

Chapter 11

Youth work in the borderlands: reflections from Malta

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Introduction

As Malta is located at the centre of the Mediterranean, migration is a familiar part of the Maltese narrative. The languages, the food, the architecture, customs and traditions all bear witness to the 7 000 years of colonisation and the myriad of people who have made the Maltese islands their home. Despite migration movements to and from Malta, until a few years ago, the Maltese population was perceived as relatively homogenous. Accession to the European Union (EU) in 2004 brought new possibilities for migration, new opportunities for the Maltese to look beyond the blue borders, and also for others from the EU and beyond to make Malta their home. For the majority, migration has afforded the possibility to seek adventure, to explore different lifestyles, and to pursue employment prospects. For others, migration has served as an escape route. Since 2002, Malta has witnessed the arrival of asylum seekers, departing from the coast of North Africa. The vast majority are young people. They have risked their lives crossing the Mediterranean Sea in a desperate effort to flee violence, war, persecution, insecurity and human rights violations. They have made the journey in the hope of finding safety, security, and the promise of economic opportunities and a dignified future.

For more than a decade, the dominant policy framing the “refugee crisis” has been constructed as a security threat to the EU and individual member states. This perceived “threat” has been used to justify the militarisation of the Mediterranean region, and deterrent border policies enacted to keep the “other” out (Vaughan-Williams 2015). Walls and fences, both metaphorical and physical, have re-emerged at Europe’s borders, an ongoing effort to “secure” the borders against unwanted migration.

For many years, successive Maltese governments implemented policies aimed at deterring asylum seekers from landing in Malta (Pisani 2016). This included a harsh detention policy followed by the housing of thousands of refugees in “open centres” – essentially makeshift camps – in remote parts of the island. Dehumanising spaces that mark the extension of the border coincide with a catalogue of racialised representations, delineating who belongs, and who does not belong (Grech 2015). Disassociating itself from a colonised history, a new narrative is embraced in Malta: Maltese (read Christian) and European (read white). The border provides an ideological symbol to construct a new identity, a new “Malteseness”. As national amnesia sets in, the oriental gaze rotates onto the incoming threatening “other”, paradoxically extending the violent bordering practices, dividing, separating and influencing the lives of both the “illegalised” refugee and the Maltese citizen.

Ongoing attempts to securitise Malta's borders and control the migrant "other" are violent, divisive and dehumanising. This is not a phenomenon particular to Malta alone. Europe is fortifying its fortress when it comes to the politics of asylum, and too many member states are competing in a race to the bottom on refugee protection. At the border, the young body is illegal first, and the enforcement of border patrols and the voting booth are prioritised over the state's human rights obligations. The situation is nothing short of toxic, placing young people at a heightened exposure to trafficking, labour and other types of exploitation, and homelessness, restricted access to health care, education and basic public services, and immigration enforcement practices, including raids, detention and identity checks (see also Global Migration Group, UNICEF and OHCHR 2013). The "right to rights" cannot be assumed, and this has implications for youth work practice in an evolving, disparate, globalised world. As noted in the Declaration of the 2nd European Youth Work Convention, youth work is an "existential necessity" in addressing "concerns about social inclusion, cohesion and equal opportunities, and commitment to values of democracy and human rights" (European Youth Work Convention 2015: 10).

But this is only part of the picture. This narrative does not account for the agency young refugees exercise in navigating, negotiating and challenging the "border" apparatus (Mainwaring 2016). Nor does it acknowledge the border as a site of contested politics, embodying a creative, exciting and humanising space that may provide the possibilities for transformative practice.

In this chapter, I will be reflecting on the practice of Integra Foundation, an NGO working with young refugees in Malta. Specifically, I will be critically reflecting on how the services have developed over more than a decade in response to the evolving and multifaceted needs of young refugees. The chapter looks at youth work in the borderlands, a liminal space that seeks to struggle with, confront, and transcend the arbitrary borders imposed on young people's lives, including young refugees. It provides a space for young refugees to no longer feel "lonely" or "alone", to make new friends, and to co-create a sense of belonging that embraces fluidity and multiple subjectivities. The chapter also considers different approaches to informal and non-formal learning – initiatives and programmes developed to respond to the immediate, practical needs of young refugees, and also those that seek to transform and to challenge inequalities and injustice. Finally, the chapter explores how youth work may contribute to developing social capital, transcending institutional borders to provide young refugees with opportunities to develop their own contacts, a critical resource in their own political and social development, and also in carving out spaces to speak out on their own terms.

