



Understanding Poverty: Lessons for Citizenship and Education

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[...]

[applause]

Darren McGarvey: Hello, everyone. Thank you for that very generous introduction.

Michalis Kakos: There are more to come.

[laughter]

Michalis: I would like to thank you on behalf of NECE, and on behalf of this audience for accepting our invitation to be here. I would like to take the opportunity also to address a personal thank you to Darren because I've been a resident in the city for quite some years now but only recently my process of being grounded in the city has started, and your book, it was a part of this process together with whiskey tasting because it revealed to me a side of Glasgow about which I had heard, about which I had read, but the living experience of those in Glasgow and participating in this, it was something that it was remaining concealed and still largely remains concealed to me.

I'm not talking about poverty here but about the history of M77 motorway because in your book you discuss about a road that I very often take to go down south side to my place, and for me it was just an easy route to go to the south part of the city, but I had absolutely no clue about the history behind it. I had no idea about history of communities, of Pollock community coming together, resisting to building this motorway and protecting their environment, the side where they live but also resisting to decisions that have been made without them but greatly affect their lives.

It's also a history of community making way at the end, being forced to make way and allowing the motorway to be constructed and also monstrosities like Silverburn, which is a large shopping mall in the south Glasgow.

I'm personally very glad that you are here and you accepted the invitation because we can discuss about motorways and shopping malls, because we can discuss about





actually communities coming together, about the ways that people can take the reins of their fate, of their life and making something to change the place where they have been placed, the area where they have been placed and the future that has been predetermined for them, and make something to change this predetermined pathway that they are expected to follow.

Really the reason why we're here is because we want to discuss about what education can do and should do anything to support this process, to make people aware of the possibilities that they have, to motivate them to do something, to change the way that they think about themselves about their future, most importantly to break the glass ceilings of their aspirations and imagination.

I'm personally interested in formal education but in this audience there are many people who are interested in informal education and there will be questions about informal education as well. I'm interested in the ways that schools and education more generally can motivate people to reflect and change and become more active participants in determining their own futures.

I would like to suggest two pillars in our conversation, if I may. The obvious one is the inequalities, but what I would like to suggest is to remind us that is that when we're discussing about inequalities, usually our mind goes to poverty but inequality is not only about poverty, inequality is about wealth as well. When we're discussing about Glasgow effect, a term that will come up very frequently I bet in these two and a half days, there is one side about Glasgow effect, which is the poverty and the low life expectancy in some areas of Glasgow, but Glasgow effect is also about the completely different living conditions and about life expectancy in other areas of Glasgow. We're discussing about wealth as well as poverty, we're discussing about marginalization but we're discussing also about privilege.

The other pillar in our discussion is obviously education but the note that I would like to make is that when we're discussing about education, I will invite us not only in the discussion with you but in the two and a half days that will follow, to think about education not only with regard to potential changes that it can bring to people's life, but the way that perhaps participate education is to blame in the conditions that we're discussing about inequality and in perpetrating the inequalities and the conditions that we will be exploring and with reference the Glasgow Effect. We know for example that Glasgow accommodates some schools and students in Glasgow, they represent some of the highest achievers in Scotland, but they are also students who struggle to finish school in the same city and their community school communities that they have very easy access to a wealth of resources, but there are also school communities that don't have any access to even the basic resources.

These are the pillars. What I would like to ask to start with, a question that I would like to start and to ask you to reflect on is about is the use of one of the phrases that you open the phrase that you open the book, that about people like you who are not expected to write books. How can we help? How education can help to change these not for everyone to write books, but for people like you, for people to be grouped in





particular settings of seclusion or exclusion and to break the glass ceilings of their aspirations?

Darren: Thank you. Good question. Just to say, I'm grateful to be asked and I hope you're all having a good opening day here today. I'm offended it's not a full house. I say indeed it's not so harsh. Maybe the Glaswegians will appreciate that dry humor more, I'm not quite sure. Either way the opening sentence to the introduction to the book served a couple of functions. In fact, a lot of the structure of the book because the emphasis of the book so much has been on the fact that apparently my life is really just a deleted scene from *Trainspotting*. Much of the conscious effort put into structure in the book in such a way as to draw on different ideological perspectives, different educational abilities throughout the course of the book, including the short chapter structure so that people feel they're making progress because a big book defeats a person who is not a confident reader.

