



ΟΙ ΕΞΑΡΤΗΣΕΙΣ ΣΤΗΝ ΕΛΛΑΔΑ • Η ΔΙΕΘΝΗΣ ΕΜΠΕΙΡΙΑ • ΓΙΑ ΤΗΝ ΕΝΗΜΕΡΩΣΗ ΤΟΥ ΑΝΑΓΝΩΣΤΗ  
DRUG ADDICTION IN GREECE • INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE • FOR THE READERS

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*Εξαρτήσεις, τεύχος 32, 2019*

## ΑΞΙΟΠΟΙΗΣΗ ΤΗΣ ΑΝΑΛΥΣΗΣ ΤΟΥ ΒΙΩΜΕΝΟΥ ΚΟΣΜΟΥ ΣΤΟΝ ΣΥΝ-ΣΧΕΔΙΑΣΜΟ ΕΝΟΣ ΝΕΟΥ ΡΟΛΟΥ ΣΤΗ ΔΟΥΛΕΙΑ ΜΕ ΝΕΟΥΣ

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### Π ε ρ ί λ η ψ η

Το παρόν άρθρο παρουσιάζει τα αποτελέσματα μίας ποιοτικής μελέτης που στοχεύει να κατανοήσει τις βιωμένες εμπειρίες των νέων που 'ανήκουν' σε περιθωριοποιημένες ομάδες. Σε αυτή τη μελέτη αξιοποιείται η ανάλυση του βιωμένου κόσμου (lifeworld) ως μια βασική τεχνική σε ένα πρόγραμμα έρευνας δράσης που έχει ως στόχο να σχεδιάσει, να εφαρμόσει και να αξιολογήσει ένα καινοτόμο εκπαιδευτικό πρόγραμμα για την ανάπτυξη ενός νέου ρόλου –του Εμπυχωτή Κοινότητας. Η έρευνα δράσης μελετά τη συνεισφορά νέων που βρίσκονται στο περιθώριο στην ενδυνάμωση του κοινωνικού τους κεφαλαίου καθώς και της κοινότητας στην οποία ανήκουν και εν δυνάμει τη συνεισφορά τους στην υποστήριξη των κοινωνικο-οικολογικών μετασχηματισμών που συμβαίνουν σήμερα στην Ευρώπη.

**Λέξεις κλειδιά:** Ανάλυση του βιωμένου κόσμου (lifeworld analysis), περιθωριοποιημένοι νέοι, έρευνα δράσης, κοινοτική ανάπτυξη

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## USING LIFEWORLD ANALYSIS TO CO-DESIGN A NEW ROLE IN YOUTH WORK

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### Abstract

This paper presents the results of research using lifeworld analysis to capture the lived experience of young people 'on the margins'. In this research, lifeworld analysis is applied as a grounding technique in an action research project aimed at designing, implementing and evaluating a novel training programme to develop a new role in youth work - the 'Community Animateur'. More broadly, the action research explores the contribution marginalised young people could potentially make to enhancing the social capital of their communities and, ultimately, the contribution they could make to supporting socio-ecological transformations in Europe.

Keywords: lifeworld analysis, marginalised young people, action research, community development

### INTRODUCTION - BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

It was suggested some time ago that young people everywhere, from whatever their background, are arguably facing more problems and challenges than the post-war generations that came before them. As the old institutions of industrial society - family, community, social class - are undermined by globalization, economic instability, cuts in education and welfare budgets and withdrawal of support for transitions from school to higher education and to work - young people must learn to 'navigate the risk society' for themselves (Beck, Giddens and Lash, 1994).

For young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, these risks are amplified. Social class, gender, ethnicity and geography heavily prescribe the career choices and aspirations of young people. Young people from family backgrounds with a history of parental unemployment, low levels of education, low income and health issues are more likely themselves to under-achieve in education; become unemployed or get low-paid, precarious jobs (Pantazis et al., 2006). Young people from communities with high levels of poverty, poor housing, high levels of deprivation, health issues and crime are more likely to become Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) and long term unemployed in later life, because more affluent communities enjoy greater access to and monopolisation of resources. Inequalities are therefore reproduced through everyday life. Young people may regard themselves as free agents making their own, individual

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ways in the world, but they continue to derive from their family and class backgrounds, particular sorts of social and cultural capital rooted in local economic history and conditions that may inhibit their opportunities and life-chances (Bourdieu, 1986).

Other evidence suggests that these structural problems faced by disadvantaged young people are reinforced by other factors like monetary poverty, insufficiently incentive-driven social protection, a low investment in education and lifelong learning, a lack of public services that allow (re-)integration into the labour market and the political under-representation of young people (Reuter, 2012). In addition, a number of studies have shown that a significant proportion of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are also 'digitally excluded' with limited access to advanced digital technologies and poorly-developed digital and media competences. (Redeker et al., 2008; Cullen et al., 2014).

