

### Book Review: Youthquake - The Rise of Young Cosmopolitans in Britain

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## Book Review

### Youthquake: The Rise of Young Cosmopolitans in Britain

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**Book Reviewed:** *Youthquake: The Rise of Young Cosmopolitans in Britain*, by James Sloam and Matt Henn. Palgrave Studies in Young People and Politics, ISBN 978-3-319-97468-2; ISBN 978-3-319-97469-9 (eBook), 2019. 129 pages.

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Compared to other places, in Europe, the youth have better engagement in political process. Some writers including Eurobarometer (2013) wrote the participation of youth in politics in Europe and found out that youth participation has reduced since 2011. From their study in Britain, Henn et al. (2002) described that in terms of their behavior and attitudes, young people are certainly less positively disposed towards the political process than their older contemporaries.

Sloam and Henn provided a recent work on Youthquake: The Rise of Young Cosmopolitans in Britain, which investigates the reasons behind the youth engagement in politics from both a comparative and theoretical perspectives. The book is original and interesting that narrates how age is an important predictor of youth participation in UK.

First the book is written by two scholars; James Soam who is a Lecturer in Royal Holloway University of London, and Matt Henn who is a Lecturer in the School of Social Sciences, Nottingham Trent University, UK. Both have high profile. However, a major strength of the book is not mere high-profile of these scholars. Rather, it gives a glimpse that age replaced class as the most important predictor of voting intention. It compares youth turnout and party allegiance over time and traces changes in youth political participation in the UK since the onset of the 2008 global financial crisis – from austerity, to the 2016 EU referendum, to the rise of Corbyn – up until the election in June 2017.

Sloam and Henn (2018) emphasized the rise of political movement of the youth by using the word of Pippa Norris (2002) – ‘reinventing political activism’. They further explained the role of new technologies, since the turn of New Millennia, have enabled a further proliferation of youth engagement into a vast array of non-

institutionalized, online activities. The book described that in the aftermath of the financial crisis, young people in many countries have utilized social media to express their outrage at growing social and intergenerational inequalities in society.

Despite the book is a response to the dramatic events of June 2017 in the UK, it is more precisely about a longer-term study of youth political participation before and after the onset of the 2008 global financial crisis, and the emergence of new patterns of political participation in established democratic systems. The New generation from early 1990s, has been in a generational rupture, or 'period effect', in UK which gave rise for *pessimistic* studies regarding the negative impact of youth disengagement on democratic citizenship (P.4). Such pessimist understanding of youth disengagement has become negated by counter scholars i.e. Pippa Norris (2002, 2004) that consider the new rules of game the youth apply in political participation such as petition, demonstration and boycotts.

The book very importantly explained that the problem of youth political disengagement is less to do with a general lack of political engagement and more to do with the disconnection between young people and the political system (P.17). Social, economic, cultural, and political changes have significant implication for youth engagement in political participation. The authors of book correctly argued that different democracies have quite different patterns of political participation.

The third chapter of the book explained that youth disengagement from the politics is due to anti-politics sentiment on the one hand and dissatisfaction with the mainstream electoral politics on the other. This chapter shows how lack of trust on the count of their voices shapes their interest to engage in political participation. The sample Youth for 2002 and 2011 elections stated that, once elections are over, political parties lack touch with the people which affects youth engagement in politics (P.52). But if so, how the current youthquake happened? Is that due to legitimacy of the political parties (supply side) or due to different pressuring factors (demand side); this lack clear explanation in the book.

In the fourth chapter, Sloam and Henn provided a generational lens with regard to a vote in Brexit. Accordingly, their survey shows that the vast majority of young people – 69% of 18–30 year olds and 76% of 18–21 year olds – voted for the UK to remain in the EU. But less explained why this is so. The explanation between this generational difference regarding the decision is not provided. In the fifth chapter of the book, it is also indicated that Labor party in UK was successful for 2017 election campaign due to its youth concerned policies. This chapter also asserted that social media is the basic source of information for the youth compared to adults and elderly people. The authors the book stated that Labor party was successful to attract the youth since it applied social media communication. However, this might not show whether the support of the youth towards labor party is due to its concern to the youth or its strategy of social media for advocacy.

Generally, the book is relevant to acquire knowledge about trends in youth participation in UK. However, it would have been worthy if it incorporate the detail views of youth and their counter parts regarding their decisions in political engagement. The books overlooked the negative side of social media. Much emphasis is given to the characteristics of youth than the political conditions and legitimacy and trust of the government that can also highly shape their political engagement. The role of readiness of political parties to consider pragmatic ideas of the youth and the

political culture that attracts the youth has been less explored. Besides, how the different views of the adult generation shapes their participation is overlooked. In other words, it doesn't discuss how the indicated pressing factors of youth political engagement influenced political engagement of their counterparts which veils how the youth are sensitive to socio-economic and political changes. Despite males and middle class youth are seen as to have better political engagement, there is no further justification why their counter parts don't have such an engagement. From the books, it is difficult to develop theories on factories determining youth engagement in political participation due to lack of uniform actions of the youth. Lack of the sayings of the youth themselves snatches the depth of study. By far, the book lacks triangulations of the interplay of the idea of the youth, the government, adults, and political parties in political participation of the youth.

## References

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