People like me don't write books as really my way of saying, "Hey, you, that thinks you can't read a book." The barrier to them actually reading the book is immediately overcome because it's outweighed by the sense of relevance, and so that is not to say that a person who might struggle to read or not feel as confident to read would just power through it based on that one line, but ultimately it's something they can identify with and through that process of identification and seeing how that one line links to their experience then suddenly they become more willing to give it a go. This applies to all education.

I've found in my experience, obviously like-- Understandably, people will talk up that adversity I talk about in my life, I have an advanced high ed in drama, I'm a qualified journalist, I'm with distinction as an arts practitioner. There are many other things going on in my life other than drug addiction. There were things that I consciously understood right in the book based on all of my different social experiences, but that one line really more than just perhaps about a skillful manipulation drawing on a certain type of person who may not be confident to read was also a way of expressing that based on the social environment into which we are born, the cultures, the norms that we were exposed to, the aspirations that we absorb then it just so happens that certain types of people live in communities where certain types of people don't do certain types of things.

I went to a school where people are taught ultimately how to learn just enough skills that they can go and sell the labor in a precarious marketplace for a pittance and to be grateful for that. I'm not as expressed in the variety of options available to them educationally, professionally and culturally. For example, I remember going to a careers adviser and telling them I wanted to be an actor, and them suggesting perhaps that I should aim for something a bit more realistic. I hope I run an element at some point. The amount of TV companies that wanted to buy the rights to my book was actually quite surprising.

Now, obviously, I understand that why this advisor had done that, it's because they all saw the product of that environment and they see very little social mobility, so they want someone to maximize their very narrow opportunity. At the same time what that





teaches us is to only aspire to a certain level. I think that then becomes the norm when actually aspiration I see at my age. A lot of studies show that if you measure aspiration between children of school age regardless of the social background, every kid wants the same thing whether they go to a private school or whether they go state school. At some point along the developmental trajectory, the aspiration becomes constrained in some way because of ultimately what I call the quicksand of poverty, and that's not just not having any money. That's also all of the social, cultural and formal social controls that constitute community life and areas of social deprivation.

Michalis: I was reading recently a study about this, and the author was using the term resignation as opposite to aspiration. You said about skillful manipulation and there has been a lot of discussion in this about that. Is this what we need? Do we need a skillful manipulation to make them read the first page and then the second page? If so, if that is the role of education, then doesn't it have very important ethical dimensions? Because are we-

Darren: It wasn't the poor people I was manipulating. It was only the middle-class people that made the book a bestseller. That's the key thing you have to understand. That's where the intelligence says.

Michalis: Fair enough.

Darren: That was actually just people like me don't write books. Someone who doesn't read books is like, "Go." Whereas a middle-class person who is reading a book for a vicarious experience of poverty is like, "Oh, my God. This person can't even believe that they could've written a book. I must continue to read on."

The book is structured in a way that really-- Perhaps manipulation isn't the right word, sophistication probably is more right. It's really showing the same degree of understanding of writing and audience and demographics as a political strategist would show when they will launch in an election campaign, you are ultimately bringing in different dimensions of interest, different dimensions of topics, deploying different types of language at different points while also taking people on an emotional journey rather than an academic methodology where someone's leading an argument based on unraveling different parts of evidence.

The book for me was really about-- I structured the book to see if me I would structure an album, it's about what makes sense to come out of this moment emotionally. The book had short chapters to make it easier for people like me to read it, but a lot of the book really was a way of challenging middle class people who already think they knew everything without explicitly saying by the way you don't actually know as much as you think you know, because that's what you need to do, is sell a book, and that's what you need to do if you want to do anything really in culture or society or politics, and that's something I learned very, very early on.

Michalis: I still like all that skillful manipulation of the term.





Darren: It is not actually my term. I can actually quote the academic but probably Chris Hedges radical left Canadian academic who says, "People are not moved by facts but by skillful manipulation of emotion." He of course was referring to political orthodoxy. I just thought it makes a lot of sense.