Against this background, youth services throughout Europe are currently experiencing demand to provide support for increasing numbers of young people who are presenting with increasingly more complex issues, shaped by rising youth unemployment, increased educational drop-out rates, the demise of 'community' and its replacement by precarious on-line relationships; loss of faith in mainstream institutions and a large increase in the influx of young migrants into EU countries. In 2015, there were 8.7 million young Europeans who could not find work; 13.7 million classified as NEET and 27 million who were at risk of poverty or social exclusion (Eurostat, 2015). Poverty rates are higher for young people than for the overall population and involuntary part-time work or protracted temporary positions expose this generation to a risk of long-term poverty. Young people with a migrant background, low educational achievers or young people with health issues are more likely to become NEET. Unemployment among native-born youth with immigrant parents is almost 50% higher than among other young people in the EU (OECD, 2015).

The problem is, youth services have been cut across the board as governments have reduced expenditure on health, welfare and social services in response to the economic crisis, the financial 'crash' and the subsequent imposition of 'austerity policies'. For example, in the UK, recent research found that overall spending on youth services in England has fallen by £737m (62%) between 2010 and 2018 (YMCA, 2018).

In this context, youth services can only succeed by increasing their efficiency and effectiveness and by increasing their intake of volunteers. However, they face big problems in these two areas. First, austerity measures have led to an exodus of trained youth workers from the sector, because both wages and jobs have been cut, leading to a significant loss in capacity, skills and know-how (Bradford and Cullen, 2014).

Second, youth services and third sector organisations struggle to attract volunteers in those areas where service demand is highest –in 'disadvantaged' communities. This is because marginalised young people don't trust mainstream youth services. They don't volunteer because they don't have time, money or motivation (GHK, 2010). Set against this, affluent young people are always more likely to volunteer than disadvantaged young people. Research in the UK, done in 2011, showed that 8% of the population –a 'civic core' of well-educated, religious, owner-occupying section of the British middle-class– provide 49% of the total hours volunteered. The core group is over-represented in wealthier areas –over 50%– and under-represented in poorer areas –under 25% (Mohan, 2011).

Third, youth services and third sector organisations tend to avoid trying to recruit volunteers from 'difficult' neighbourhoods. They know they can rely on affluent communities for volunteers, so they take this easier option. Young people from 'advantaged' backgrounds are the ones most likely to receive support from parents and families to take part in volunteering activities. Youth workers therefore often make the rational decision not to invest time and resources in less reliable young people from 'hard to reach' backgrounds and communities (Dean, 2016). But affluent volunteers don't have the skills to engage with marginalized young people either (Eliasoph, 2013).

To address these issues, the 'COMANITY' project is a European transnational project, funded under the 'Erasmus+' programme, that aims to develop a new role in youth work –the 'Community Animateur'. The 'Animateur' can be thought of as a 'Social Mediator' who makes a bridge between young people on the margins and other community actors and institutions. Animateurs are intended to act as a point of mediation between so-called 'hard to reach' young people and 'the system'. They bridge disconnected service and stakeholder organisations. They valorize and build on the resources of the community to develop, in collaboration with young people, social innovations aimed at solving problems in the community. The Animateur would typically be a professional youth worker, or volunteer, working with young people. However, the vision of COMANITY is that, in time, as a result of the collaborative work that takes place between the Community Animateur and young people on the margins, more 'marginalised' young people who would not normally get involved in social and civic participation –including volunteering– will be encouraged to do so, and may even become Community Animateurs themselves.

The vision and design of COMANITY is based on 'co-production'. Traditional interventions with youth 'on the margins' tend to be designed 'top-down', with young people centralised as 'the problem' (Williamson, 2007). Interventions are often constructed from the narratives of researchers, policy-makers and experts, not from the narratives of the young people who participate in them (Parr, 2009). In contrast, COMANITY uses participatory action research (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2008; Reason and Bradbury, 2001) to support young people as 'co-producers of knowledge', actively working in collaboration with the research team in creating 'developmental' interventions, rather than applying traditional 'transmissive' behaviour change models. The approach draws on practices from radical pedagogy to support marginalised young people to become architects of their own future (Freire, 1972; Vygotsky, 1978).

In order to ensure that the voice of young people on the margins was fully represented in the design of the project, COMANITY's starting point was to work with marginalised young people in four different cities in the four European countries in which the Community Animateur project is being delivered to capture their 'lived experience' to feed into the design of the Community Animateur Training Programme.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Following Patton (1990) the main objective of the lifeworld analysis carried out in COMANITY was to deliver a phenomenological study 'that is focused on descriptions of what people experience and how it is that they experience what they experience'. The study

aimed to answer the following questions: What does it feel like to be young and 'on the margins' at this time and place? What are the most difficult issues and problems marginalised young people face in their Community? What best describes marginalised young people's attitudes to civic participation and particularly volunteering? What are the main factors that shape these attitudes? Would a 'Community Animateur' give marginalised young people more voice and more power to solve some of the problems and issues in their community?

