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In the introduction, the editors indicate that the book explores 'if and how the 'progressive' values of community development and youth work can be invested with meaning' and seeks 'to identify the forces and interests that work against the realisation of their transformative potential' (p. 3). This book achieves this by exploring 'contested and constructed' theoretical concepts, examining the realities that shape contemporary youth and community work in Ireland and by investigating transformative possibilities which may serve as new directions for practice.

The book is divided into three sections: The first section 'Concepts' includes four chapters which tackle theoretical debates pertinent to youth and community work. Implicit assumptions behind concepts and values, the consequences of alternative choices and the expectations raised by particular values are teased-out and possible political ramifications discussed. The consideration of models of youth work practice highlight the recognition of their theoretical incompleteness given postmodern developments. The five major theoretical perspectives on youth (Developmental, Generational, Structural Conflict, Transitional, Constructionist), presented in a coherent, critical and comparative style, provide a very useful framework, 'a set of lenses' through which we can understand youth, with implications drawn for policy and practice. As noted by Maurice Devlin, the chapter author, the point 'is not to choose one of these perspectives but rather to weigh their arguments one against the other (in the light of our own experience and that of the young people we work with) and draw on them as appropriate in different settings and contexts' (p. 56).

In the second section 'Context', three chapters explore political and policy considerations that shape youth and community work in contemporary Ireland. The position young people are placed in by the current state-sector relationship in youth work is explored within the framework of statutory funding and social policy.

The chapter by Seamus Bane on professionalisation provides a very informative account of what is meant by professionalisation and what has driven it in both youth and community work. It tackles the challenges raised by professionalisation of youth and community work

in respect to their core values and practices and raises the question of how best to proceed. As noted by Bane (p. 173) 'practice may become more about doing things 'for' rather than 'with' people. Alternatively, workers might seek to redefine systems of accountability in partnership with young people and communities, so that their practice is invested with real commitment to democracy and participation'.

The third section 'Futures', includes three chapters which present issues, problems and possible solutions and directions facing youth work in Ireland today. David Treacy's chapter is a very concise, enlightening account on Irish youth work and the challenges it faces in the future. The chapter on community development and participatory theory focuses on the potentials and pitfalls of participatory democracy in Ireland today and potential of community development to address social exclusion given the ever expanding interpretations of this concept.

The need for youth and community work to move 'beyond the local' is the concern of the final chapter by Eilis Dillon on youth and community work in Ireland in the context of globalisation. Questions and challenges for youth and community work in addressing globalisation are considered leading on to a discussion on the politics of transformation, particularly in respect to addressing inequalities and democratic deficits associated with neoliberal globalisation. The chapter ends with useful examples of Irish initiatives which may provide the basis for how this can be done.

Each chapter has a consistent framework, A useful introduction is given at the start of each chapter 'setting the scene' and signposting what the chapter is about. At the end of each chapter there is a concise conclusion providing a helpful synopsis, with links drawn between the chapter and other chapters in the book as well other documents such as national reports.

Throughout the book effective relationships are drawn between theory, policy and practice and the practical implications of various initiatives, policies and research studies identified. Concepts and issues are explored in a clear and coherent manner with pertinent critical discussion.

From a critical standpoint, a final chapter exploring themes across all of the chapters, presented briefly in the introductory chapter, might have been a helpful inclusion. In addition, the notes at the end of each chapter appear at times too lengthy and overloaded, yet they do include valuable sources of additional reference material.

The authors are to be commended on writing such a useful, robust text for those studying youth and community work as well for allied professions.