Michalis: It does make a lot of sense, but at the same time it ups on to discussions that we have hearing among ourselves about the ethical dimension of manipulating those who want to empower them we want to empower. The last thing that I guess we need is people pointing the finger and asking people to change their lives and being empowered rather than us empowering them.

The question about citizenship education in particular is, what is the role of the teacher? Are we trying to manipulate them to change their lives or are we actually trying to educate them? For example, should we educate them, be supporting them in analyzing critically their situation and making them actually aware of the wealth of particular areas in Glasgow, in comparison to their own situation? Isn't this more honest?

Darren: Yes. Obviously, honesty is a virtue. Being upfront and being frank, but sometimes being very, very honest upfront might not be conducive to what their long-term objective is. As Thatcher had been honest about what her policies mean and the ease, she wouldn't have said, "This is going to lead to so much social mobility. The society is going to become dominated by a prevailing middle-class sensibility, which is really just conservatism." If she'd been really honest, what she would've said was, "A lot of you are going to die. A lot of you are going to fall into despair and idleness because, to be honest, we are sacrificing you on the altar of the free market."

There was a reason she wasn't that honest. No, obviously that is about more of a vulgar point to make, but when you're dealing in a community context, then being honest is also about being intuitive to whether a person has their understanding, write down the language that you may use, in my experience as someone who has been a service user in communities, a service provider in communities, has certainly performed the role of an educator at certain points, what I have learned is that you have to walk alongside people for long enough to develop a intuition as to the most conducive way to introduce difficult ideas to them, like honesty.

If you're bringing someone into a classroom, and you are telling them, "Here's what we need to learn, blah, blah, blah. This is a curriculum and you're just having to know. I'm just being honest. I'm just hanging over that straightaway," with no understanding of what their educational needs are, the social context from which those needs have arisen, then actually, you're being quite clumsy about that. You've been very unsophisticated about it.

What's ironic about the whole term social mobility is that people who rise in professions are deemed to be socially mobile, when actually they have great difficulty mixing with people from other social backgrounds. Whereas what you'll find is people like myself who come from the bottom, are far more natural at mixing with people from further up the food chain, because when you come from poverty, there is nowhere around the





middle-class teacher, or a middle-class doctor or a middle-class policeman or a middle-class judge, so you become fluent in the customs of that prevailing sensibility.

It's about really being honest with the educator about-- in a way that makes sense without offending them, without upsetting them. They've grown up and being educated in a culture where they believe they have all the answers, so you really have to be sensitive to their needs and their ego, and say, "Actually, because you did a degree, and because you read a few books, and you might be caught up with [unintelligible 00:23:21], it doesn't actually mean you've got a clue when you parachute in to a place like Poland and Edinburgh, where kids are more fascinated with stealing more bikes than they are reading books.

Actually, when we're talking about honesty and we're talking about communication skills and becoming intuitive to how different people interpret different things, then I think that the people in the position of power have as much to learn as the people who are going to be ladder or not quite doing so well in terms of educational attainment. I think that that humility is key.

Michalis: I understand that. I guess what you're suggesting is the educator to be educated as well and they exchange those.

Darren: Very polite to say I'm suggesting it.

[laughter]

Michalis: Fair enough. I used actually, the term empowerment before and in community education and civic education, we always come across the term. Can I ask you directly, what do you think? How does empowerment look like?

Darren: Well, this is where my view has evolved a lot over the years, particularly in the area of personal development or own recovery and addiction. In 2014, I got sober for three years. I relapsed for about a week. I got to jail. I got sober again for another couple of years. Since my book came out, I've been on and off the wagon knowing then because all sorts of new stresses have come into my life but for me, the-- What was the question again?

Michalis: It's about empowerment.

Darren: Empowerment, sorry. Forgive me. Empowerment for me was about challenging my own assumptions, which I had inherited from a very hardcore radical left-wing community, which quite rightfully attributes many of the issues we experience to systemic problems, like unfit of capitalism, neoliberalism, the marketization of communities, and in many ways that is actually absolutely correct.

