

# Socially Just, Radical Alternatives for Education and Youth Work Practice

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# **Socially Just, Radical Alternatives for Education and Youth Work Practice**

**Re-Imagining Ways of Working  
with Young People**

Edited by

Charlie Cooper, Sinéad Gormally and Gill Hughes

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Summary: "Challenging dominant neoliberal discourses about ways of working with 'disconnected' young people, this book sets out ideas for generating radically different ways of thinking about such practices. Drawing on contemporary and historical material, the book argues that alternative approaches to formal and informal education are necessary to challenge repressive practices, and to help build a more equal, socially-just society. The book achieves this by re-imagining – with the aid of utopian studies – how formal and informal ways of working with young people might be made more empowering. Each chapter contributes to addressing the heterogeneity of experience of diverse life-worlds – in contrast to the homogenous one-size fits all approach to education and youth work that has become the dominant mode in neoliberal societies. Whilst many young people do make successful transitions to adulthood, a substantial minority are failed by an increasingly marketized social system – particularly education where young people are expected to achieve specified outcomes in a structure that does not speak to them, and leaves them wondering on the irrelevance of academic qualifications that seem to be out of their reach"—Provided by publisher.

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# Acknowledgements

This book stemmed from a conversation in the summer of 2012 between Charlie and Annette Fitzsimons, who had introduced community and youth work studies to Hull ten years earlier. Annette had just retired after her fight against ill health. We wanted to continue working together around our shared belief that more humane and effectual social policies were needed to enhance the well-being of young people and society, and that these were imaginable. Sadly, this journey never happened. Annette died in 2013, shortly after this book had been commissioned by Palgrave. Happily, though, what Annette had helped to germinate – a case for reimagining ways of working with young people in education and youth work – has been brought to fruition by the three of us. We believe that Annette would be pleased with much – if not all – of what is reimagined here.

Each of us would like to express our thanks to all at Palgrave who were involved in the evolution of this book: Andrew James (commissioning editor), Ann Martin (contracts administrator), and Maryan Rutter, Beth O’Leary and Eleanor Christie (editorial assistants) in Basingstoke, England; and especially Marie Felina Francois and her team at Integra-PDY, India, for their skilful and smooth handling of the production process of the book.

Charlie dedicates this work to the ever-joyful Amélie-Rosa, and her mummy.

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Gill would like to offer love and thanks to her mum, Liz Charles, and her dad and step-mum, Ron and Pam Hughes, for their unwavering support and encouragement; she dedicates this work to the memory of Jim Clare, her granddad, who instilled in his family the fight for social justice and the hope for change.

Charlie, Sinéad and Gill  
Hull, UK  
August 2015



# Contributors

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**Charlie Cooper** initially worked as a welfare practitioner with Women's Aid and worker-collective housing associations. Since moving into academia, he has taught and researched on a range of themes including housing studies, social policy, and community development and youth work. He is a professionally qualified housing manager, and community development and youth worker, and a lifelong Blade.

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**Susan Cullen** has research interests covering 'citizenship', 'body politics', critical pedagogy and social constructions of 'ability'. These themes bolstered her insightful PhD research into 'citizenship' and 'consumerist' society. She currently teaches social sciences in both higher and further education settings in Lincolnshire.

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