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Introduction: 'Youthscapes' of Development in the Caribbean and Latin America

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**Introduction**  
**‘Youthscapes’ of Development in the Caribbean and Latin America**

**Terri-Ann Gilbert-Roberts**

Inequality remains a key development concern in Caribbean and Latin American countries, despite trends suggesting improvements in growth, social services and poverty reduction over the last ten years (De Ferranti et al. 2004; World Bank 2013). In fact, both income and social inequalities are considered to contribute to a 24% loss in the level of human development, as measured by a drop in the regional Human Development Index from 0.740 to 0.559 when coefficients of inequality are applied (UNDP 2014, 171). Notwithstanding the broadening of the measurement of inequality beyond the hitherto dominant concern with income distribution (see also The Social Progress Imperative 2014), assessments of inequality still fail to sufficiently highlight some of the *inequities* in participation—applied here as a distinct construct associated with fairness, rights and justice—which, I argue, are at the heart of the bleak picture of non-inclusiveness presented by the statistical data. Indeed, Caribbean and Latin American societies have been criticised for their historical exclusion of particular groups, based on intertwined and discriminatory constructions of citizenship based on income, class, race, gender, abilities and, more recently, age.

It is against that background that this Special Issue on the ‘Youthscapes’ of Development in the region is presented as a contribution to addressing the imbalance in the narrative of inequality, by raising concerns about the dynamics of inequity in the lives of young people and their consequent exclusion from the development process. The collection offers the views and research findings of members of the SALISES “50/50 Youth” Research Cluster, which was launched in August 2012, as a mechanism for contributing to youth inclusion in academic debates on development, within the context of the Institute’s 50/50 Project of reflection on the first 50 years of Independence in the Commonwealth Caribbean. The volume is an opening dialogue amongst the core researchers of the cluster, which we hope will initiate a wider dialogue amongst youth, academics, practitioners and policy-

makers on the role young people will play in regional development, the priorities for youth inclusion, and the implications for youth of existing policy choices and structural configurations of the regional political economy.

The collection will not, however, claim representativeness of the views of youth, though it may demonstrate points of commonality, as well as points of contention, with youth analyses. The artwork which adorns the modified cover of the journal, as well as the pages of this editorial, are a signal of the cluster's objectives to include youth voices, even though only a few are expressed here.<sup>1</sup> The e-graffiti cover, a piece entitled "Youth Inclusive", was submitted by a young Guyanese woman, Lerato Hodge, and is reflective of a vision, shared by millions of youth across the world (Governments of the United Nations 2014) and which also inspires the work of our 50/50 Youth Cluster. She says, "Who better understands the needs of young people than young people? The voices of youth are therefore critical to the development process, hence the need for discussions to be 'youth inclusive.' The graffiti speaks to the need for youth inclusivity in discussions as it relates to youth development. They cannot be left out!" (Hodge, Lerato 2014, Personal Communication). Hodge's remarks prompt me to offer, by way of introduction, some context to the call for increased youth inclusiveness and our conceptualisation of youthspheres of development.

However, it is important to note at this juncture, that the Special Issue on Youth is published alongside additional articles to form a double issue which addresses various aspects of the Caribbean development situation. Three additional articles explore aspects of international cooperation, regional foreign direct investment and corporate governance. First, Janette Bulkan explores the structures of patronage politics in Guyana which co-opts Official Development Assistance from Norway, in the form of a REDD agreement on reducing carbon emissions, to encourage

1 I am particularly grateful to Dwayne Gutzmer, a member of the 50/50 Youth Cluster and former Dean of the CARICOM Youth Ambassadors Corps (CYAP), for his inspiration in my endeavor to include youth voices through art. Dwayne conceptualized the e-graffiti initiative for CARICOM Youth Day in 2013, from which we have reproduced some of the submissions, and he also contributed to the realization of the most recent Call for Artwork issued by the Cluster in June 2014 for this Special Issue.

inequitable “inclusion” of Amerindian communities in a politics which entrenches vulnerabilities and perpetuates racial and ethnic insecurity. Secondly, Preeya Mohan and Patrick Watson provide a quantitative analysis of the nature and pattern of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) flows to the Caribbean, and make recommendations on the way in which flows could be improved in order to contribute to growth and development. Thirdly, Diana Weeks-Marshall analyses the corporate governance context in Barbados in a post 2008 financial crisis era. Using content analysis, she establishes the level of corporate governance disclosure of 21 public limited companies in the country, finding above average disclosure in many cases.