The theoretical approach of this chapter is informed by my experience and observations as a youth worker and activist. I engage elements of critical border studies (Vaughan-Williams 2015), borderlands theory (Anzaldúa 1999), critical race theory (Crenshaw 1989), post/neo-colonial theory (Said 1978) and critical pedagogy (Freire 2001; hooks 2003) as resources that provide for critical thinking and reflection, and as a framework for advancing transformative youth work practice. The chapter seeks to advance a "grass-roots" approach to youth work that is understood as young person-centred, focused on relationships, forging a democratic space conducive to dialogue and mutual learning, grounded in voluntary engagement, localised (see

also de St Croix 2016; Batsleer and Davies 2010), but also attentive to transnational discourses, geopolitics, the workings of power, and how this influences and sometimes limits the lives of young refugees, broader society, and indeed, a youth work practice that is committed to social justice.

Malta: the carceral archipelago

The year 2002 is generally acknowledged as the one when asylum seekers started arriving on the shores of Malta. The “klandestini” (clandestines) as they were colloquially known at the time, embodied the “other”, the unwanted “invaders”, uniting elements of Maltese society, political parties and much of the mainstream media. The arrival of (in the majority) young African men stimulated a new discourse on national identity that witnessed the emergence of nationalist discourse, far-right political parties, racism and xenophobia. In his theoretical elaborations on discourse, Foucault (1977) demonstrates how a social and political context affects language, and how language, in turn, shapes and constructs realities. The government of the time (supported by the main opposition) responded with hard-line political discourse that revolved around national security concerns and policies designed and implemented as “common sense” solutions to this perceived “invasion”. The human rights of refugees were generally subordinated to the “national good” (see for example the report published by the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights 2006).

The historical fortresses surrounding the Maltese islands were reinforced – metaphorically and physically. The new arrivals were largely met with structural violence aimed at stripping the “illegalised” body of agency and a life of dignity. At a political level, the border serves as a state instrument of control, and also as the ideological marker for the construction of national and political identity – delineating who belongs, and who does not; who has rights, and the right to rights (Pisani 2016). Such politics of control geared towards exclusion and precariousness, however, are not complete, but rather are contested, negotiated, transgressed and resisted in diverse ways (see also Naples 2009; Squire 2011). For example, Pisani and Vaughan-Williams (2018) contest the binary distinction between “border control” and “migrant agency”, demonstrating how individuals encounter and negotiate – sometimes successfully, sometimes not so – bordering practices throughout the migratory journey, beyond and within the EU borders, including Malta.

Crossing borders: the borderlands ...

Integra Foundation was established towards the end of 2004 in direct response to the multifaceted challenges asylum seekers were facing in Malta. Over the years, the NGO has developed and evolved, and today, the work of the organisation rests on three pillars, namely, advocacy, research and an active presence in the community. The first is advocacy. Working in partnership with other human rights organisations, our work focuses on protecting human rights and calling for corrective action. Together we monitor national and EU policies, and when necessary, pressure policy makers to act according to their international human rights obligations. The work also depends on grass-roots engagement and, when possible, the backing of public support and that of the media. Much of our advocacy also depends on a strong evidence base. The

second pillar is research. Integra has indeed conducted substantial research using and emphasising the need to adopt participatory methodologies. Over the years, such work has helped, not only in establishing Integra as a key stakeholder in the field of asylum, refugees and inclusion, but also in developing relationships with government, NGOs and INGOs, agencies and services. The third pillar is Konnect Kulturi, involving a team of volunteers providing a number of services for asylum seekers and refugees living in the community; these include, English and Maltese lessons, the Integra higher education programme and Dinja Waħda (One World), a drop-in centre.

In the early days, we opted to work on a voluntary basis. We took this decision in order to strengthen our advocacy role, fearing that any dependency on funds might compromise our values or practice. Of course, such a decision comes with consequences, and indeed services have remained small, limited by lack of financial resources. However, it also has its strengths, since Integra maintains an active presence thanks to a team of volunteers who are committed to the core values and aims of the NGO and those we work with. Stripped of bureaucratic restraints, the services remain open and flexible, able to respond to emerging needs with relative ease. The following section describes how Konnect Kulturi has developed over the years. The text focuses on three interlinked elements that characterise the youth work practice, namely:

1. Relationships: the importance of a safe space (but not a comfort zone), voluntary engagement, building relationships and trust.
2. New opportunities: developing trust, bonding and bridging social capital.
3. Learning: responding to diverse learning needs towards personal and socio-political transformation.

