

RECENZJE

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David M. Smith: *On the margins of inclusion. Changing labour markets and social exclusion in London*, Bristol: Policy Press 2005

In his book *On the margins of inclusion: changing labour markets and social exclusion in London* David M. Smith touches upon the subject of social exclusion and policies designed to counteract it under the influence of forces of global economy in the context of the post-industrial society. Operating within the framework of *community studies*, the author attempts to capture a micro-structural dimension of macro-structural changes. To put it in the author's own words, the 'book examines the impact of changing labour markets and social policies on the life chances and working lives of a group of economically marginal individuals, on the locality that they inhabit and on their social relations' [Smith 2005: 1]. Smith verifies credibility of means against inequalities introduced in the United Kingdom by the New Labour Party governments¹ by contrasting the 'top-down' notion of social exclusion (adopted by politicians, experts and media in Great Britain) with the 'bottom-up' perspective of the very people falling into the category of 'the excluded'. In doing so, he uses qualitative and bibliographical method, which he finds best to analyze the community-based exclusion, as it enables the researcher to contextualize existing statistical data and also to explore inter-class relations among the members of the community under study. Field-work, comprising of 46 informal interviews with inhabitants of St. Helier housing estate in southern London² and 36 semi-structured interviews with participants of compulsory employment training scheme, was conducted in 1998–2000. Most of the respondents were white, working class, with basic education and very low or no professional qualifications, living on social benefits. Born in the 70s or in the 80s, they (as children) had a chance to witness a relative working class affluence of that period, followed by de-industrialization and economic demise processes of the late 80s and early

¹ Such as the New Deal programme, introduced in 1998 [Hills 1998]

² St. Helier housing estate is where the pockets of poverty in relatively affluent environment of Sutton and Merton boroughs are localized.

90s. Entering the labour market at the time of the rapid growth of the number of low paid, precarious, temporal, entry level jobs in the service sector, the respondents experienced unstable, unsatisfactory work which does not secure a decent living standard.

David M. Smith's research proved a wide gap in the perception of social exclusion between the social policy makers and the policy's beneficiaries. As the author points out, in the dominant British political discourse the social exclusion is principally perceived as the exclusion from the labour market, followed by other forms of exclusion (from consumption, saving, social activities, etc.). The respondents, however, defined their own exclusion as the lack of agency. A sense of control over one's own life, not the fact of having a paid job, turned out to be the condition of social inclusion in the eyes of the interviewees. Therefore, the author provides a thorough criticism of the British 'welfare-to-work' system based on the 'Third Way' objective to 'make work pay'. The social policy, by forcing the unemployed (under the threat of financial consequences) to enter the 'dead-end jobs' market not only does not tackle the social exclusion, but it strengthens it, he claims. It is the social policy that stores people on the margins of the labour market and condemns them to social exclusion.

The statement above is only one of many conclusions drawn by David M. Smith in his book. The author analyses development and structure of informal labour market within which many of the excluded operate; he investigates their social networks of family, friends and acquaintances forming informal sources of support; he examines their attitude towards organizations and people providing institutionalized help; he also traces social relations within the group of individuals labeled as socially excluded. The book presents a wide range of theoretical approaches wisely mixed with empirical data, which makes the text painless to read. A reader with a women's studies background will be delighted by numerous references to feminist critique and by gender aware perspective adopted by the author. What could be added to the book, though, especially from a non-British reader's point of view, is an index of abbreviations and a short dictionary of institutions and programmes being frequently mentioned in the text. Also, some data on effectiveness of heavily criticized employment schemes (if available) would make up a perfect completion of the schemes participants' opinions.