I now turn to a discussion of the imperative of youth inclusion, as a matter of equity, before providing an over-view of the arguments offered by the authors of the Special Issue.

#### THE IMPERATIVES OF EQUITY AND YOUTH INCLUSION

This dedicated volume on youth is presented at a time of unprecedented interest in youth development, driven by a distinct demographic imperative for youth inclusion. The global youth population of persons between 15 and 24 years, is considered to be the highest it has ever been in history, estimated at about 1.2 billion or close to 20% of the world’s population; while about 60% of the population in Commonwealth and CARICOM countries is under 30 years old (UNECOSOC 2013; Commonwealth Secretariat 2014). While national, regional and international definitions of youth may vary,<sup>2</sup> the statistics have initiated greater international attention to youth development issues. Since the landmark World Development Report on youth (World Bank 2006), there have been increasing calls for more work to be done on understanding and resolving the challenges faced by young people in a rapidly changing and

2 This collection is based on a life-cycle approach to the study of human development which acknowledges and respects diverse political and cultural categorisations and definitions of “youth” in the region—including internationally-accepted definitions of children (0-18 years); adolescents (14-19 years); youth (15-24 years) and young people (up to 29 years). As such, the “youth” who are the focus of the collection may fall into various categories according to the context, including the regional definition advanced by the CARICOM Commission on Youth Development (CCYD) as those between 10-29 years, which acts as an impermanent guideline definition of youth for the SALISES 50/50 Youth Cluster.

declining global political economy. In my view, the resulting narrative of 'investment in youth' is firmly entrenched within a neoliberal economic imperative, in which lack of investment in youth is conceptualised as merely a threat to economic growth and international security.

In that regard, research on youth has often provided an economic rationale for youth inclusion – by documenting losses to Gross Domestic Product (GDP), estimated to be as much as two per cent annually in Europe (Lundberg 2011), and between less than one per cent and five per cent annually in Caribbean countries. In the Caribbean Community, it was estimated that early school leaving at tertiary level could cost individual CARICOM countries up to 5% of GDP annually; youth unemployment costs between 0.75 and 2.46% of GDP; adolescent pregnancy between two and 17% of GDP; and youth involvement in crime between 2.8% and 4.1% of GDP (CARICOM Commission on Youth Development 2010, 117-126). Research has also offered a security rationale for greater investment in which analyses of youth movements, like in the Arab Spring, for example, ambivalently homogenise Millennials and Generation Y as the new democratic global change-makers; while also perpetuating stereotypes of (violent) youth who are threats to order and stability (Kingsley 2014; Ezbawy 2012; Howe and Strauss 2000). These latter perspectives hark back to earlier conceptualisations of youth as "folk-devils" (Cohen 1973).

Undeniably, the demographic imperative presents both opportunities and challenges. On the one hand, young people have been at the forefront of innovation in economic, social, cultural and political change globally. On the other hand, youth bear the brunt of major international development challenges, resulting in social, economic and political exclusion occasioned by high rates of unemployment, poverty, victimization and disempowerment. However, in my opinion, the academic narrative requires a shift away from justifications for "fixing" youth for prosperity, to discussions of youth inclusion as a fundamental matter of equity. In that regard, current discussions on the formulation of a set of Sustainable Development Goals for the Post 2015 development agenda, informed by the most recent World Conference on Youth (Governments of the United Nations 2014), will need to bridge the divide between corrective action and equitable inclusion, based on

respect for the rights of young people and their position of power within the global population.