The methodology used combined two phenomenological approaches: 'lifeworld analysis' (Ashworth, 2003; Dahlberg et al, 2008), and 'relational research' (Finlay and Evans, 2009). It was implemented through interactive group interviews with young people in London (UK), Athens (Greece), Perugia (Italy) and Santander (Spain). Each group interview used a standardised Interview Guideline to provide empirical data to explore and analyse their lived experience. The Guideline was structured to incorporate the five 'lifeworld constructs' typically used in lifeworld analysis:

*Life-world.* This focused on young people's lived experience of social exclusion.

*Temporality.* This focused on how young people experience time, both in terms of their broader historical position (for example how does being young in the 21st century affect young people's attitudes to volunteering?) and in an everyday sense, as part of their experience of 'lifeworld' (for example what events are important in developing social relationships?).

*Spatiality.* This focused on how young people make sense of the world through geographical structures and boundaries (for example, how does the way the neighbourhood is constructed shape a sense of territoriality, and identification with gangs?).

*Embodiment.* This focused on the body and the physical space in which the body operates. On the one hand, it refers to the capacities of the human body –for example how young people experience 'body image'. On the other, it refers to how young people acquire 'embodied skills' –for example how young people acquire 'participation skills' by dealing with challenging situations.

*Inter-subjectivity.* This focused on how the everyday, inter-subjective world is constituted –for example how living in 'crisis Europe' affects young people's social and civic participation.

Post-interview analysis of the collected group interview data followed 'classical' phenomenological content analysis procedures through retrospective interrogation of the interview data, covering: transcription of the interview narrative; bracketing and the phenomenological reduction; identifying 'units of general meaning' and then 'units of meaning relevant to the research question'; clustering units of relevant meaning; determining themes from clusters of meaning (Giorgi, 2003; Patton, 1990).

A coding frame was applied in the ex-post analysis (Stemler, 2001; Neuendorf, 2002). It categorised the group interview data within four main thematic dimensions, reflecting the key literature themes and research questions of the project, set against the five 'lifeworld constructs' used in the group interview Guideline, as shown in Table 1.

**TABLE 1:** CODING FRAME USED FOR EX-POST ANALYSIS OF GROUP INTERVIEW DATA

<i>Themes</i>	<i>Constructs</i>
<b>Life Politics</b> - how young peoples' lifestyle and lifestyle choices are shaped; how young people bring into discourse ideas about progress using framing strategies and local performed action; how globalising influences intrude into self-actualisation and vice versa	Life-world
	Temporality
	Spatiality
<b>Life Problematics</b> - issues and/or crises that happen to young people living normal lives	Embodiment
<b>Civic participation</b> - how young people create discourses and actions around public values and making changes in their communities	Inter-subjectivity
<b>Community Animateur</b> - how young people interpret the role of the Community Animateur and reflect on its relevance in their everyday life	

#### PARTICIPANTS

Overall, 37 young people aged between 16-25 years, participated in the group interviews. In Greece six (6) males and one (1) female, aged 18-25 years old took part in the study, all of them having past convictions for youth offending; one of them was a former heroin user and the rest heavy cannabis users. Three also reported parental heavy alcohol or/and drug use. In Spain, the group comprised of eight (8) individuals from various backgrounds, aged between 18-25 years. The group consisted of four (4) men and four (4) women where the risk of exclusion was related to their ethnic origin (Roma population), migration, situations of material deprivation and addictions. In Italy, the group interview participants were ten (10) young people, mainly second generation migrants, aged 16-25 years old, of whom six (6) were male and four (4) female from varied ethnic and religious backgrounds. In the UK, twelve young people took part in the group interview. Seven (7) were female and five (5) male, between 17-22 years old, All were British Bangladeshi, apart from one British Asian, one Mixed Heritage and one British White. Five were not in education, employment or training (NEET), had left school with poor results, and reported being involved in antisocial behaviour including substance / alcohol misuse. Seven were at sixth form college, and reported they were 'doing well'.

#### RESULTS

Table 2 presents a summary of the 'clusters of meaning' identified by the content analysis, broken down for each of the four themes and five lifeworld constructs.

The following sections present the detailed results of the analysis for each of the four main themes shown in the Table.

#### LIFE POLITICS

This theme considered how young peoples' lifestyle and lifestyle choices are shaped; how young people bring into discourse ideas about progress using framing strategies and



**TABLE 2:** LIFEWORLD ANALYSIS SUMMARY

<i>Theme/construct</i>	<i>Life-world</i>	<i>Temporality</i>	<i>Spatiality</i>	<i>Embodiment</i>	<i>Inter-subjectivity</i>
Life Politics	Insecurity and impermanence	Time slavery	Environmental decay	Inadequate skills	Social fragmentation
Life Problematics	Poverty pressure	Depersonalised time	Housing poverty	De-activism	Social conflict
Civic Participation	Praxis	Embedding activism	Gentrification	Role models	De-othering
CA Construction	Cultural construction	Progression	Multi-communities	Lifeworld mapping	Owning

local performed action and how globalising influences intrude into self-actualisation and vice versa. The key thematic cluster identified by the analysis for this theme focuses on how employment is framed and engaged with. Employment is articulated with reference to the five lifeworld constructs as follows:

*Lifeworld* - the dominance of the ‘black economy’, long working hours, low payment, no insurance, pressure to do well in education in order to improve your prospects, no guarantee of a job in the face of increased competition, lack of qualifications leading to limited opportunities and low payment, mental health issues.

