Living in liquid modernity

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The argument

1. Too many people w. intellectual disabilities ‘known well by no-one ‘(Bigby, 2008; Hubert & Hollins, 2010), live ‘abject’ lives (Hall 2005)
2. Ideas about Community Inclusion formed 40 years ago:
   ▶ Huge changes in society make it imperative to revise our understanding of what community inclusion means
3. Post-millennium Liquid Modernity
4. Social Anchoring: selfhood stays afloat on past & future
5. But… hate crimes
6. And… ID slow to take up new ideas
7. Community psychology methods may help change
Groups, clubs, organisations are dissolving
Greater insecurity of jobs and homes
More migration globally
Relationships more fluid
Achieving satisfactory recognition one of problems of the age
Pits vulnerable groups against one another for limited resource
Redefined relationship between economy, state, society & individuals

Markets have a way of knowing that exceeds human mind

Limits wage growth, imposes ‘flexibilization’ on workers, adversely effects welfare systems, penalizes the poor

Devil-take-the-hindmost treatment of vulnerable groups disadvantages people with ID disproportionately (Clegg & Bigby 2017)

Dissolution of social collectives blocks political dissent & emergence of alternatives

Different interest groups acting together can & should resist it
When society changes, policy must adapt.

- Gleeson: getting things right for people with intellectual disabilities often leads social change.
- Bauman advocates a social justice approach:
  - Describing well-being
  - Specifying a life of dignity
- Fine & Saad-Filho: Different interest groups acting together can & should resist neoliberal individualism.
- Need to find common ground & new ways to cooperate.
Social Anchoring
Grzymala-Kazłowska (2016)

- How people stay afloat on a changing world
- “The process of finding significant references and grounded points which enable migrants to restore their socio-psychological stability in new life settings and establish their (subjective and objective) footholds in a receiving society.” (134)
- Anchors to past & future needed
- Past:
  - Relationships, places, rituals that celebrate particular events; gravestones, ashes, photographs
- Future:
  - Engaging with places, people, activities
BUT... hate crimes

- 7% people with cognitive disabilities abused in communities past year
  - 6 times higher non-disabled people
  - Women over-represented as perpetrators of ID abuse
- Underestimated & underpunished (ECHR; Wharmby)
  - Judges speak of torture as merely ‘senseless’
  - Media report sustained torment as mere ‘bullying’
Factors in community abuse

- Anthropology: sustained ‘liminality’ breeds suspicion
- Philosophy: Discomforting strangeness → intolerance
- In socially disadvantaged & impoverished environments
  - Others who get more support resented
  - Poverty creates ‘fog’ obscures seriousness of abuse
- Chronic loneliness & under-occupation ↑ vulnerability
- Austerity → abandonment by services (in UK)
Tessellation
- Make alliances, create new settings
- Create & support community projects
- Strengthen community leaders/activists

Walk alongside
- Commit to the community
- Witness realities of lives
- Patience & faith in members’ resourcefulness
- Acknowledge limits to autonomy: responsibility-taking often needed, enduring support often required

Stewardship
- Act responsibly - long term engagement not one-off projects
But... ID slow to change

Eg assertion that employment can create a meaningful adult life for all people with IDs
- Fatigue: constant churn, no real change
- People defend ideas they depend on
  - ‘I’ve heard nothing new’ or
  - ‘I don’t want to hear anything new’?
- Fully occupied juggling own skills, demands, building networks
- & effective advocacy demands certainty
So... can we rebuild the boat while crossing Atlantic?

- Are we talking about **IF** we change, or **WHEN** we change?
- **If:**
  - Ideas to persuade critical mass that have reached the tipping point: that radically new goals and actions are required?
- **When:**
  - Which alliances need to be created?
  - What actions most effective in Liquid Modernity?
  - What represents the little rescue boat we can take to when the boat starts leaking?