In respect of the Caribbean and Latin America, two main gaps in the academic discourse are of concern and demonstrate the significance of this collection. Firstly, in general, the dominant and accessible literature on youth development (Lesko and Talburt 2012; Batsleer and Davies 2010; Jones 2009; Belton 2009; Kehily 2007; Bessant 2004) has focused on histories and contemporary explanations of youth in developed countries, particularly the United Kingdom, Australia and the United States. This has been to the detriment of diversity in the literature, as analyses of developing countries continue to receive ad hoc and dispersed treatment. Certainly, there have been some worthwhile contributions, which need to be built upon to create a significant body of knowledge on the unique experiences of the region (Lewis and Carter 1995; World Bank 2003; Williams 2007; Carter 2008; Lockhart 2012). Indeed, the experiences of youth development in small states are rarely highlighted, including in instances in which they outperform developed countries on indicators of youth development. The first Commonwealth Youth Development Index (YDI) suggests that, while income levels are positively associated with performance in youth development, some low and middle income countries have been able to make greater gains than more developed countries. In the assessment of 15 indicators across the five youth development domains of education, health and well-being, employment, political participation and civic participation, some Caribbean countries find themselves in the top ten rankings of 51 Commonwealth countries. Barbados and Guyana are ranked fourth and ninth respectively in youth health and well-being; Trinidad and Tobago is tenth in youth employment; Belize is ninth in political participation of youth and Jamaica is eighth in civic participation of youth. Only one Caribbean country is assessed as having low youth development—St. Kitts and Nevis (The Commonwealth 2013). One of the significant contributions of the issue is that it launches a truly indigenous debate about youth in Latin America and the Caribbean—written by people from the region about the societies in which they live. In that regard, it reflects, and will advance, an emergent body of Caribbean and Latin American thought on youth.

The second area of research concern has been with the simultaneous artificial merging and artificial division of the Caribbean and Latin American sub-regions. On the one hand, analyses which speak to the experiences of Latin American countries are used as proxies for the Caribbean, without analysis of the distinctions of context and size. At the same time, and on the other hand, dedicated treatment of one or the other sub-region does not encourage sub-regional exchange of ideas across the hemispheric space. While this collection has only been able to offer one treatment on Latin America (including countries which are considered Caribbean), it is presented as a start of the future direction of youth development studies in the region. The challenges of youth development are not limited to a geographical area but have particular geopolitical manifestations. In that regard, youth development studies need to take into account the heterogeneous experiences of youth, without ignoring the structural forces and context which, in effect, homogenise the exclusion of youth as a global and regional class of citizen.

Against the background of those two issues, which suggest the need to grapple with the complexities of challenge and opportunity within various geopolitical landscapes, the concept of 'youthscapes of development' has been employed as an analytical frame for the collection. The focus on 'youthscapes' allows for the navigation of the complexity, through exploration of the relationships between young people and the world around them. The analyses are about youth and of youth and by youth (having highlighted the voices of young scholars and other youth), and, at the same time, are about policies and programmes, and dreams and aspirations. It draws on the concept coined by Maira and Soep (2005, xv) in their collection of essays on "youth practices, national ideologies and global markets" which aimed to push the boundaries of youth culture studies at the time, by suggesting "a site that is not just geographic or temporal, but social and political as well, a 'place' that is bound up with questions of power and materiality". This collection is inspired by the multi-sphere and multi-level approach, but does not seek to engage with youth cultures themselves, but rather the working of power in, through and on youth at regional, local government and community levels, and in the spheres of law, policy, institutions and structures. It eschews the notion that young people are the sole creators of negative

cultures, but that youth behaviours emerge within the context of structures, which promote individualism, competition and a discourse and practice of survival. By starting with the potential among youth, and acknowledging features of youth innovation and innovation for youth, we emphasise alternative mechanisms for better youth experiences and outcomes. In other words, we seek to challenge the dominant economic focus of youth development by exploring the power dynamics of inclusion—that is, the political youthscape of development in Latin America and the Caribbean. It is through this mechanism that we introduce a debate on equity in development.

#### POINTS OF CONTENTION AND OF COMMONALITY WITH YOUTH VIEWS

Recent institutional reports have documented the main concerns of adolescents and youth in Latin America and the Caribbean. The main concerns include unemployment, crime and violence, abuse and exploitation by adults, weak governance in countries, poverty, inequality, powerlessness, 'voicelessness' and rights to participation (CARICOM Commission on Youth Development 2010, 32; Organización Iberoamericana de Juventud 2013). Many of these concerns find connections with the work in this collection, while others are noticeably absent. While the limits of space and competence have impinged on the scope of the contents of this issue, the prioritisation of some of the conceptual and juridical issues in youth development is deliberate. So, there is a focus on rights to participation and to social protection. These are treated as foundational issues to the other concerns of youth and find points of commonality with youth concerns about their powerlessness, voicelessness and exclusion.