*Temporality* - long working hours, no time for leisure, working to live, pressure to do more things, employment trumps all.

*Spatiality* - low quality of life, misery everywhere, air pollution, broken playgrounds, people gather all in the same place for entertainment missing the beauty in hidden streets, overcrowded living conditions, lack of personal space, hanging out outside, exposure and involvement in crime and antisocial behaviour.

*Embodiment* - fear of being targeted because of appearance, lack of skills to escape.

*Inter-subjectivity* - the impact globalisation and austerity have had on personal relationships, leading to individualism and self-absorption, broken relationships and reduced social solidarity.

Employment-related constructions focused on long-term unemployment; the precariousness of employment opportunities available to young people; the erosion of leisure time as a result of working long hours and the issue of ‘brain waste’ –young people being unable to apply their intellect, creativity and skills in mundane, low-paid jobs. Most participants reported long working hours at low payment –especially in Greece, where the ‘black market economy’ is seen as pervasive. As one young male in Greece said in relation to his employee:

*“He is asking you to work and he does not respect you, he makes you work 14 hours in a row, you have no contact with your family ... they are there 12 hours out of 24, they just go to bed and then to work again, I mean we are in a position where we live only to work, we don’t work to earn a living”.*

A key feature of the lifeworld of marginalised young people is the impact that globalisation of work has had on interpersonal relationships and the quality of life. As one participant described Athens city centre:

*"It drives me crazy to run around all day, one thing after the other with no point at the end ... I feel tense all the time ... I am never relaxed. Never calm, I always think what to do next, what is the next thing that I have to do ... I feel too much pressure from the environment".*

This combination of precarious employment, low salaries and long hours, poorly mitigated by leisure time, contributes to the construction of a sense of powerlessness among marginalised young people. This is reinforced by the sense that 'agents of the system' often describe young people's situation as an inevitability –part of a 'natural order of things' that is driven by structures that are outside of human control– like the so-called 'financial crisis':

*"I have the feeling that I work to support my employer working long hours with no insurance and he says that ... you know how things are ... the crisis".*

In Spain and Italy, the concerns around labour market conditions identified in the Greek lifeworld analysis are amplified by perceptions of inadequate training. Several participants felt that educational institutions are out of step with the lifeworld of young people. They deliver very theoretical knowledge that is not seen as useful for real life. Some participants referenced the importance of 'transition management' in navigating their way through the lifeworld, but felt that they'd made 'bad decisions' in managing transitions from school to employment, because they were not supported in their decision-making:

*"We spent most of our time alone at home [my brother and I], on the street with friends or at home. School was a waste of time, all the day doing nothing ... I took courses in an employment programme, but after the internship I'm on the streets".*

As in the Greek case, young peoples' discourses around employment in Spain and Italy resonate with a sense of powerlessness. As one participant put it:

*"If you get a full-time job, the salary is very low. You kill yourself working and it's not enough to live independently. You lose your life and life is not only work ... I felt like a slave. You do not count as individual".*

In the UK, education was seen as a key tool in the aspirational pursuit of improved living conditions and future wealth. However, young people also referred to the negative impacts of aspiration. Several felt that the pressure to do well from their families and 'the system' often left them with low mood, depression and anxiety issues which in turn had a negative impact on their studies. They also felt that they did not have enough leisure time to 'just enjoy life'. There was a strong sense in the group interview that no support services were available to help them work with these issues:

*"All you do is go to college, go home, study and stay in your room. Then you have to help out at home ... there is no space to just be yourself, you share your room with brothers, there's nowhere to think. They are always telling you to do well, so you can get a good job. What jobs? After college you have to go to university. These days even with very good marks you won't be able get into good ones. You keep needing to do more".*

The young people participating in the UK group interview made a clear correlation between these unrelenting pressures and what they saw as a steady increase in psycho-social pathologies. A number of participants cited references they had seen in both traditional and social media to increases in mental health issues reported by young people. However, they also communicated a strong perception –shared by their peers in the other three cities– that, in the face of these presenting issues, mental health services for young people are continually being cut. In turn, they felt that other key services –such as support for re-entering education, and support for vocational training, have also been significantly reduced.

