td>
<td>55.5</td>
<td>57.3</td>
<td>60.2</td>
<td>63.1</td>
<td>60.1</td>
<td>61.4</td>
<td>62.8</td>
<td>58.9</td>
<td>56.4</td>
<td>56.6</td>
<td>55.0</td>
<td>54.1</td>
<td>53.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: HILDA data wave 14
Figure 2: Percentage of 15–19 year olds employed in service and other industries, part-time and full-time

Figure 3: Percentage of 20–24 year olds employed in service and other industries, part-time and full-time

Source: ABS 2016, Labour force Australia, detailed, quarterly, November 2016, Cat. no. 6291.0.55.003, data cube EQ12 Employed persons by age and industry division of main job (ANZSIC), November 1984 onwards.
UNDEREMPLOYMENT IN THE EU

Supplementary indicators to unemployment by sex and educational attainment level, persons aged 15-74, EU-28, annual average, 2016 (million persons) (Eurostat, May 2017)
WORKING ARRANGEMENT YOUNG PEOPLE WANT

• The Deloitte 2017 Millennial Survey:
Ken Roberts (2009, p. 4) argued that “underemployment is the 21st century **global normality for youth** in the labour market”

In your area or region, which presents the biggest challenge for young people?

- a) Unemployment
- b) Underemployment
- c) Both
- d) Neither (and if so, then what?)
THE ‘GIG ECONOMY’: Cause or consequence of underemployment?
“Many workers (particularly those of Generation Y) are disenchanted with their 9 to 5 routine and have an increasing need for flexible and diversified work.”

Ai Group: Workforce Development (2016): *The Emergence of the Gig Economy*

- But -- is it instead about compensating for a lack of wages from underemployment?
- Is it entrepreneurialism or ‘bogus self-employment’?
- Is it really about the young?
- Does it promote a ‘grey’ economy?
Young people in my area/region are able to take advantage of ‘the gig economy’:

a) Agree
b) Maybe
c) Don’t agree

• Method: Measured within person and between person mental health over 13 waves and exposure to underemployment by hours; 86000 thousand total observations of more than 17000 people.

• **Key Findings** -
  - declines in mental health are associated with an increasing number of hours underemployed, especially prevalent if unempl. More than 11 hours per week
  - factors associated with underemployment: being a woman, younger, and working in a casual or low-skilled job.
EDUCATION PROFILES OF THE UNDEREMPLOYED

Post grad | Bachelor | Diploma or certificate | High school (year 12) | Less than year 12

- Post grad: 0.00%
- Bachelor: 5.00%
- Diploma or certificate: 10.00%
- High school (year 12): 15.00%
- Less than year 12: 20.00%
IMPLICATIONS FOR ALL SYMPOSIUM THEMES

1. Belonging
2. Agency & Empowerment
3. Participation
4. Volunteering
5. Learning & training
6. Working & Creating

UNDEREMPLOYMENT
EXAMPLE QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER DURING THIS SYMPOSIUM

• In the absence of paid, how do young people achieve a sense of belonging and forge their identities? What are the implications for citizenship?
• Does this compromise young people’s right to a decent standard of living?
• Are more young people going to be ‘couch surfing’? Can we create relationships between the youth sector and the housing sector? Can we better inform young people of their right in respect of housing?
• How can we give people a more equal chance at escaping underemployment? More in/formal training... But what are the limits and works best?
• Employers now view social media profiles... can we provide training to aid young people in presenting themselves as well as possible?
• How can we best teach entrepreneurialism that is not only riding a bike for deliveroo?
• Does less work equal more or less ‘play’? Can youth policy fill the gap with leisure? More volunteering? But what kind of opportunities? What skills can be developed?
• Can underemployment foster engagement with political institutions? Or will it only cause despondency and alienation?
AN EXAMPLE OF IMPLICATIONS: VOICE AND PARTICIPATION

• ‘In many societies, dominant political and economic power sources are closely aligned, and governments therefore have a tendency to develop policies favouring those with economic power, while ignoring those without economic power’.

# VICTORIA GVMNT RESPONSE

## Flagship Projects

| Annual survey of young people in Victoria | Youth Summit  
| Redvelopment of the Youth Central website | Victorian Youth Congress  
|                                           | Social policy design labs  
|                                           | Capability building  
|                                           | Youth barometer  
|                                           | Cross government partnerships to strengthen the voice of young people from diverse backgrounds  
|                                           | Symposium on co-design |

## Success Factors

| More young people having a say about issues that affect them | More young people actively and directly influencing the design of government policies, programs and services | More young people involved in decisions about the services they receive, ensuring their goals and circumstances are reflected |

## Outcomes

An outcomes framework including measures and indicators will be developed in consultation with young people.
BUT … MAYBE OTHER OPPORTUNITIES?

• Empowerment is “the process by which adolescents develop the consciousness and skills necessary to envision social change and understand their role in that change.” (Wagaman 2011)

• So what about empowerment through music and culture? How can youth policy harness this?

• Eg: #grimeforcorbyn

‘hip hop fosters new geographies of citizenship inspiring urban youth to transgress prescribed boundaries in allowed speech and political behavior to make new claims on their city and nation’ – Fredericks 2013.

Not EITHER rap/ hip hop OR conventional political engagement – but BOTH/ AND

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

• 2 discursive challenges:
  • i) disrupt narratives of generational deficit
  • ii) reject homogenising discourses: focus on inequality within generations

• And a substantive challenge: incorporating underemployment as a central aspect of youth policy responses – it will impacts across many of the themes of this symposium

• We need a paradigm shift: away from ‘employment=good/unemployment =bad’ dichotomy

• We need to be ready for the mental health implications of rising underemployment

• Youth Policy is great at intervention, but also needs help from those who can promote prevention (we must lobby and advocate!)

• We must focus also on the moderately qualified – after all they are what the most educationally disadvantaged might become
Thank you for listening