Dinja Waħda: building relationships

Many years ago, I recall meeting a young woman, Mariam, for a coffee. Mariam, a refugee, had been in Malta for almost a year. She told me I was the first Maltese person to meet with her outside the borders of the centre. She felt lonely, and she felt alone. Ironically perhaps, Mariam was not “alone” in expressing such sentiments – it is a feeling, and a condition, that we have met all too many times. Within the refugee camp settings, young refugees are often living in overcrowded contexts, they forge many relationships, and most certainly, they are not “alone”. For Mariam, her loneliness was experienced as a lack of friendships, the possibility to relax, have fun, and just “be”, beyond the day-to-day functional interactions in the camp. Friendships are more personal, they serve no “function”, but rather, any purpose that arises from the “care and delight in each other” (Fielding 2007: 185). The sense of feeling “alone” is often mentioned in relation to a sense of personhood, of not being “seen” as a unique individual, and with it, the need for the kind of support that is associated with being treated with dignity (JRS, aditus foundation and Integra 2018). It was clear to us that something needed to be done, for Mariam, and many like her.

Nestled in the backstreets of the capital city of Valletta, the drop-in centre was set up to provide a safe space for young asylum seekers and refugees to meet, forge new relationships, and establish a sense of belonging. Given the broader political and societal climate, the need for such a space was critical. The centre is physically small; the front room has comfortable chairs for relaxing and a library. The back room

has a table and chairs and a whiteboard for meetings and educational activities. Importantly, the space also provides access to free Wi-Fi.

The team of volunteers is generally made up of young people; some are Maltese, others are migrants from the EU and beyond, albeit in a very different situation to refugees. What goes on in the centre varies from week to week – depending on the season (where weather may dictate), the scholastic year (where homework and studies may dictate), and also on who happens to be there (in which case those present organise the activities, which can be anything from watching a film together, to singing karaoke, or just hanging out and chatting). The informality allows for this flexibility; organised activities are planned together, and everyone is free to engage, or not.

The space is transitory; different people come and go, with some attending consistently for weeks, months or even years. Others drop by occasionally, often when something specific has come up. In many ways, *Dinja Waħda* has emerged as a hybrid, yet liminal space wherein “the prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants” (Anzaldúa 1999: 25). Whether physical, social, cultural or symbolic, borders are established “to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish us from them” (Anzaldúa 1999: 25). Borders represent separation and divide, establishing a hierarchy, and enforcing binary identities; at the same time, they are ambiguous, fluid and in flux. The space between borders, where difference meets, this is the borderlands, “a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition” (Anzaldúa 1999: 25). Life in this liminal space can be tough, a place of contradictions, violence, anger and pain. And it cannot be entirely “safe”; stepping out of one’s comfort zone requires radical openness. This is life at the edges, and perhaps also on the edge (see also hooks 1989). But for those who transgress the border, this liminal space also offers the possibility for reprieve, consciousness, and the possibility to embrace and struggle with our multiple identities, the different facets of the self, the positions we occupy, and the communities we belong to – and possibilities for fusion. Be they volunteers, interns or refugees, the people frequenting the drop-in occupy a liminal space between borders: as young people, often (even if for different reasons) transiting between school and employment, and positioned between multiple spaces of belonging: nation, “race”/ethnicity, gender, sexuality, legal status. Within these borderlands, albeit still bounded by time and space, through dialogue and building relationships and a sense of community, young people create opportunities to construct a sense of self, and create their own possibilities, confronting and transgressing borders. The youth leaders do not presume to educate, since such a top-down, prescriptive approach flies in the face of democratic learning. While the space has purposely been created in such a way that provides for informal learning (Stanton 2015), no goals have been set, beyond creating the possibility to get to know the “other”, to make friends, develop relationships and co-create a sense of belonging. That said, no longer subject to control and regulation, the space embraces an anti-oppressive, critical educational approach, providing the opportunity to question multiple scripts, inscribed by patriarchal, (post)colonial, statist, ageist, heterosexist and capitalist histories, if and when they emerge, and to explore and embrace new opportunities, to take on new and multiple subjectivities and untamed possibilities.