Those who were identified as ‘NEET’ felt that the education and training system was not geared up for their needs. They felt employment agencies don’t understand their needs; are set up more for those who left school with GCSEs, A levels or have an undergraduate degree, and provide courses that do not lead to anything. As a result, they pursued alternative activities such as smoking cannabis, hanging out with ‘the wrong’ peer groups, getting involved in anti-social behaviour and sometimes criminal activities. This ranged from selling drugs, through motor vehicle crimes, robberies and getting involved in territorial conflict. Some participants said that the temptation for ‘easy money’ remains constant.

*“All the apprenticeships are crap, they pay you shit ... can’t even get a proper job afterwards we have to keep applying for them though ... it’s depressing to keep applying for jobs that pay you nothing. You can make more money by doing something else”.*

Although London’s main financial centre at Canary Wharf is ten minutes away from where most of the group interview participants live, they see this area as belonging to the business class. It’s a space when they visit they are made to feel different:

*“We can’t even go to Canary Wharf, the security eye us up all the time”.*

#### LIFE PROBLEMATICS

This theme explored issues and crises that happen to young people, people living on the margins, how these are shaped and how these affect life chances. Three main discourses were highlighted by the analysis: relationships, community life, and criminality. These were expressed in terms of the five lifeworld constructs as follows.

*Life-world* - time waste and brain waste, lack of support and opportunities, constant pressure to do well, education as way out of poverty, pressure to apply for jobs that are not available.

*Temporality* - lack of personal time, pressure of work, pressure to succeed in a short time.

*Spatiality* - lack of personal space, restricted outside space, rich and poor distinctions, lack of housing, and poor housing conditions.

*Embodiment* - the barriers to acting to change your lifeworld.

*Inter-subjectivity* - friends vs. gangs, support networks, social media and the erosion of ‘real relationships’.

## RELATIONSHIPS AND COMMUNITY LIFE

One of the main issues that surfaced in the analysis concerns the overuse of social media and its destructive effect on what young people see as 'real life' social relationships. Some members of the group interviews referred to the impact of social media on the lifeworld as 'de-socialization':

*"They all sit together at a table and don't talk to each other ... they are absorbed with their cell-phones all the time ... I see that happening from kids four years old up to very old people ... you 'de-socialize' doing that"*.

This process of de-socialisation was seen as part of a more general shift towards a culture of 'self-absorption' and hence disconnection with social life. In Greece, this sense of disconnection is exacerbated by the effects of the 'fiscal crisis' in that country. Some participants suggested that the unique feeling of small community life and 'neighbourhoods' that was common in pre-crisis Athens has now given way to a prevailing, amorphous indifference:

*"The next door neighbour was the god father of my uncle ... now he is just a neighbour ... again ... there are no relationships anymore ... you will not say good morning ... you will not ask him ... how does he feel"*.

Personal relationships continue to be very important to marginalised young people - because 'friends support you' but most young people in the group interviews felt that the broader fabric of social cohesion and social solidarity has now become damaged through a combination of the effects of globalisation, austerity, a climate of precarious employment and the isolating effects of social media:

*"You feel isolated, if you want to be different you feel like an idiot, good people are perceived as idiots ... everybody is looking only after themselves ... that makes you feel that you also have to look only after yourself ... some will step on you just to move on ... to gain something ... neighbours won't even say hello ... if you are all alone in a city like Athens you feel like you are choking"*.

Unlike the young people participating in the Group interviews in Greece, Italy and Spain, the London Group interview participants all lived with their parents. This reflects a growing trend in that country generally and in the capital in particular, where steep rises in property values have made home ownership or rental almost impossible for most young people. In the area in which the Group interview was carried out –the 'most deprived' in London<sup>3</sup>, overcrowding, homelessness and a high level of youth unemployment remain key problems. Many young people 'hang out' on streets as a way of escaping overcrowding at home and to gain personal space and autonomy. The resultant street culture leaves young people exposed to risk-taking activities. One of the main concerns around young people is the increase in drug use/binge drinking and the subsequent poor health associated with it, along with becoming involved in criminal activity:

*"We like to hang out in streets or park with our friends. We get into trouble for it though. Where else can we go, no room for us at home"*.

3 <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2015>

Yet, although young people in the London group interview shared common perceptions with their counterparts in Athens, Santander and Perugia around the erosion of community life in the current globalised economy, most of the group still felt connected to their immediate community. They felt that there was a sense of people coming together in their Estates to put on social events or problem solve.

*“We are lucky, we live on an Estate where people are close to each other. If there is a problem, people get together and try to make it better. Parents put on get togethers like birthdays and we celebrate Eid and things”.*

Apart from some feeling connected to their immediate community, the rest were not so positive. They feel there is not much going on for them. Even youth service provisions are not catered to their needs or it causes tension between different youth cultures.

*“Youth clubs are boring ... when you go to them, you do some things that are ok, then you get into trouble and you get thrown out”.*

*“You can’t go to some clubs, you get into trouble with other people, it’s not worth it”.*

Some felt they could travel to different parts of the area as they were not involved in any youth conflict. However, they were aware of knife crime, gang and drugs related conflict –connected with sporadic ‘Postcode Wars’ between young people– and were careful where they went. The recent ‘acid attacks’ –young people being targeted and having acid thrown at them– were a concern for all, but they felt this was overplayed by the media.