At the same time, a dominant point of contention with youth concerns and the institutional focus of international agendas, relates to the lack of a substantive chapter on the issue of youth unemployment. The connection between this feature of the youthscape and youth exclusion has been given significant treatment at the international level (International Labour Organisation 2013) and should be a part of subsequent volumes of the 50/50 Youth dialogue. In fact, its priority was highlighted by the fact that the first submission we received to our Call for Artwork was entitled "Youth

Unemployment” by 21 year old Jermine Hodge. His submission seeks to represent, in his words, “the current situation in most of our CARICOM states”. He continues,

Many young people would have qualified themselves and are the holders of Degrees but still cannot get a job. They search the newspapers daily, particularly the classified ads section looking for jobs. As is seen in the picture- the graduate is holding what looks like a certificate but is also looking for a job in the classified section of the newspaper. Youth unemployment is still very much alive in the Caribbean! (Hodge, Jermine 2014, Personal Communication).

**Fig. 1: Youth Unemployment**



Hodge's commentary is significant because it reflects one of the primary concerns of youth as documented in the literature, but it also explains a paradox—seemingly greater access but lower participation and increased rates of economic exclusion. Notwithstanding the lack of dedicated focus, the papers in this collection make an overarching argument that the lack of spaces for voice and participation are at the root of youth exclusion issues, including economic exclusion. We suggest that the political sphere builds the overarching norms of inclusion, which enable more effective treatment of sectoral marginalisation and exclusion. The themes covered in the issue, though on different topics, coalesce around a common treatment of the politics of exclusion.

#### BRINGING YOUTH INTO THE DEVELOPMENT DIALOGUE

The issue is presented in two complementary parts, which offer analyses on youth rights and on opportunities and challenges of youth inclusion in policy and planning in the region. Part I offers three articles on the youthspheres of inclusion in policy, politics and practice; while Part II offers three on the rights of children and youth to social protection. The issue allows the cluster to open the dialogue on emerging issues in the region, namely views on corporal punishment as discipline, the treatment of children in the care of the state, child and youth rights, ICT use in the region, transnational administration of youth development, youth participation in local government and governance, and the historical antecedents of the dominant ideational foundation of youth development in the region. It is worth reiterating that the issue does not attempt to exhaust the debate on youth development but to present initial perspectives, which, by focusing on the rights of youth, deliberately bring young people into the development dialogue in a way which has not gained adequate attention.

#### **PART I: Youth in Policy, Politics and Practice**

The 50/50 Youth dialogue begins with an analytical focus on youth inclusion in the politics of development, covering youth policy, regional governance and local government. In Part I of this issue, the three discussions, by Henry Charles and Madgerie Jameson-Charles, Terri-Ann Gilbert-Roberts and Gerardo Berthin, suggest that the theory of complete youth exclusion is a fallacy. While

acknowledging the need for continued space-creation and expansion for youth, each article in effect presupposes the existence of real opportunities for youth inclusion, despite trends towards inequality and inequity in the Caribbean development landscape. Charles and Jameson-Charles open the dialogue in the first article with a discussion on the historical evolution of youth development policy and practice in the Commonwealth Caribbean. The qualitative historical review offers a contextualization of inclusion. The authors argue for the embedding of narratives of youth contribution in the history of the sub-region, while also acknowledging trends towards the marginalisation of the significance of youth participation in policy and politics. An explicit argument is made for a revamping of approaches to youth development, from the welfarist approach to a proposed transformational approach, which will create new spaces for youth participation, strengthening youth networks and advancing empowerment.

Gilbert-Roberts responds to Charles and Jameson-Charles by proposing the advancement of a citizenship framework for the member states of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), based on the opportunities provided by the youth development framework for catalysing regional governance reform. The regional governance analysis, including qualitative text analysis, of the youth development agenda in CARICOM, offers concrete recommendations in pursuit of the transformation required in the youthscape. Indeed, the central argument is that the transformation does not occur “on its own”, but must be properly institutionalised in the political culture—that is benefit from an overarching framework for citizen-inclusive regional governance, in order to provide a foundation for youth participation, empowerment and youth policy mainstreaming. A process of ‘citizenisation’ is proposed as a possible way of re-establishing the role of young people, and youth organisations, in charting the future for the region and ensuring the sustainability of the regional governance project.

Following the discussion of the Commonwealth Caribbean and Caribbean Community, Berthin expands the geopolitical scope of the discussion to consider the participation experiences of youth in the Latin American pole of the region; while also narrowing the political space of the youthscape to the local government level of analysis. Berthin’s offering reinforces the need to break down false

geographical barriers in analysis, in order to contribute to sub-regional exchange of experiences. The mixed method political analysis draws on the experiences of young people in four local government constituencies in Colombia, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic. Berthin reinforces the argument that there are already existing spaces for youth inclusion in political decision-making; while also offering a critique of the efficacy of these spaces, based on the findings of a survey of youth perspectives. He stresses youth preference for non-partisan spaces for participation, and innovative (alternative) methods for participation through non-traditional artistic, sporting, environmental advocacy and communications strategies.