However, within that context, you also have to find some way to draw up an anchor and say, "This is the reality that I'm faced with. How am I going to navigate this?" You can't be around for the world to change to suit your personal needs. This is very challenging thing to say as a left-wing person. Empowerment for me, is to be able to find and reconcile the idea that we need systemic change, but also that every human





being has been born into society at some point through or short civilizational has today, which is fundamentally unjust, fundamentally dangerous, fundamentally unfair and that we have as individuals or find some kind of way to contrive some kind of quality of life of that.

I think that that message resonates more with people in poverty than what we currently hear from most prominent figures on the left, who tend to focus more on the systemic issues and those who speak in a very exclusive jargon, that I'm adopted to now because I understand the studied formality of that sort of environment, but I could see these two prisoners in a jail and I definitely came to language and get the same point across.

Empowerment is not just about, "Join my course, say not my petition, I'll lead you somewhere else." It is not really empowerment is it, is really just kind of political construction of some sort. Empowerment is about saying, "You live in an unfair world, you face a lot of these barriers. If you want to face these barriers, you can do that, but also within the context of your own life, there may be certain things that you within your own competence could begin to slowly become more aware of, take more responsibility for and thus become more useful and not brought a struggle."

How many times do you go to a union meeting or some left-wing get-together or some anti-trump rally? What does everybody do after that? They'll go to the pub and talk about fuck capitalism? Drinking BrewDog. There are areas of individual responsibility which are entirely relevant and entirely important, and I believe that empowering people to understand the broader systemic issues is one part of empowerment.

Also, as you say, being honest about areas and your life, son, where you might be able to stop going to jail every single six months because no amount of systemic change is going to take away your heroin addiction until you accept you have a heroin addiction. Even if we lead on every service under the sun it's only an act of self-well, that is going to allow an individual to engage with the support that's provided and good luck trying to get to a heroin addict who doesn't believe that a heroin addict can engage with whatever plethora of services that you want to provide.

There are so many acts of individualism within what we regard as left-wing institutions, joining a union, one person joining a union, why are they doing that? What's the mechanism by which they do that? It's an individual act, they decide to join a union because they want to take responsibility for their place in the labour market, and solidarity in collectivization with other people who face the same individual problems. That's how individual collective dichotomy at the level of empowerment, I just find is a real distraction. And there's an element of political correctness involved, we have people know this intuitively but feel frightened to say it in case they're accused of being a Tory.

As a person on the left, then I believe empowerment is about reconciling both of those previously oppositional ideas.





Michalis: Thank you. Thank you for that. One last question before we open the floor to our audience. What makes me wonder about your thoughts, what brings to mind is an experience that I had when I first came to this country and I was discussing with young people from those who are not expected to write a book. I was asking them where they are and I couldn't recognize the place that they were referring to until I realized that actually they referred to a block of flats, their tower and that was their community.

What you're saying, to some extent, I agree, but on the other hand, I'm finding a bit difficult to convince someone to give up, for example, a predetermined life when we know that part of the reason why it's staying in that kind of life is because we feel it's safe in there, we feel also some sense of pride of being member of that community, which actually is expected to perhaps not to take drugs but to jail, for example, it can be a natural progress.

Darren: Yes, well, that really just comes down to social connection and what we are hardwired to seek regardless of the quality of social connections available to us. As a species, that's partly what defines our ability to group together and do amazing and terrible things. This is as true if you live in a high block of flats, and you write the name of your local gang in graffiti and say the left. These are ways for people to ingratiate themselves in communities where they often feel unsafe and insecure, and so this is a way for them to signal to others that they are part. No, we all do that stuff.

There's a lot of people in here dressed a certain way because it wouldn't it be cool to turn up in a pair of trackies. There's a lot of people in here dressed a certain way or speaking a certain way because it just would not do to say or sound a certain way. In that sense, we are no different from the people in communities who write GYT on the wall. We're all just trying to belong. That is all just part of the studied formality of humans organizing themselves in small groups, I understand that. Why people lay claim to specific areas and regions. In Glasgow my personal view is that people don't necessarily lay claim to being from Glasgow or of a sense of conscious pride that Glasgow is some wonderful place.