The participants feel that their area is divided into two communities –the rich and the poor. They view gentrification mainly for the new communities that are moving into the area and not for them, and feel pushed out of their spaces.

*“All the new houses are for the ‘rich’. There are people begging everywhere, but they have nowhere to go ... we can’t hang out near the river or the marina, police come and move us, saying we are making too much noise. We can’t even hang out in our Estates; our families get in trouble for it”.*

Despite the above issues and concerns they felt that they all had good relationships with their friends and peers. They were often together, especially the female participants. Although it was recognised that social media has had a negative effect on social communication more broadly, communication via social media has always kept them connected.

*“When we are not together, we are always chatting.”*

Relationship with parents and family members can be difficult at times for some participants. They felt that sometimes there was too ‘much tension’ at home, particularly in relation to cultural and religious pressures. Rather than talking to parents, which leads to confrontation about their ideas or views, it is easier to escape these situations. As one participant said:

*“They don’t listen to you; they think you’re disrespecting them and losing your culture, but we are not, we just want to be able to do what some of our other friends do”.*

This is not to say that the young women felt estranged from their cultural backgrounds. They all expressed a desire to retain their cultural heritage, but wished to be allowed to let this

culture evolve in relation to their specific and complex experiences as young people in London. The older and mostly male participants felt that they needed a space where they can negotiate their identities; identities which include both traditional values as well as aspects of the environment that they are growing up in.

These discourses highlight an important finding from the lifeworld analysis –that sense of ‘belonging’ is framed by young people on the margins not through a single construct of ‘identity’ or ‘community’ but through a multi-dimensional prism. For most young people who took part in the Group interviews, community is a flexible, sometimes fragile, thing that changes shape from place to place and from time to time. Marginalised young people are continually called upon to balance identities and allegiances between different communities –between society ‘at large’ and discrete social media groups; between family and friends; between mono-culture and multi-culture; between post-code A and post-code B. This process of community shape-shifting is both atomising and liberating. Community is therefore often framed by young people in ‘Janus’ terms –as a thing with multiple beginnings and endings; with many gates, doorways, passages and transitions; a thing of dualities –often presenting two opposing faces and choices.

One participant in the Athens Group interview, for example, described the city as a place with two facades –one that is familiar to the tourists and another, a miserable one, that inhabitants experience when they move around it:

*“Athens is a very beautiful city for someone to visit with a lot of variety and things to do ... but when you live here it is a very miserable place ... dirt everywhere ... anxious people everywhere ... drug users, homeless everywhere ... 45 people sleeping on the streets ... then next door you have the most touristic shops that cost millions”.*

#### CRIMINALITY

As noted above, crime and anti-social behaviour is a strand that runs through the fabric of the lifeworld of marginalised young people. One female participant reported ‘hanging out’ with other young people who are often engaging in at risk activities like trading in stolen goods, binge drinking and hanging out and causing noise pollution on different Estates. She views this as part of growing up in her neighbourhood and being part of a group:

*“It’s fun doing stupid stuff sometimes, your friends are doing it, so why shouldn’t you?”*

In particular, knife crime, gang and drugs related conflict are key factors in shaping the territoriality and spatiality of the lifeworld, dictating to some extent where young people feel they can go in safety and the times they can go there.

However, one important finding from the lifeworld analysis reinforces the conclusions from a number of studies that gangs provide important social functions and perceived benefits for young people on the margins. Exclusion from mainstream services - like school and youth clubs- and estrangement from family create a social vacuum and loss of belonging that gangs can help fill. Perversely, gangs are seen as providing protection from other gangs. They also provide potential sources of income, due to the close link between gangs and the drugs economy, for young people who are poverty-pressured

(Rizzo, 2003; Kintrea et al., 2008; Ralphs et al., 2009; Alleyne and Wood, 2011; Merrin et al., 2015). As one participant put it:

*“It’s a kind of trip, this one will kill me, the other one will steal from me, there are gangs that people go to for protection ... I have my group in case someone wants to hurt me, and I have their phone numbers, this how it works”.*

Young people also expressed their own constructions of the causes of youth crime, referring in particular to what they see as a lack of positive role models to provide guidance for young people:

*“I believe it is the wrong role models ... everybody is trying to find out who has more power, everybody is trying to have with him a knife, a weapon to protect themselves in the streets”.*

Other participants in the group interviews made a link between youth crime and the combination of social pathologies they highlighted as key dynamics that chain together to shape their lifeworld –the globalised economy, leading to precarious employment, leading to poverty pressure, leading to powerlessness, leading to isolation, alienation and hard-heartedness:

