

## Adolescence and Youth: an international perspective on public policies on health and living conditions

Around the world, adolescents and young dictate lifestyles, behavioral changes and cultural innovation, while dealing simultaneously with social and political problems that seek to curb their movements. It also fosters the maximum exploitation of their desires by the market, in a dynamic that restricts subjectivities in the name of profits.

These mismatches accentuate the distancing between different segments of society, causing historical problems such as authoritarianism and prejudice that, disguised in new clothing and language, (re)produce a society in which social change is considered a stimulus to idleness; valorization of cultural diversity as an apology for social disruption; politics as corruption; social movements as terrorism; freedom of choice as an offense; civil and police violence as a solution to social problems; and meritocracy among unequals as a Salvationist market panacea.

In confrontational societies, adolescents and young are the protagonists of social, cultural, political and economic processes that are synergistic or contradictory and have direct and indirect repercussions on their health and living conditions.

The scope of this Thematic Issue is to reflect upon these repercussions. The articles examine aspects of the life of adolescents and young in five countries, namely Brazil, Portugal, Argentina, Uruguay and Scotland. These diversified readings contribute to reflective processes and decision-making.

Thematically, the selection of articles provides a body of reflective and empirical texts focused on relevant issues: suicide, being under the sway of others and involvement with crime are approached in essay-style texts that propose, more or less ambitiously, new/different approaches to their objects of study. Socio-educational and prison systems, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, school violence, sexual health and reproductive health, disease burden and health policies are the topics addressed in international texts. Road rage, student health, oral health, anorexia and abortion are the focus of empirical studies that articulate primary and secondary sources, advancing in their approaches for updating the information or obtaining innovations from the testimonies of adolescents and young.

The Thematic Issue therefore offers input for public policies at the national and international level. More importantly, it confirms the pressing need for these policies as guarantors of rights and instruments of social justice<sup>1</sup>. In the past 20 years political implementation of tax adjustments allocated scarce public resources away from social policies thereby increasing inequality, injustice and decreasing the future prospects of adolescents and young.

Adolescents and young are strong and prepared to deal with iniquities and injustices, as their immediate existence depends on it. However, the absence of future prospects and the drastic restriction of possible life horizons, is a challenge that, without public support, they will not be able to overcome. Preventing the young from the dreams of their future is to condemn them to a bleak reality, which organized crime understands so well<sup>2</sup>.

Public investment in adolescents and young, which is the general consensus of this Thematic Issue, is the only democratic way of restoring future possibilities that are, after all, the future possibilities of every society.

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## References

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