And so, for a short time at least, *Dinja Waħda* provides the opportunity to laugh together, to play, to discuss, to disagree, to struggle and to create – to be seen. Through dialogue, they learn about different and often unimagined realities; in creating their

own pedagogical conditions, they are able to disrupt and contest divisive geopolitical borders and the binaries established in policy and populist discourse. In doing so, young people defy the dominant discourses of who can and who cannot belong, of who is human, and indeed what it means to be human. Within the borderlands, a messy space that transgresses imposed borders, young people are resisting false binaries, both physical and metaphorical. For a moment they are liberated, they reclaim their voices, they cling to new opportunities for political and creative expression, and they expose each other to new ways of knowing, of understanding, of collective consciousness and resistance. Escape is temporary – the borders still exist, physically and metaphorically – but the borderland provides the possibility to learn, and the potential to use this knowledge to resist and to transform the borders.

New opportunities: developing trust, bonding and bridging social capital

The borders that demarcate Dinja Waħda must not be fixed; they too must be fluid. By shifting the theoretical lens, we can also explore how the relationships – or bonds – forged in the drop-in, not only provide an important resource in coping with everyday life, but also serve as a valuable source of social capital, bridging and making new friends and, importantly, new networks. Poverty, racism and policies that have been conducive to (or even geared towards) marginalisation and exclusion have lent themselves to ghettoisation, metaphorically and physically. Bonding capital (Putnam 2000) may provide important support and a sense of identity, be it within the confines of the open centre, within an ethnic grouping, or even in Dinja Waħda. It does not, however, provide new sources of information, new forms of knowledge or relationships beyond the group. Contrarily, it risks reproducing the social structures, and class relations massaged by racism and Islamophobia (Bourdieu 1986).

We provide an ongoing referral service, reaching out to different agencies and service providers to address individual cases (these are varied, including social work intervention, medical cases, employment concerns and legal advice among others). More than this, over the years we have made efforts to step outside the borders of the drop-in. In the beginning, events tended to be more structured, such as bowling activities with other Maltese youth organisations. In truth, they achieved very little, providing little time to really develop friendships, and if anything, reinforcing a sense of the “other”, satisfying a sense of curiosity, but from a safe distance. With time, these trips became much more informal and impromptu: a trip to the beach, grabbing a pizza, visiting a local gallery, or simply enjoying a coffee in the sun – spaces where the young refugees were less likely to visit alone. While in the beginning they were accompanied by the volunteers, who were familiar with, and confident in, the context over time, the refugee youth started to frequent these same places alone and outside of the drop-in hours. Many of the young refugees posted photos of such outings on social media, encouraging others to attend, and also generating online conversations on what happened, and where to go next. One of our volunteers is a running enthusiast, and over the years has involved a number of young people in the Malta half marathon and other such events – developing not only new friendships, but also cultural capital within the sporting subculture. Using our own networks we reach out to football clubs, artists, theatre clubs, and they in turn reach out to us in order

to reach out to young refugees. In a sense, Integra serves as the conduit, providing the bridges and links to new relationships, accessing sociocultural needs, practical/functional needs and also learning and transformative needs (see below). This may be through referral, providing opportunities for young refugees to develop their own social capital, an important resource in their own political and social development, and also in creating spaces and platforms where (when possible) young refugees speak on their own terms.

Responding to learning needs

Over the years, Integra has developed a number of learning opportunities in response to the young people's expressed needs. In Dinja Waħda, conversations are generally held in English, sometimes in Maltese (semitic in origin, the Maltese language sounds like an Arabic language mixed with English and Italian, making it easier for Arabic speakers to learn Maltese), and sometimes both. Many of the young people who attend the drop-in are eager to learn English, and we have responded in a number of ways, often blurring the lines between non-formal and informal learning. These terms are not being used arbitrarily. The glossary of the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy refers to non-formal learning as:

a purposive, but voluntary, learning that takes place in a diverse range of environments and situations for which teaching/training and learning is not necessarily their sole or main activity. These environments and situations may be intermittent or transitory, and the activities or courses that take place may be staffed by professional learning facilitators (such as youth trainers) or by volunteers (such as youth leaders). The activities and courses are planned, but are seldom structured by conventional rhythms or curriculum subjects. (Council of Europe and European Commission Youth Partnership 2018)

Figure 11.1 – Young people relaxing and having fun



(Dinja Waħda, Integra drop-in)