*“I think it’s a chain ... someone starts from stealing and then ... you stab a kid who is below you and it just goes like that ... it’s a matter of principle ... but is also indifference ... we see so many things that we don’t care about ... you see homeless and you say its ok and eventually you end up accepting this situation and you say its ok to have homeless and it is not my business ... and it is ok to be a criminal and it is ok to live like a criminal because none one cares for me ... and I kind of reproduce that and it just goes on and these type of values affect everybody”.*

In turn, there was a sense expressed by some participating young people that attitudes of indifference, self-absorption and lack of social responsibility have become normalised as socially acceptable behaviours, for example in the context of drug use:

*“Drug use is not a problem anymore ... their parents don’t really care and they think that’s ok, everybody does drugs and stuff like ... many things go unnoticed”.*

In the UK most participants felt that crime in parts of their neighbourhood was rising, citing knife crimes, acid attacks, and an increase in territorial conflict, which they mostly believe is drug related –as evidence. Some male participants felt fear of crime restricted them moving around freely. If they happen to be in another area they are often anxious:

*“You never know when you might be attacked, they might think you belong with that group. Lots of kids get attacked by mistake”.*

This in turn has led to increasing numbers of young people forming alliances to protect themselves. In some cases, as a result of their gang allegiance, they become involved in criminal activity. The participants were concerned about how young these young people were who were taking this route:

*“These young ones, they are about 12, 13, think they are so tough. Riding around on their bicycles, we know what they’re doing. They’ll be the ones that get caught by the feds”.*

They all felt more should be done about educating children and young people about getting involved in gangs and drugs in primary schools, along with information on how to keep



yourself safe and where to access support. They were also concerned that all young people were branded together as *'troublemakers'* by the authorities.

#### CIVIC PARTICIPATION

Participants in the group interviews mainly saw civic participation in terms of life opportunities and prospects. As noted above, most of the young people participating in the Group interviews saw their life opportunities as limited, and were pessimistic about their prospects. This was framed in terms of a combination of their position in life –perceived as socially and economically marginalised– the way the globalised economy operates –seen as locking them into a cycle of poverty pressure and precarious employment– their lack of a voice in political institutions and decision-making –seen as disempowering them– and the steady erosion of social relations –seen as forcing them into self-absorption and isolation. In this context, young peoples' perceptions of civic participation were mainly articulated as a possible way of changing their lifeworld, in order to improve their prospects. This was expressed in terms of the five lifeworld constructs as follows.

*Life-world* - the tension between fire-fighting and activism, the need for participation to be authentic and meet local needs, participation as problem-solving, participation as radical action.

*Temporality* - the opposition between theory and practice, civic participation as an act of daily life.

*Spatiality* - indifference vs connection, the fluidity of communities, how action changes geographical boundaries, how territories affect action.

*Embodiment* - civic participation is what young people do in their daily life with their bodies and their skills.

*Inter-subjectivity* - working with otherness.

On the whole, participating young people were broadly positive about the idea of getting involved in civic life, though they constructed it in different ways. In one construction, civic participation is equated with 'authenticity', with one participant defining it as *'being consistent between what you say and what you do'*. A second construction defines civic participation as the actions needed to reduce fear of the 'other' and to combat tribalism. Another construction defines civic participation as 'activism'. For example, young people in Athens who volunteer in a music band that is trying to convey the message of drug recovery, perceive themselves as:

*"Activists in drug matters' since we recovered and we now try to give the message from our concerts and music groups and radio broadcasting to other kids that they can recover from drug use".*

In contrast, some participants described themselves almost as 'invisible activists' –individualists who are averse to being organised in a group but whose civic participation is embedded in daily life:

*"I don't have to be in a group, I do recycling and take care of abandoned animals –nobody knows".*



In the Spanish group interview, one theme that emerged was the sense that 'the system is corrupt', that young people should be more engaged to change it, but that they feel powerless to do so:

*"I'm concerned about what happens, the difficulties of young people, but I do not think we have the power to change it ... the system is corrupt".*

Some participants framed civic participation as instrumental –a necessary requirement to get on:

*"These days you must volunteer, without it you can't get anywhere. Even with good marks, you need experience, you need both, so you must start volunteering. I hope all this volunteering gets you somewhere".*

In the UK group interview participants were positive about the concept of civic participation as a means to engage marginalised young people more actively in their communities, and three participants reported they volunteered weekly at a homelessness project.

However, reinforcing the conclusions in the literature, as cited above, UK participants highlighted the difficulties they faced in volunteering, set against other time and resource constraints like college, homework, helping at home and social activities. They also felt that there is pressure to volunteer from school, college and youth organisations:

*"People are always trying to sign you up to things, sometimes I feel it's just so that they can tick a box".*

One participant reported that the difficulties she faced in trying to volunteer could be caused by prejudice:

*"I've tried to volunteer with different organisations, but haven't heard back from any of them ... it could be to do with my learning disability".*

#### THE ROLE OF THE COMMUNITY ANIMATEUR

Across all the Group interviews, participants had difficulty understanding the concept of the 'Community Animateur'. However, the analysis highlighted the following discourses in terms of the five lifeworld constructs:

*Lifeworld* - cultural understanding; sensitivity to setting.