For someone like me, it's a sense of resignation, and Glasgow what you might find, compared to the rather joyless parts of Edinburgh that many of you may have frequented at various points, particularly the loving museum exhibit lies the heavily fortified Edinburgh central where people are completely open arms because a pond land may be opening, smashing the illusion. Yes, exactly. Smashing the illusion that poor people might be in Edinburgh somewhere. For me in Glasgow, I found often we will take pride in things like all of the terrible statistics around violence associated with the community.

One of the things you would see would be this is the roughest city in Scotland or at one point in Europe. We would see that with a mixture of pride and resignation because in the face of what appear to be insurmountable problems, all you can do is laugh. When you genuinely feel powerless to overcome so many issues around you, and you become so adjusted to the ubiquity of violence, the low proximity to opportunity and a deep-rooted pathological skepticism of all institutions and every





individual professional represented in them to the extent that you see a social worker and a teacher, the same way you look at a police officer, then all you can do is laugh.

That's all you can do. Because laughing is one way to create the delusion that you are taking some ownership over that when in actual fact, regardless of the aesthetic progress of a lot of our communities, people have become more and more remote, not just from opportunity, but even from the desire to participate in the local, national or even at least until the end of the month, international democracy.

Michalis: Thank you for this. I think that I wouldn't like to monopolize anything further of the discussion with Darren, so shall we open for discussion with the audience and are we ready to take questions? It's a bit difficult to see from here.

Participant: Hi. This is a bit left-field coming from what you've just been talking about, but I think it's a really important conversation. One of the biggest issues heading towards for citizenship education now is the ecological crisis, climate crisis that's going to completely transform everybody's lives, and most of all, the poorest and most vulnerable people who will lose out the most. Given everything you're saying about the kind of attack a lot of people are on a daily basis, it must be very, very hard to take on board that kind of issue. Do you think that the ecological crisis, climate crisis is doomed to remain a mostly middle-class movement or do you see a way out of that?

Darren: No, that's a good point, do you mind if I stand up just so that I can properly chat to you? Good question. Just a very brief social history lesson. It was only after the European Union unleashed neoliberalism upon us all that working-class people went from living rather thriftily and handing down close to one another, and growing their own food, and operating their own local businesses, to having a Tesco parked on the corner of the community like a hungry monster extracting profit from the community, and selling all our social problems back to us as a culture.

Actually, if you look at working-class people or the poor to actually be fair or carbon footprints all over, we don't live as long, therefore, we don't access health care as much. If you look at the inverse care law, for example, you find that actually peer head middle-class people in Bearsden get 10 pounds more than the neighboring housing scheme of Possil where people are dealing with multimorbidity and are actually dying before they are old enough to claim a pension.

This is one of the areas of political terrain where social mobility has created a paradox for people who want to engage the working-class because many of us have become socially mobile to the extent that we have low proximity now to the concerns, the lexicon, the sense of priority, even the sense of humor of people further down the food chain. When we go to them with our valid concerns, whether it be about the welfare of animals, whether it be about mass food production, industrial farming, and they are navigating a hostile benefit environment where their communities have been turned down to just bookmakers, and chip shops, and off-sales masquerading as groceries?

Then naturally, there's attention because what concerns you're raising are completely valid and completely fundamental, but because we haven't walked alongside people





in these communities, and indeed actually left a vacuum for people followed along the right of the spectrum to occupy it and pretend they're listening and pretend that they understand, then we've actually created a problem for ourselves because the people we want to help and the people that are in a practical and political level we need to mobilize are extremely skeptical of us now. Even skeptical, I mean, I know I talk like them, but my experience is in these communities intermediated by panel hosts, TV cameras, da da da.

The minute you become socially mobile, you become removed from the reality of what people are experiencing. We enter this has been that you won't hear a lot of discussions perhaps on the street corners in socially deprived communities, and certainly not in the language that many of us have become accustomed to using when describing it. A certain level of informal social pressure has begun to emerge which I do think vindicates a lot of the more strident activism that we've been seeing recently that's often easily criticized in the tabloid press. I, for one, certainly have changed the milk that I drink. My partner has become a vegetarian.