In the same evening, it is quite normal to have a small group learning basic syntax, while others will be playing a game that encourages use of the English language, or watch a film with English subtitles. Homework support for those attending formal education is also provided, including, for example, trial “class presentations” in preparation for actual school assessments. Many refugees also request assistance in formulating a CV in order to enhance their employment possibilities. For a number of years Konnect Kulturi has also provided more structured language classes (the Ministry for Education has provided us with the space to do so). In the early days, the majority of refugees wanted to learn English, their intention being to leave Malta and settle elsewhere. Later, we introduced Maltese lessons, as more refugees wanted to remain in Malta. Such learning opportunities would appear to be in line with the “specific contribution of youth work and non-formal and informal learning to address challenges young people are facing, in particular the transition from education to employment” (European Commission 2015: 12). We also responded to requests by the participants to provide certificates, which have been instrumental in finding work. Providing young refugees with the skills to access employment or with the practical information to integrate into Maltese society has value, and serves a functional or instrumental purpose, useful – or necessary – in navigating a new life in a new country. Likewise, learning either English or Maltese will most certainly facilitate communication, perhaps rule out the need for an interpreter, and provide new opportunities to develop relationships in employment and beyond.

In 2016 we established the Integra higher education programme in response to concerns put to us by Spark 15, a refugee youth-led organisation (see below). The members of the youth group faced multiple barriers (structural, economic and language) in accessing university. Integra responded by establishing a team of English teachers specifically focused on preparing potential students for the English admission exams. In parallel, we established communication channels with the University of Malta, the Ministry of Education and the Students Council. This has evolved into an ongoing collaboration between all partners, including Spark 15 and Integra. The process is slow, manoeuvring within a bureaucratic system that is resistant to change, but there is commitment from all sides to remove the intersecting structural barriers. In 2017, five young refugees registered for a course at university, a fruit of this collaboration and dialogue.

“Empowerment” will always be curtailed if the structural barriers, including (but not limited to) racism, Islamophobia, nationalism and a “statist” mindset that excludes the rights of the non-citizen or “illegal body” (see Pisani 2016) are not addressed and transformed. The methods and tools youth workers adopt are underpinned by the theoretical and ideological lens they use to understand the way society is structured and ordered. Youth workers’ *raison d’être* are varied, from creating a space for recreation and fun, to a focus on skills for employment, to one-on-one support (see also Cooper and White 1994). While each of these examples respond to a need, or multiple needs, very little is achieved in disrupting the status quo – the onus is on giving young people the skills and knowledge to navigate and fit into a system. Much of the work carried out by Integra would fall within such paradigms. However, in order for real transformation to take place, youth work must challenge the hegemonic structures that maintain and reproduce inequality and divide within and across our

communities, and broader society. This requires a focus on consciousness raising, with a focus on rights and social justice.

As such, any educational initiative framed as “empowering”, but which in practice simply serves to maintain the status quo, will be limited, indeed, perhaps even doomed to fail. All too often, the burden of such failure is placed on the young refugee. In a sense then, we provide these educational opportunities with our eyes wide open. Learning English or Maltese, or attending a university course, does not necessarily translate into the right to speak, nor indeed, provide any assurances that such voices will be heard. Time is critical here. Over the years, we have come to understand that on arrival, “functioning” is the priority for refugees, and youth work can be instrumental in this regard. The need to secure basic sustenance and shelter are crucial to survival. With time, and indeed a certain sense of security, submission in the face of injustice can no longer remain a sustainable option. Time has taught us that if and when young refugees make the association between addressing practical or functional learning needs and critical, political and transformative learning needs, they will turn to those they can trust. At Integra, our advocacy work is an ongoing dialogue geared towards structural change; over the years more and more refugees have recognised the need to speak on their own behalf and have asked us to support them in addressing their own learning needs in this regard, so that they may reposition themselves as actors in the Maltese context, and critically engage divisive and unequal power relationships.

