Editorial: Youth vulnerabilities in European cities

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Editorial on the Research Topic
Youth vulnerabilities in European cities

Introduction

This Research Topic delves into the multifaceted landscape of youth vulnerabilities within the intricate tapestry of European cities. Existing research shows that social and spatial inequalities and vulnerabilities are correlated with each other and reproduced over the generations (Erikson and Goldthorpe, 2002; Tammaru et al., 2021; Coulter, 2023). Across the eight papers included in this Research Topic, the topic focus revolves around the nuanced interplay of Places, Policies, and Participation, aiming to develop a comprehensive agenda for enhancing the urban prospects of young generations and especially the prospects of more vulnerable youth. Additionally, it scrutinizes the within-generational inequities within the young generation, which are often exacerbated by differences in parental support (Esping-Andersen and Wagner, 2012; Raitano, 2015; see also Bodvin et al., 2018; Bukodi et al., 2020). This three-pronged approach, aptly termed the 3P approach, serves as a framework for a comprehensive tackling of youth vulnerabilities. Firstly, the examination of diverse localities is important as different places offer distinct opportunity structures. Thus, the first set of papers addresses local circumstances influencing the lives of young people, shedding light on the geographical nuances that shape their experiences and life opportunities. Through this localized place-based lens, a deeper understanding emerges regarding the spatial dynamics of youth vulnerability and potential avenues for intervention.

Secondly, papers in this Research Topic extend to the realm of policy responses tailored to address the myriad challenges faced by youth. Delving into the intricacies of policy formulation and implementation, these papers navigate the landscape of governmental interventions and community initiatives designed to mitigate the vulnerabilities experienced by young people. By elaborating on reflexive policy frameworks, insights are gleaned into the efficacy of existing strategies and avenues for innovation to better support youth transitions into adulthood. Finally, the third set of papers focuses on youth participation in policy-making processes. Emphasizing the importance of youth voices in the decision-making process, these discussions underscore the transformative potential of inclusive governance structures developed together with young people. By fostering meaningful engagement, the aim is to facilitate broader access to urban opportunities and

pave the way for the cultivation of more sustainable and equitable cities that cater to the diverse needs and aspirations of future generations.

Role of places

The nature and scale of youth vulnerabilities are not independent from the local circumstances young people live in. According to Medgyesi and Csathó, the local labor market and the quality of local public services have a direct impact on the financial satisfaction of young people. Housing, as a public service, has an exceptionally strong impact on young people's financial satisfaction in case housing is affordable. In contrast to that, Gerőházi et al. highlight that even if urban localities provide different economic circumstances for young people which has a direct impact on the relation of housing demand and supply, the room for maneuver localities have to manage the inequalities on the housing market is strongly restricted by regional/national legal and financial frameworks and tied by path-dependency of housing structures. Even if the national policy framework is determining, and localities may have a shortage of resources and tools to counteract economic cycles, still local policies matter, as the article by Barke et al. showcases. Corby, UK, is hard hit by the industrial transformation that has a strong impact on the labor market precarity of young people strengthened by housing and educational precarity. Based on the outcomes of interviews with young people summarized by the article, local actors may have a role in providing information and guidance in navigating through the ever-changing local environment and increasing individual social capital.

Role of policies

The second important ingredient for understanding youth vulnerabilities relates to policies. Paabort et al. provide a scoping review of the research on policies targeting youth Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET). They explored how well policies are responding to the challenges that youth NEETs face and whether policy and practice are reflexively informing each other to better respond to the heterogeneity of the youth NEETs' varied experiences. The authors emphasize that cross-sectoral approaches, reflexive policies, and tailor-made solutions that consider and support young people's coping strategies are particularly important to address the complex needs of more difficult target groups. Paabort et al. proceed by demonstrating how young people's educational and labor market opportunities vary not only across Europe but also across different locations inside a single country. Therefore, tailored measures for vulnerable young people have to be designed according to the specifics of local contexts. Kährik and Pastak provide an example of how policies affect young people's lives locally based on the case study in Tallinn, Estonia. Comparing young people's housing perspectives in 2010 and 2020, their analysis demonstrates that young people's housing conditions have become more precarious and insecure. Housing inequalities of youth are heavily shaped by the transmission of their parent's wealth. Like Paabort et al., Kährik and Pastak also emphasize the need for more

proactive and reflexive policies that would be better informed by young people's real-life experiences.

Role of participation

Youth participation in urban planning and policymaking is the third vital component in reducing youth vulnerabilities as it ensures that the voices and perspectives of younger generations are heard and considered in decisions that directly affect their lives. The central theme explored in the perspective paper authored by García-Antúnez et al. links youth inclusion with intergenerational justice. More specifically, it delves into methods that would enhance the participation and inclusion of young individuals in urban environmental planning. The authors delineate various promising avenues, such as pedestrianizing streets, promoting active transport, implementing traffic calming measures, and enhancing urban green spaces, among others. The next two papers address one of the most pressing challenges concerning youth vulnerabilities in urban settings: housing. Amidst escalating house prices and rents, young people either delay leaving their parental homes or find themselves in precarious housing situations as they encounter difficulties in securing affordable housing independently. Lorenz investigates co-creation and youth involvement in shaping housing strategies, using Barakaldo, Spain, as a case study. The research reveals that co-creation endeavors contribute to empowering vulnerable youth by equipping them with the necessary knowledge and skills to navigate the housing market effectively. Hoekstra and Gentili continue these discussions by advocating for policy formulation led by youth rather than for youth, drawing insights from Amsterdam, Netherlands, as an example. Their paper aims to elucidate the real-life experiences of young people and presents comprehensive recommendations for enhancing housing outcomes based on an extensive co-creation process, also capitalizing on new opportunities in digitally transforming societies such as virtual platforms for young house seekers. These recommendations span various aspects including the size, location, and institutional frameworks governing access to housing.

Author contributions

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lives: Exploring changes in spatial inequalities in digitally transforming societies").

Conflict of interest

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