The three papers in Part I offer adult aspirations for youth inclusion in political participation, which may sometimes appear incongruent with youth perspectives. Consider, for example, the following submission in Figure 2 by 16-year old David Gutzmer (2013) from Jamaica.

**Fig. 2: Non-political**



This e-graffiti expression of the kind of Caribbean David Gutzmer wants to live in, would suggest, on the surface, that youth are not interested in politics, yet the three articles in the first

section suggest a historical and contemporary role of youth in politics (small or capital Ps), in local government and in regional governance. However, beneath the emphatic and fervent expression is, in fact, a desire to be included in an equitable way. That is, he wishes to participate, without having to declare a particular partisan political affiliation. In Jamaica, the challenge of participation in a politically polarized context for governance has been well documented elsewhere (Stone 1980; Figueroa and Sives 2002; Figueroa and Sives 2003; Meeks 2007; Gray 2013). Another reading of the perspective offered by Gutzmer is that young people are not interested in partisan political behaviour, because of its association with corruption, garrisonisation and inequity. It is instructive towards the opening up of frank dialogue with young people about their criticisms of the partisan politics of development advanced by older generations, and a critique of their current experiences and visions of a “new politics” from below. Youth seem to point us towards a “non-political” participation. The questions raised by Gutzmer’s presentation, when coupled with the articles in Part I, include: *What does equitable non-discriminatory youth participation look like? Do we have the precedent in the histories and cases presented? Which other experiences need to be assessed for good practice?* These are questions which must form part of the next phase of the dialogue.

## **PART II: Child and Youth Rights to Social Protection**

Part II of this issue shifts the dialogue to a consideration of the special context for child development – the childscape, if you will – by documenting experiences, to date, with youth rights to social protection. The three articles, by Aldrie Henry-Lee, Khadijah Williams-Peters, and Corin Bailey, Tracy Robinson and Charlene Coore-Desai, are supplemented by commentary from Birte Timm on a country-specific experience in youth development. The treatment in Part II appears, at first glance, to contest the advocacy for political empowerment of youth, implicit in Part I, by seemingly advancing a welfarist view of youth development. However, the reading of the section reveals the significant coalescence of perspectives on social protection, where issues of child welfare are presented as political rights to citizenship, participation and freedom from abuse.

In that regard, Henry-Lee opens the section with a literature review on child rights and a regional policy review of the adoption and enforcement of child rights across six countries in the Caribbean sub-region. She argues that strong legal frameworks in support of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) are in existence, but are challenged by political constructions of citizenship which are inequitable in their exclusion of children. The exclusion permits the non-enforcement of child rights, which Henry-Lee argues, should be considered an explicit violation, even if it occurs as a result of capacity weaknesses in national administrations. The violation of rights puts vulnerable children—those in poverty, in child labour, with disabilities, and those living with HIV/AIDS—at risk of even greater exclusion. She concludes with proposals for policy changes towards reducing risk and promoting child citizenship.

The country-based review of youthspheres of child rights continues with the ethnographic study of participation by Khadijah Williams-Peters, which documents the experiences of ‘looked-after children’ in Trinidad and Tobago. By documenting the views of children in state care and their caregivers, the analysis offers a novel insight into the way in which Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) have been changing the youthsphere of inclusion. The offline participation of children and online participation of children collide in framing contending spheres of ideational innovation and challenging traditional concepts of surveillance and political control of the child. The article proposes a renegotiation of approaches to care, to challenge traditionally paternalistic patterns of limiting the ICT use of children, without neglecting the responsibility to safeguard children from risks associated with interactions with their peers, as well as adults/outsiders on online platforms.

