

Editorial

In this issue of Concept, Lynne Friedli takes a critical look at the emerging focus on asset based community work. Whilst this approach can build on the political and organisational strengths, and the moral economy of people living in poverty, its overriding impact is to criticise the public sector and essentially seek to privatise solutions to poverty without addressing structural inequality. At a time of neoliberal restructuring in Britain, this can be used to justify the disintegration of social welfare.

The failure of community and social movement politics to respond adequately to the neoliberal restructuring and austerity programme in Ireland is the subject of Laurence Cox's article. A range of processes of clientelism, incorporation and co-option has helped to fragment grassroots resistance and ensured that there has been virtually no effective challenge. Cox argues that radical education has a crucial role in integrating political confrontation with critical analysis.

Ruari Sutherland explores one of the more dangerous outcomes of austerity, the rise of extreme-right movements in the English and Scottish Defence Leagues. He argues that confronting these movements requires a more nuanced analysis than is often presented by the left – of simply lumping them with the historical formations of Nazism and Fascism. Far right ideologues of the 'new racism' have adopted new narratives and tactics and exploited the increasingly racist mainstream discourses on immigration and the 'war on terror'. Anti-racist politics and community education needs to recognise these changes if we are to combat these groups and to "problematise and challenge the hegemonic discourse of tacit xenophobic populism".

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