These were things that we weren't even considering not long ago. It's about how do we modify that approach that you're talking about and the various strains of activism that emerge from that, and base ourselves in communities for long enough that people get a sense of us, rather than us being this thing that just appears when something's on the telly or a politician that just appears when it's an electoral cycle. How do we create time within our schedules to be in communities long enough to walk alongside folk?

That they get a sense of us, how we talk, and we get a sense of them because the Pollock Free State to what my friend here mentioned, and if you haven't heard of that, I suggest that you look it up. There is a documentary on YouTube, which is available to watch called *Govern Through the People*. It's our visual/audio story of that. There's a chapter in my book which goes into in great detail.

The Pollock Free State may have failed in its objective to stop a motorway being built through a community, but really, a lot of activism is not about achieving an objective, it's about building solidarity, it's about cross-pollinating people from different backgrounds with different interests and different sense of priority until they become intuitive to one another, rather than jogged by how each other speak or how each other dress. We really need to open it in communities a lot longer than a couple of days if we want to create that sort of filter you're growing for real social change that I think you're referring to. I hope that answered your question.

Participant: Thank you very much.

Darren: Cheers.

Michalis: Other comments or questions?

Olivia Jayden: Hi, everyone, my name's Olivia Jayden. I'm here to social studies and citizenship at Rosshall Academy, which is a school that now covers the area obviously





that you grew up in. Just a couple of the things that I wanted to clarify or question in both your speeches, but also a question for you as well, Darren. Firstly, we're talking, and actually, I needed an introduction about resources for schools. You talked about the fact that some schools in poorer areas have less resources than schools in richer areas in Glasgow.

I just wanted to clarify that part because when it comes to external resources such as parental involvement and things like that, absolutely schools in poorer areas have got less resources, but in terms of actual financial resources or money, in Scotland, we actually receive considerably more resources than schools in richer areas similarly because we have pupil equity funding. That allows us to bring in quite a lot of additional resources that we didn't have 10, 15 years ago, and actually change what we are able to offer and particularly when it comes to things like ops and choices and so on. I think things have maybe changed quite a bit in the last 15, 20 years.

One thing that we have seen in the last few years and it really concerns me and I'd like to hear your thoughts on is since really I suppose it's a massive, the SSP in the area and there's a cleaner that the Pollock Free State and also poor center [unintelligible 00:42:34]. Over the last few years, we've really started to see the development of far right views amongst young people, and that's something that we're continually challenging within school, but it comes more and more difficult because of the political context and particularly what's coming from the USC. I just wondered if you could comment and how you think we can best address that with young people in the community that you're from.

Darren: Thank you. I'll take that in reverse order. First thing, I would even say the real emergence of far right ideas, for me, is inevitable when you bring in a policy as it is of freedom of movement, but you don't actually think about how it's going to be implemented, so it results in strange contradictions like people fleeing poverty, and violence, and oppression.

We put them in our most impoverished, and violent, and oppressed communities, and think in an age of austerity that it's not going to create a chronic stress that is conducive to people developing natural resentments when they have to wait six weeks for the child to be seen by a doctor or they have to wait to get a bus because there's too many people on it.

Now I'm in no way justifying or apologizing for skinhead Nazis who are running loose and the space that we in the left have created through our inability to truly engage with us for sure.

The concept of freedom of movement, as widely as it is, has also real white privilege and action when you think about that, particularly in the context of the environmental issue that my friend back there has raised. Just this idea that because we are European, we should just be able to go whatever we want, whenever we want, and love whatever we want, and do whatever we want, but without thinking through all of the other implications. Of course, we should be able to do those things, but we should also, rather than just paying lip service to freedom of movement and integration.





When you actually look at the policies in Scotland or England or most other European countries, then you see that really multiculturalism and freedom of movement has consisted basically of you can go and work anywhere, but not really put a lot of thought in the actual resources that are available in communities to support that integration. That's not only created stress in the communities, but it's not fair on many of the vulnerable immigrants who are moving into new communities in the first place, and having worked there, different migrant communities, and a lot of different contexts particularly in the government now, which has become a lightning rod for all of this nonsense.

Then I can say categorically that, well, I completely disagree with the lexicon of terms that has emerged in the far right to describe these issues. The fault of much of the social discord lies with the EU's commitment to neoliberal economics and the ideological austerity.

