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Divided Cities, invisible youth and the "writing of coping maps" – Towards a social geography of adolescence¹

Christian Reutlinger

Abstract

The theoretical approach of "writing coping-maps" from the area of "Social Geography of adolescence" is based upon the hypothesis that present geographical approaches are losing sight of children's and young people's socio-spatial problems in divided cities. To face today's problems of growing up in cities – e.g. the "new poverty", increasing delinquency and youth crime or increased problems of integrating certain sections of the population – we have to uncover the invisible forms of coping with being useless (see e.g. "The End of Work", Rifkin 1995), to explain the reasons which are behind them and to do something against it.

"Invisible coping-maps" is developed on the basis that children and young people, growing up under the circumstances of digital capitalism, try to solve their problems of being useless with increasing frequency outside the institutions of socialization like family, school or the traditional social system. We assume that every human being (idea of "Making Geography" (Werlen 1995, 1997, Werlen/Reutlinger 2005)) writes its social (coping) map in order to keep his/her capacity of acting in spite of a rising number of so-called 'useless people'. In the empirical part of the present paper we have carried out a comparative study of the above subject in three Spanish cities (Madrid, Barcelona and La Coruña). This study is part of a higher research project combining the cities of Madrid (Spain), Perpignan (France) and Palermo (Italy). It serves the "Invisible Youth Integration"-project of the European Union's initiative "Leonardo da Vinci".

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