*Temporality* - understanding of progression and transition routes young people have to navigate.

*Spatiality* - understanding and reflection on how young people view space in their daily life, how it effects, limits and constrains them; sensitivity to the geography of conflict.

*Embodiment* - supporting young people to acquire the skills to maximise their opportunities; reconciling the conflict between realising individual talent and applying talent to improve community social capital.

*Inter-subjectivity* - the need to engineer and valorise partnerships between different stakeholders and include young people as co-collaborators.

Overall, the young people participating in the Group interviews framed the Community Animateur role in terms of community activism rather than in relation to a job or profession:

*“Anyone can be (a Community Animateur) ... someone who supports a team to win a game or even a mayor in a city’ ... a role for a leading figure, to help, to push into something positive”.*

In essence, the participants saw the Community Animateur as a role model. Its main task, it was suggested, is to get young people ‘on the margins’ to think about the consequences of behaviour; to provide guidance on ways to realise their talents and to empower them to access opportunities.

Group interview participants highlighted a range of competences Community Animateurs would need to have in order to be effective. These included: understanding of young people’s multiple identities and communities; cultural sensitivity; understanding of young people’s geographical and social boundaries; how these boundaries affect, limit and constrain them, how it can also bring them together; the ability to step into the shoes of young people on the margins and embody their experiences; the capacity to deliver partnerships with key professionals and stakeholders who have an interest in and affect on young people’s lives.

## DISCUSSION

This research used lifeworld analysis to capture the lived experience of marginalised young people in four European cities. The research demonstrated that it is a powerful tool to reflect the positions and perspectives of young people whose voices are not often heard. It also demonstrated that lifeworld analysis can be effective as a grounding technique to support the engagement of marginalised youth as co-collaborators in action research experiments.

The application of lifeworld analysis provided valuable insights on the ‘life politics’ dynamics that influence the lifestyle and lifestyle choices of young people on the margins, the ‘life problematics’ that constrain marginalised young people’s access to opportunities and how these both subsequently frame strategies for self-actualisation and ‘performed action’. In turn, the lifeworld analysis enabled validation of the concept of a new role in youth work - the Community Animateur, and outlined the direction of travel in which this new role might be developed.

The analysis showed that the aspirations and life opportunities of young people on the margins are constrained by structural dynamics. Employment prospects are poor; the economic situation is precarious; the ‘gig economy’ is taking root. Young people in these situations need better access to more information and more guidance on ‘good practices’ to help them steer a path through life’s transitions.

The analysis showed that young people don’t belong to ‘a community’. They occupy multiple communities. A Community Animateur would need to understand how these multiple communities work.

These multiple communities sometimes conflict. There are pressures on young people to align to one over the other. This can be one factor that can contribute to ‘risk-taking behaviour’ by young people –for example getting involved in gangs and criminality. In turn, some young people feel that pressure from family, religious and cultural groups

they belong to and from peers, makes it harder for them to get involved in social and civic activities, like volunteering. Some are also not interested in taking part in civic activities or cultural events as often they feel out of place. A Community Animateur would need to understand these dynamics and provide support to help young people manage risk-taking and explore opportunities outside their boundaries.

The analysis revealed the ambivalent relationship young people on the margins have with digital technologies. On the one hand, digital technologies –particularly social media platforms and tools– are important tools in promoting self-actualisation and social interaction with peers. On the other hand, young people acknowledge the capacity of digital technologies to destroy social relationships, and contribute to individual self-absorption and isolation. The Community Animateur would therefore need to understand this duality and support young people in acquiring the digital competences to apply digital technologies productively.

Young people on the margins report that ‘mainstream’ youth services and support –for example youth clubs– are either ‘off limits’ (young people labelled as ‘difficult’ are often banned from them) or do not cater for their needs. The lifeworld analysis provided further evidence that disadvantaged youth perceive the youth system as failing them. A Community Animateur should be able to bridge access to alternatives to these mainstream services.

Young people on the margins have little faith in formal social and civic institutions. They don’t trust politicians. The Community Animateur role could be seen as a bridge to alternative, more innovative ways of getting young people involved in civil society. A strong theme highlighted by the Lifeworld Analysis was that young people want an alternative to what they see as the consumerist, selfish, individualistic and profit-chasing societal norm.

Young people report they often feel isolated. They perceive a lack of sharing, common interests and common spaces in their world, and not enough interaction with people outside their boundaries. A Community Animateur could act as a catalyst for a sharing social economy.

Although the lifeworld analysis did not provide a clear endorsement by the young people who participated in the research for the concept of the Community Animateur –many of those involved in the research had difficulty in understanding the role of the Animateur and how it would work in practice– the research results nevertheless confirmed that the needs the Community Animateur is intended to meet are pressing ones. Going forward, the COMANITY project will build on the foundations established by this research to develop the Community Animateur role, working in collaboration with young people on the margins.

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