In the final research paper on children, Bailey, Robinson and Coore-Desai offer a mixed methodological report on attitudes and practices to corporal punishment in four Eastern Caribbean countries—Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, St Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago. Drawing on a quantitative survey of students and teachers, as well as in-depth interviews with school Principals, the authors present, through their research, fervent advocacy for advancing child rights in the Caribbean. The authors argue that there exists a culture of violence in the Caribbean

which encourages the use of corporal punishment, despite international and regional evidence of its negative effects on the development outcomes of children and young people. Importantly, their study reveals a duality in the youthscape of child rights to protection from abuse through corporal punishment. On the one hand, violent forms of discipline are prohibited by international conventions to which Caribbean states are signatories; but, on the other hand, national laws in the four countries of study permit corporal punishment to be administered in government-supported schools, and thereby, endorse the maintenance of child ‘un-friendly’ “beliefs, assumptions, traditions and rituals” by teachers and school administrators.

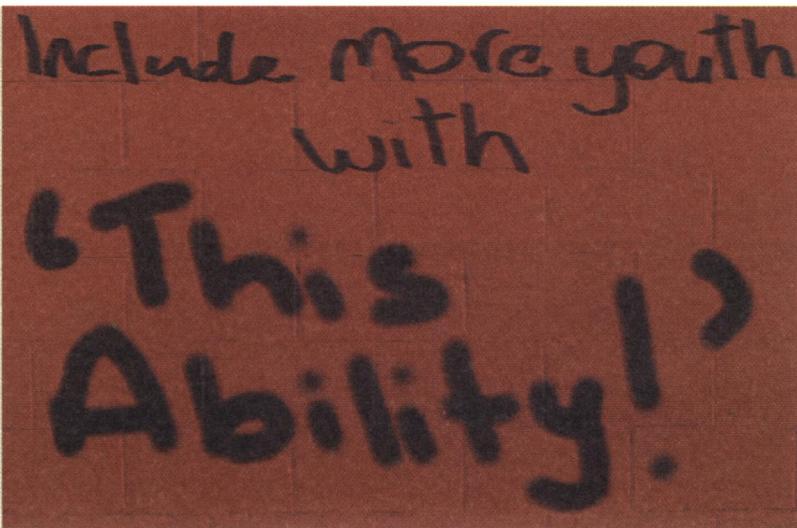
A lack of regional data on this issue prompted the study, which provides valuable baseline data on the prevalence of corporal punishment in schools, and early analysis of student and teacher attitudes to corporal punishment. This new data, invites the initiation of a new dialogue on the nexus between child and youth rights, and state responsibilities for social protection.

Part II leaves us with important questions and topics for advancing the discussion on child rights. *To what extent are local cultures and norms inimical to advancing the rights of children to social protection, participation and expression? How do these norms influence conceptualisations of discipline and control of youth in various contexts? To what extent can public, teacher and higher education curricula help in changing attitudes? How can school leadership be strengthened and equipped to support change? To what extent do we acknowledge the role of new tools—like ICT platforms—in creating spaces for independent expression and participation of young people? What are the next steps in aligning national legislative frameworks and international standards in order to advance the protection of child rights and promote child-friendly schools and institutions of care?*

Part II's focus on children, raises the importance of vulnerability as a concept which remains important in youth development, notwithstanding shifts towards conceptual prioritisation of youth empowerment. However, the three articles suggest that social protection and rights empowerment are not mutually exclusive, but mutually reinforcing. Although Henry-Lee's article is the only one which makes an explicit link to the vulnerabilities of children with disabilities, it raises an important question about the way in which young people view child and youth vulnerabilities.

In much of the adult-written discourse on youth, 'dis'-ability is the dominant concept, while other voices offer different views on the nature and extent of vulnerability. The submission by 25 year old Tamara McKayle from Jamaica, in Figure 3 below, advocates for a region which acknowledges abilities rather than disabilities, rejecting the conceptualization of vulnerability as the overriding feature of the challenges that youth face. McKayle says "The piece speaks to the issue of greater inclusion in society for youth with disabilities . . . where we recognize that they have 'abilities' and skills that often times are not recognized because of whatever physical or mental conditions they may have been born with or acquired . . . so the piece, though simple in its artistic expression, sends an important and vital message to society where we advocate for more youth with disabilities to be employed by the public and private sector and where we appeal to every citizen to also have a sense of responsibility regarding this sector and aim to engage and empower more youth with 'this ability' to get involved at the communal and national levels as we seek to break whatever societal stigma that may still exist,"(McKayle 2014, Personal Communication). Indeed, her e-graffiti message suggests that to focus on disability is to jeopardise opportunities for youth inclusion. Focusing on the existing abilities of youth with limiting physical,

Fig. 3: Its This Ability



emotional, mental and other challenges, creates a space for inclusion.

