

## **Youth Work and the Austerity City**



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**THE PSYCHOGEOGRAPHY OF THE AUSTERITY CITY: the creation of a  
denizen youth class called precariat.**

**'...idle youth lost in the sheer boredom of increasing unemployment and neglect in the soulless suburbs that eventually became sites of roiling unrest'.**

**David Harvey *Rebel Cities* 2013 pxi**

- The city is the object of utopian desire (e.g. Paris, Berlin, London, Amsterdam, and Shanghai) – a shifting spatio – temporal order that is associated with both the realisation of dreams and the act of rebellion.
- The reality is the austerity city of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century has produced a new class, called ‘the precariat’, which are denizens (especially young migrants) rather than citizens – a dangerous cultural contradiction in the age of globalisation.
- Citizenship for the precariat is truncated by ‘the precariousness of residency, of labour and work and of social protection’ (Guy Standing, 2011, p.5).
- For the precariat their labour is instrumental (to live), opportunistic (taking what comes) and precarious (insecure) Standing, 2014 pp 22-23.

## **Historic Child Abuse: Exploding the Myths of Youth Policy**

- **Historic child abuse enquiries have exploded the myths of youth policy (e.g. the Irish Ryan Report 2009; The Dutch Deetman Report, 2011).**
- **Youth policy problematizes poor children – especially migrants and leaves them vulnerable to predatory abuse by adults in hostels, direct provision centres, in transit and in the black economy.**
- **The austerity city results in socially deprived young people open to exploitation socially, economically and culturally as the epicentre of the black economy.**
- **The austerity city must be replaced by the caring city that puts youth at its centre rather than periphery.**

## **The Task of Youth Work in the Austerity City**



- The task of youth work is to promote the reimagining of the austerity city, as a different kind of space to the globalised urban jungle of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- The skyscrapers have become the symbolic giants of this urban landscape – dominated by financial centres, hotels and playgrounds for rich adults from which youth are excluded.
- Youth work is challenged to contribute to the reconstitution of the psychogeography of the austerity city into an inclusive space
- Youth need to be brought in from the borderlands of inclusion/exclusion into being real citizens of the postmodern city. Youth work is challenged to be the bridge to inclusion.

## **Rethinking Urban Space as a Strategy for an Inclusive Youth Policy**

- Homelessness and residential marginalisation in the banlieu (suburbs), what Michel Foucault called the ‘interior of the exterior’, needs to be addressed by reimagining the city as a ‘commons’ or common space with common rights of access and easement.
- Social housing needs to be provided for young people in city centres at subsidised rents in partnership with civil society/youth organisations.
- Public spaces need to be developed as opposed to privatised for young people to place sport, make and listen to music, engage in community art and enjoy free WI-FI access in process of becoming – youth and the narrative of sustainable futures.
- Youth work needs to embrace the internet as a new space in which new things happen (eg e-activism) and potentially new possibilities for participation and deliberation exist (eg e-governance).

## **Youth Work and Generational Political Ruptures: Embracing a Multicultural Future**

- **Young people are not just alienated from politics but also from the values, lifestyles and ambitions of their parents.**
- **The rise of political phenomenon as diverse as Golden Dawn (Greece), UKip, FN (France), Sinn Fein (Ireland), Occupy/Los Indignados and homegrown jihadism speak to youth alienation.**
- **Youth work is challenged to recognise that we are living within new intergenerational territory that is being reinvented as we speak.**
- **Values need to be explicit in the youth work informal educational curriculum that reflect the reality of multiculturalism in a global world, if tolerance and social cohesion are to be maintained.**

**Youth work organisations need to advocate a Marshall Plan for  
youth based on an, EU Youth Tax on wealth**

- **Youth unemployment (eg Spain 53%, Italy 43%, Greece 55%) is destroying the current generation of young people and turning them into a futureless class of denizens.**
- **There needs to be a European Learning Bank offering every young person 3 years free tuition within new youth universities that are informed by the values of open access, flexible learning and participative curricula provided through youth organisations in every part of the austerity city.**
- **Youth work organisations need to campaign for a 10% wealth tax on all financial transactions, called a youth investment tax.**
- **European youth need an economic stimulus now – what has youth work done to advocate a stimulus?**

## **Sources**

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