Spark 15 – A refugee youth-led organisation

In 2015 the Global Refugee Youth Consultations were launched at the UNHCR-NGO consultations in Geneva. Integra and another Maltese NGO, Organisation for Friendship in Diversity (OFD) were contacted by UNHCR Malta and asked to support in the development and piloting of a toolkit to be used for the consultations. The pilot activity brought together for the first time 15 young refugees living in Malta, and a number of them went on to participate in activities in Geneva and beyond. Spark 15, a refugee youth-led organisation, was set up as a result of this initiative. Once a week, the youth group meets at the Integra drop-in. We have tried to respond to their learning needs by providing sessions explaining policy and refugee and human rights laws (or pulling in other professionals to provide such education). We have put them in contact with the National Youth Agency, other youth work providers and also artists and cultural entities. We include them in meetings related to advocacy (nowadays we rarely “invite” or “include” them, they are included in their own right, and sometimes they include us). Beyond providing the space, Integra has tried to respond to the groups’ needs as they have evolved. Our approach embraces the difficult questions and, necessarily, critically explores geopolitics, neoliberalism, the nation state, borders, liberal democracy, citizenship and human rights. We engage the different voices and social divisions, represented in symbols, texts and images, and how they are experienced in real life. We discover the complexities of each individual, how age intersects with, *inter alia*, “race”, gender, sexual orientation, disability and, importantly, legal status, and how such social divisions shape the lives of young people, their opportunities, hopes, choices, and indeed, their ability to speak unto power (see Pisani 2017).

Figure 11.2 – Members of Spark 15 talking at the Integra drop-in



We have tapped into our own contacts as an important resource, putting the group in contact with journalists and media stations, among others. Over the past two years, Spark 15 has become an important voice within the Maltese context. It is speaking out on its own terms, engaging, challenging and influencing popular discourse and politics.

We also recognise the limitations of youth work practice and the possibilities for transformative action in advocating for a democratic process, paradoxically, within a “national” democratic space from which refugees, and in particular those not granted any form of protection, are excluded. It is for this reason that advocacy remains a critical component of our practice. The challenge remains in representing the young refugee and giving true voice, rather than recolonising their voices and perpetuating subjugation. This can only be achieved through listening, building trust, and creating the conditions to engage in critical authentic dialogue.

Conclusion

Borders can be deadly and divisive; the cost of state security is borne by the politically insecure. In the case of young refugees, particularly those with no legal status, the transition from minor to voting adult cannot be assumed, and the rights associated with citizenship cannot be taken for granted. Youth work with young refugees requires a particular knowledge base grounded in an understanding of how state machinery excludes the racialised, illegalised young body, as well as a commitment to human rights, and a readiness to hold the state and other duty bearers to account. In this regard, I believe youth work has a critical and unique role.

This chapter describes how youth work practice with young refugees in Malta within an NGO has developed over the years. Rather than adopting a “one-size-fits-all” approach, it explores how an NGO has engaged youth work principles and

practices grounded in social justice, in an attempt to meet the specific, and yet varied, multifaceted and evolving needs of young refugees in Malta. The text explores the borderlands as a site of youth work practice, different pedagogical methodologies grounded in a grass-roots approach to praxis, and the importance of transcending the institutional borders and providing young refugees with opportunities to develop their own social capital and speak out on their own terms.

In essence, the youth work conducted by Integra is multifaceted and flexible, responding to needs as they evolve. Grounded in praxis, with a commitment to social justice, it is hoped that the following points may provide points for reflection, and new possibilities for youth work practice with young refugees, and indeed, all young people positioned at the margins by multiple, intersecting systems of power:

- ▶ Positioned between adulthood and child, young people occupy a liminal space. Youth work can embrace the borderlands and provide a space that transgresses inscribed borders (be they legal, social or cultural), allowing young people to come and go, to make friends, to have fun and engage in dialogue with the “other”. The borderland offers a radical position of marginality and possibilities for new experiences, new subjectivities and new knowledge – it offers safety, but cannot be completely safe; this radical openness is situated on the “edge” – there is risk and discomfort in transgressing our comfort zones and exploring the unknown.
- ▶ Youth work can provide learner-centred opportunities that respond to immediate, practical or “functional” needs, such as learning the language and how to write a CV. But youth work that is committed to social justice must also be concerned with shifting the power imbalance, and providing opportunities for transformative learning. This necessarily requires critically engaging with the lived realities and concerns of young refugees, and developing the knowledge and skills necessary to challenge those structures that maintain and reproduce the status quo and inequalities.
- ▶ Being an important source of social capital – bonding within the group, but also reaching out and linking up. This may be through referral, by providing opportunities for young refugees to develop their own social capital, an important resource in their own political and social development, and also in creating spaces and platforms where young refugees speak out on their own terms.
- ▶ Silence is consent. Youth work practice that is committed to human rights and equity necessarily demands a commitment to advocacy and holding duty bearers to account.

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