If to compare the results of David M. Smith's investigation of lifestyles and practices of inhabitants of a social hot-spot in London to research led in pockets of poverty in Łódź (Warzywoda-Kruszyńska 2001a, Warzywoda-Kruszyńska 2001b, Golczyńska-Grondas 2004), a severe shock is almost inevitable. The excluded in London complain about their unreliable cars, receive psychological, supported by psychiatric, help and choose programmes they want to participate in, whereas the poor in Lodz cannot even afford public transport, refrain from purchasing first-need medicines and do not seem to have any alternatives concerning the process of their inclusion into the society. Such comparison testifies to immense quality of life discrepancies between the two localities. However, some characteristics of the excluded in both countries are convergent, such as respondents' limited sense of responsibility for their own actions, the notion of the lack of

control over their own lives and inability to make plans for the future. Interestingly, and probably surprisingly for a Polish reader, no church or any other religious organization was mentioned as a source of possible support for the excluded, neither by the respondents, nor by the author³. Another astonishing aspect of the research was the ethnic homogeneity of the community under study, seeming quite rare in the multiethnic and multicultural environment of London. One can only wonder how different the results of the research would be if the respondents were not sharing the same ethnic and cultural background.

Generally speaking, the book constitutes another voice in the discussion on whether the New Labour Third Way programme can be described as 'RIO' ('Responsibility, Inclusion and Opportunity'), as Ruth Lister does, or as 'PAP', standing for 'Pragmatism and Populism' [Powell 2000]. Even though the author did not invent another witty acronym, he convincingly pointed at weaknesses, contradictions and inconsequence of the current anti-exclusion strategy in Great Britain by referring to the experiences of the excluded themselves.

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³ In the Polish part of the PROFIT research it was the local parish "The Sacred Heart of Jesus" that became an example of a good practice in the overcoming the social exclusion in the town under study [PROFIT Final Activity Report: 85]

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Daniel Cueff (ed.): *A Child on the street*, Warsaw: GPAS 2006

The publication *A Child on the street* was written within the frame of the European Project 'DAPHNE – combating the violence against street children'. As it is described by the authors – it is methodological guidebook for street educators: working methods in the open environment. Daniel Cueff, the main author of the publication, cooperated with the team of educators from Poland and France who enriched the book with their own, practical experiences. The book can be described as highly interesting and informative, not only for those who work directly with children spending majority of their time on the street, but also for councilors, social workers, sociologists, teachers – for everybody, who cares about the plight of the children on the street.

According to the authors, of the vital importance is the initial, conceptual distinction between the notion of 'a street child' and 'a child on the street'. Children on the street do not experience exclusion to the extent that is characteristic for street children. Although children on the street spend a lot of time there, they sleep at their own homes. Their social bonds with school, family and social environment did not vanish, however they are very much weakened. Those children are not covered by the institutional support, usually they stay away from day – care centers, youth clubs, etc.

Publication is divided into two main parts. The theoretical one presents issues necessary for understanding complexity of this multidimensional problem and what is more, outlines the authors' attitude. The methodological part includes practical advice and exemplifications of activities and solutions that can be used by street educators in their own work.

Theoretical part of the book contains three complementary parts. The first one is devoted to conceptualization of chief terms and sketching theoretical foundation. It is emphasized that every child is shaped by the social environment, however, socio-economic status of a family is the most important factor. A child being a part of his/her social environment is well-adjusted to it, taught how to fulfill his/her needs as fully as possible in particular circumstances, how to survive in the given conditions. This main assumption is illustrated from three different perspectives: sociological, pragmatic and social skills approach.

The sociological approach is an attempt to present child's situation through the child - street concept, as well as through the perspective of child poverty. What is more, factors contributing to the plight of a child are indicated, as well as mechanisms causing mutual

reluctance between children on the street and institutions. The social settings of children, deep knowledge of which is necessary while planning the support project, are characterised. Space that is available for those children is usually significantly limited, narrowed to the devastated part of the town, poverty pocket. Antisocial behavior often results from the lack of opportunity to fulfill the need of creation and improvement of the neighborhood. It is widely known that peer group plays very important role in the adolescence period and, according to the authors, social ties between the members of the group consisting of children on the street are even closer. However, there are also some children excluded from the peer group that should also be considered. All these factors should be taken into account in the process of constructing the support programme.