The other point now I would like to make was, I think my point about the people from well-off areas getting more than people from less well-off was actually referenced to health, not education. I was talking about the adverse care-law, which actually is a fact, so I completely take your point. I would never dispute your point and having worked in additional support needs schools, residential units, any context you care to mention, if you're present at a street corner, I completely recognize that vast resources have been deployed in order to support young people with a plethora of not just educational attainment issues, but emotional attainment issues. I can tell from your question that you're very passionate about that and thank you.

Michalis: I think that your comment was more about my suggestion, but I referred to educational communities rather than school communities, and yes, I completely agree with you, with the comment that you made about parenting. For example, in the BBC series, there was this prison officer discussing about parenting, deprived from parenting, communities where the school children who actually are dealing in the school with things that actually are not related directly to school resources. It's not only parenting, it's also so many other things that they have to deal with, and in 2019 should not have to deal with.

Darren: It's Mark the socialist. Every event I go to.

Mark: Not every event, Darren. I think just a few, but yes, it's nice to see you again. I'm really interested in your view on, given that we're in an education conference, what I would argue is the failure of the education system to create a criticality amongst the wider populace which has allowed this neoliberal hegemony to become so entrenched. While in Scotland the policy environment has talked about participatory democracy on participatory budgeting, and the community planning, dressing up the idea that they're trying to empower people in communities.

It feels to me as if there's an abject failure in the actions of those people charged with the rules of education, the rules of social justice through social work, through criminal justice systems. Even in this illustrious setting we are, I'm studying in Strathclyde at the moment, but this university shut down its sociology department, shut down its





community and learning development departments, shut down its community music and community arts. It's the essence of the neoliberal university. I'm just interested in turning a lens from looking at what the people who would suffer in poverty have to do and look at the failures of the wider society that surely remain to challenge and promote equality and social justice.

Darren: Absolutely. I think we've probably ran, not necessarily back and forth but have had exchanges of a similar nature at the variety of events that we have both attended coincidentally. My own view is that I completely agree that if a course is not conducive to someone getting on at the free market to sell their labor for the patents, then it's not really regarded as being of much value, and that is an indictment on either the malevolence or shortsightedness of people who take the bag of overarching decisions in our society.

However, the only thing I wouldn't even contest, I can't think of a society, whatever ideological, economic or political system that had, where they educate its own citizens on how they overthrow it.

Mark: That's the problem.

Darren: It's like, "Welcome to the PhD in overthrowing unfettered capitalism." This is obviously the central dilemma, isn't it? Actually, one of the ironies I think of the society and one of the things ultimately that I think will overwhelm, not necessarily social water but overwhelm the very firm grasp that certain special interests have on the situation, is that we have unleashed – to make money – certain disruptive technologies and forces, many of them revolutionary, which we don't understand because the primary interest of Facebook and Silicon Valley is money.

Actually, we're already realizing that a lot of the YouTubes and Facebooks and Twitters out there have created a sense of unraveling that we are all experiencing. Indeed, it may be the one thing that all of us agree on or the only thing regardless of where we come from. It's a case of how do we harness some of the innovations that capitalism has generated to the extent that we can begin to, not only advocate for but demonstrate that we need a new kind of society. I'm all for innovation, I'm all for people making money. I've come into money in the last year and I can already sense how's that's laid. It's a magnetic force. The more money I make, the more money comes to me.

I don't even have to be doing anything and money just appears. That may not always be like that, but even if my bank account got cleared by tomorrow, I'm now socially mobile enough and have enough cultural capital that I can generate more money anyway. For me, I think we have to consider while obviously pointing at the flaws within the system, and you're absolutely right. Although I have learned from my own social mobility sake to conceal my utter disgust for the current economic paradigm in a way that sometimes might not seem as obvious as others.

I think there are a lot of opportunities as the society we live in begins to fall apart. Where education comes into that, I'm not quite sure, but I certainly think and I said this





to some housing professionals earlier and I think maybe 50% of them took it on the chin and the other ones probably thought, "That wasn't what we asked you to come here and talk about."

