

‘To be able to see a future’: hope and the utopian imagination of marginalized youth.

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Linear pathways through predictable stages – primary school, secondary school, training, work, family formation - no longer work for significant portions of our society. Nor do the institutions of schooling as they are currently constituted prepare all young people for the reality of life ahead in a globalizing society. Some institutions marginalize those whose lives do not fit the trajectory of education systems as are they are currently constituted. Who are those on the margins in this rapidly changing society? Where are the margins, where the mainstream? While one system is, perhaps, in ruins the new is not yet born.

How will that be imagined? Frequently the margins are categorized as spaces of despair, of dystopias. This paper discusses a project which asks how those on the margins, perhaps ‘in the ruins’, detect new spaces of hope. It offers some young people, often considered to be ‘on the margins’ an opportunity to present their dreams and hopes for a good life and to be involved in developing a museum exhibition to showcase their future hopes. This innovative approach suggests ways in which young people can develop what Peter Bishop calls ‘difficult hope’.