It is worth mentioning that the authors highly disfavor of using the term pathology, as this concept burdens children with guilt for their own faith. It is emphasized that child's behaviour can be improved only on the condition that their life situation will be changed. A child on the street is not ill-adjusted; just on the contrary, he/she is well-adjusted, but to the surrounding and conditions. As it experiences violence on the daily basis, model of alternative way of behaviour could not be internalized. Characteristic of the street environment requires constant readiness and rapid reactions. Children cannot acquire ability of planning and are unable to overcome the way of thinking in the here and now manner. Moreover, in the publication other specific skills and characteristic of the children on the street are listed and described, what again can be very helpful for all of those who work with children on the street.

Not all the children on the street experience poverty; however, the impact of the material deprivation on the loosening of the social bonds and as a consequence 'moving' on the street is crucial. This statement is even more alarming when we realize that poverty in Poland is a mass phenomenon and juvenilization of poverty is confirmed by social research⁴. This process has also its spatial dimension and places where poor children are concentrated can be pointed out. Diagnosis of the distribution of the enclaves of child poverty is crucial, especially for effective addressing of the undertaken activities.

Subsequently, the essential question is raised: if and how situation of children can be changed? In order to find an answer authors refer to the Pierre Bourdieu's theory of reproduction; they also use the concepts of habitus and symbolic violence. Because of the fact that children who are subject of the publication frequently experience stigmatization and face humiliations, they tend to think about themselves 'I'm from pathological family'. Street educators should be aware of this fact and avoid behaviour that can have stigmatizing effect. The knowledge of the basis of social psychology and psychology of social judgments is necessary. Elementary information concerning formulation of opinions and evaluations should be known by everyone who works with underprivileged children and this is why it also can be found in the book.

⁴ See: W. Warzywoda-Kruszyńska W. (ed.) (1999), *Dorastać w biedzie (w:) (Życie) Na marginesie wielkiego miasta*, Łódź: Instytut Socjologii UŁ; W. Warzywoda-Kruszyńska W. (1999) *Kwestia biedy dzieci (na przykładzie Łodzi)*, „Problemy polityki społecznej. Studia i dyskusje”. Vol 1: 139–153;

Theoretical part is closed with deliberations on methodological issues. Approach that is suggested by the authors is labeled as ethnoclinical and combines: firstly, the ethnographical part that is devoted to getting to know each other, becoming accepted and trusted; secondly, the clinical part that is directed at improvement of child's situation. Authors refer also to the Polish pedagogical theories and practices. What is more, the idea of project is introduced, in the perspective of which including children in the project is basic, nevertheless very challenging task. Motivating children is a key to the effective cooperation, however, it cannot be forgotten that unless basic needs are fulfilled, involvement of young participants is impossible.

Second part of the book is focused on practical issues, it presents working methods of street educator. It is rich in guides, pieces of advice and examples of already functioning projects. It is based on experience of GPAS (Group of Pedagogy and Social Animation) that leads field work with street children in Poland and France. It can serve as detailed guidebook for every practitioner, it describes every stage of the activities, their characteristic and scope of knowledge that is necessary for maintaining the contact with children and their environment effectively. This part is complemented by analysis of difficulties and dilemmas that social workers are likely to face.

To conclude, the publication *A child on the street* should be read by anyone who works with disadvantaged children and it can serve as a source of knowledge not only for practitioners. It should be emphasized that authors state their point of view and vision of effective actions clearly and explicitly, and it is an important voice in the discussion on the given problem. The guidebook is structured in a logical way, from the initial theoretical deliberations till practical guide at the end it represents high academic level. Not less important – this kind of publication was really needed; first of all because the problem of children on the street in Poland was not described in such a complex way; secondly, because it presents the attitude that can contribute to leaving aside the category of pathology, while discussing the problem of children on the street.