The Special Issue closes with a piece of commentary by Birte Timm on a youth work experience in Jamaica. The piece offers the unique perspective of a classically-trained historian on working with youth—an area traditionally embedded within the Social Sciences and not the Humanities. Timm’s reflection suggests the need for greater inter-disciplinary dialogue about positive youth development methodologies in research, policy and programming, which can meet the region’s youth development goals. The comment offers insight into practices of youth inclusion, which bring youth into untraditional spheres of participation. By engaging youth activism through historical education, the HELP Jamaica History Project in Jamaica, suggests a promising practice of connecting theory and practice. The engagement of youth in learning about their history, and advancing their own ideas of how to harness the power of history to deal with contemporary challenges of the youthscape of inner-city life, is intriguing. It assumes a benefit of nationalism for youth empowerment – advocating for youth to be grounded in the past, while engaging them on a mission in creating their own new and more prosperous futures.

Interestingly, several submissions to the CARICOM Youth Day initiative, from which we have drawn youth artwork, focused on an interest of young people in being grounded in their history, in order to fulfil their mission for social change in the future. Take, for example, the advocacy of Adrian Watson in his e-graffiti in Figure 4 below. His work suggests that by being aware of national history, but also appreciating personal family histories and generational changes, has enabled him to gain the requisite footholds to launch his own strategy for freedom—education—and to take advantage of opportunities his ancestors lacked for a prosperous future (Watson 2014, Personal Communication).

Timm’s contribution closes our issue on an intriguing note. Like the Sankofa bird, a symbol which featured prominently in the 50/50 Project which precipitated the formation of the youth cluster, we look to the past in the hope of changing the future for the better. In closing, I make some brief comments on the areas in which I believe this Special Issue helps us move towards that future.

Fig. 4: Climbing The Steps Of History



#### THE SUM OF ITS PARTS: EQUITABLE INCLUSION

I argue that these constituent parts of an emerging dialogue on the future of youth development in the region, though adopting a variety of perspectives, coalesce to offer four contributions to social and economic studies in the region, and open the dialogue on youth development studies in the region.

The first main contribution of this volume is to provide a broad update on key policy issues in the region, including new areas of focus like ICTs, as well as on-going discussions on corporal punishment and regional integration. The lack of up to date information, data and analyses on youth in the region remains a challenge, particularly for small states, and efforts have to be made to expand the scope of the body of knowledge to ensure proper documentation of practice.

Secondly, this issue offers multi-level analyses across the sub-regions. It includes individual country experiences in Barbados, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Colombia, Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic, St. Kitts and Nevis, Grenada and others,

which are juxtaposed with regional treatments of the Caribbean Community as a whole. The coverage allows a broad review of the situation in the regional youthscape.

Thirdly, the special issue highlights the importance of methodological diversity in compiling evidence-based inputs into youth development policy and practice. The varying methodologies employed here—ranging from ethnography to quantitative survey to qualitative text analysis—add to the richness of studies of youthscales. The diverse methodologies allow us to, not just extract information from youth, as is customary, but also contribute to their development and understanding of the context in which they operate, by offering other kinds of analyses of structures which affect their lives. The richness is borne, then, from the diversity of methods and units of analysis, and also from the overlapping disciplinary and inter-disciplinary backgrounds of the members of the 50/50 youth cluster in Political Science, Development Studies, History, Sociology and Social Work and Criminology. In addition, it has sought to mix theory with practice in an inter-professional dialogue amongst the stakeholders involved in youth development. Finally, by focusing on giving voice to youth—whether directly by including their words in our reporting of findings, in the artwork included in the issue, or indirectly by analysing the lack of space for their voices, the cluster seeks to advance an epistemological preference for youth development research which is not just about youth but includes their voices and perspectives. It is our aim to treat youth equitably in the academic and professional dialogues on youth development.

Notwithstanding the practicalities of compiling a compact discussion in a single issue of this journal, the volume also provides space for further refinement of the scope of the proposed dialogue, by virtue of the absence of some key issues in youth development. Areas of primary concern include youth unemployment, education, sexual and reproductive health rights and the challenges of HIV/AIDS epidemic. These issues remain concerns of the cluster and are subject to on-going internal discussion, but require contributions from others. It is hoped that these gaps in the discussion will encourage responses of analytical articles for subsequent issues, which seek to critique the perspectives in this volume but also propose areas for future focus.

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