Really what I said was if you're really annoyed about what's going on in your system, and then your lack of experienced society understand the same concerns have been expressed in every other sphere in society, education, criminal justice, the legal system, the welfare system, it really needs people with prestige who have a comfortable life to stand up in unison and say enough is enough. Unfortunately, obviously, the [unintelligible 00:53:36] has succeeded this because we have actually completely demolished all of the structures which used to cultivate that sense of solidarity through which we could bring about incremental or revolutionary change. Thanks for your work in the community, Mark.

Mark: Cheers, mate. Thanks for your answer. Great answer, cheers.

Tata Vikau Pian: Thank you. I'm Tata Vikaku Pian representing the Eastern European network for citizenship education. First of all, thank you, Darren, for the great Scottish English accent.

Darren: Scottish, thank you.

Tata: Which fills the room with warm atmosphere. My question is based on the part that Michalis mentioned about the teachers. You said that how we should manipulate and also educate the teachers. I would like to hear your short recommendations, Darren, connected with the fact like how we can make teachers be manipulated via education or have a good mixture of that based on the Scottish example, for example.

Because we, Eastern European countries, having the background that comes from the Soviet Union after even the 30 years of the collapse of it feel the influence in the schools of our countries and those people are getting the lowest salary because they are paid by the government, so the formal education field is still lacking something, the support from everybody's side. I would like to get your short recommendations maybe on that field and also something that we can also use, some methods or some mechanism that Scotland has used so far. Thank you.

Michalis: The question is not to me, is it? We can have plenty of opportunities to discuss about that. The only thing that I would take the time from Darren to say is that in Britain, we have a completely different problem. We have the problem of not allowing, not having teachers, allowing the confidence to discuss politically because of the fear of indoctrination. If there is any concern in this country, it's actually that people are silenced from manipulating if you want.

Darren: It would be very easy for me to very verbosely pretend to understand all of the specificity of your important question. Unfortunately, I don't, but what I would like to say, as a general foregrounding of education, generally, is that it was only 20 years ago that we outlawed smacking in classes. That was in private schools because





obviously, in private schools, they get to have kids and assault children in class a little bit longer than people do in state schools.

Really, I guess the point I'm trying to drive home with the problem mentioned that's an opening remark, but I think we just dove straight in, when we're talking about education, all of the problems that are in that, how politically active should teachers be, what is the role of a teacher, are they also a child psychologist and a counselor, and all of these other things that we expect them to do in the absence of a society that is failing to provide proper services. It's important to remember that not so long ago, education was the exclusive preserve of the wealthy and even then, it was rooted in violence. You ever heard the term prefect?

A prefect was somebody who had been co-opted by the teacher to stop the class rebellion. The only people that went to school were boys and the only people who taught were men.

At some point within that environment, only a few hundred years ago, the boys would just start battering the teacher, and so then, the prefect was introduced as a bridge between. Education evolved slowly but not that much to be in a process of indoctrination on the school by the threat of violence. The violence has changed to punishment and shame. Even recently, I was speaking to the family of a young guy who made national headlines.

A guy with additional educational needs, or special education needs if you live in England, whose teacher thought it was an appropriate way to treat him to get everyone in the class to tell this boy what they didn't like about him. See, whenever we talk about school, whenever we talk about education, whatever we are talking about, just remember, it's not that long ago that you could legally assault a child in a classroom full of other children. We have people sleeping in the streets right now who were traumatized by educated professionals in front of all the kids, and that is how we taught our kids. Forget about the curriculum and that are all the same techniques still being used.

I feel like any discussion about education, we really need to be bringing right into the forefront that difficult reminder that actually, not long ago, it was about battling people and punishing people for things as innocuous as being left-handed. I'm not surprised that the current education system is fundamentally dysfunctional because only two generations ago, people were getting battered by teachers that they trusted.

[applause]

Michalis: I don't know how it happens that the discussion needs to stop exactly when it gets heated and interesting, but I'm reminded that we have exceeded our time.

Darren: I'm sure it was a lot better than Russia. I'm sure it was a lot less violent the USSR obviously.

Michalis: On that note, Darren, thank you so much for being with us and on behalf of our audience.





[END OF RECORDING]

