

SOCIAL WORK - A HINGE OF PRACTICAL UTOPIA

School of Social Work Theory and Practice
Inter-University Centre, Dubrovnik

20th to 24th June

12th to 16th September

ARE THE DOORS CLOSING OR ARE THEY OPENING ?

After declaring the need for a social breakthrough in [The Dubrovnik manifesto](#) and despite the adversities and catastrophes that we are facing today our aim is to explore and affirm the potential of social work to be a transformative agent. Are there any good news in bad times?

We want to bring into the open the instances of social work success of:

- Undoing injustice
- Utopian actions in dystopian structures
- Small steps paving the way for big changes
- Solidarity as praxis
- Empowerment of the people
- Making the voice of the oppressed heard
- Introducing the perspective of the margin to the centre
- Enabling freedom and safety
- Affirming the process and relationships
- Putting up resistance to:
 - rising authoritarianism
 - resurgence of colonialism and imperialism
 - exclusion and reification
 - supremacy of all kinds
- Self-organisation and community reinvention
- Keeping the peace in the time of war
- and other

Perhaps these instances can help us to withstand the atrocities of the day.

The aim of this year edition of the School for Social Work Theory and Practice is to exchange, discuss and further explore practical utopias, to revive and strengthen the practical power of social work as a transversal, inter-disciplinary and inter-sectional approach and inter-sectoral position that contributes towards building a progressive and radically inclusive society.

The school has traditionally offered courses, recently combined in a more open format, introducing transversal, cross-cutting topics; this year:

**Social work as the anti-colonialist practice and
Action research - the art of Acting and Knowing**

The open format of the course means that the final programme will be designed on the spot.



Social work as the anti-colonialist practice

Crucially, an anti-colonialist paradigm focuses on dismantling global structures of domination - in thought, language, action, suggesting that political and conceptual work is needed, constantly, to challenge the powerful legacies of the colonial past and the violence of the neo-colonial present. This bias is as present in social work as it is in other disciplines and practices, eroding the memory and relevance of alternative traditions and practices. Alongside geo-political colonisation there were parallel processes of the colonisation of madness, childhood, sexuality, poverty, gender, disability and old age. In all of these examples, the dominant powers use the same, or similar, patterns of subordinating, even erasing, 'The Other', through disciplines of care and control that involve oppression and exploitation. Crucially, the planet, and its finite resources, are being colonised for profit through unfettered extractivist productivism. Social work's emergence as a profession was deeply implicated in social Darwinism and eugenics, trends that have re-emerged in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Understanding global inequality as a phenomenon deriving from colonialism, imperialism and capitalism, we need to address the prospects for a decolonial social work, a social work otherwise, a social work from the South and the ways these can and should be reflected in social work education, training and practice.

Action research - a practice of freedom and solidarity

Action research was a response of socially engaged and critical social scientists to the then prevailing positivistic alleged neutrality and the ban on meaningful engagement in social action. Alongside ethnographic knowledge gathering of how people live, critical examination and the contestation of axiomatics of power, action research is predestined to be the prime methodology of social work - a science of doing. Action research seeks transformative change through the simultaneous process of taking action and doing research, which are linked together by critical reflection. It uses the action to generate the knowledge and to explain the forces in the social field (Lewin), but it also uses knowledge of how people live in order to provide codes for action of emancipatory nature (Freire). It is not used to "solve" the problems but seeks to unearth them. In Gramscian terms, it does not serve the hegemon power but is engaged in generating the power for social transformation. It is teleological, maybe even deontic, in setting the goals. The research practitioner must profess his intention and act according to the obligations of the profession - which in social work are human freedom and solidarity.



COURSES AND ORGANIZING DIRECTORS

June

Social work and old age - organising director: Jana Mali, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia
 Social work theories and methods - Vito Flaker, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia
 Social work and deinstitutionalisation - Lorenzo Toresini, formerly Centre for Research in Mental Health Merano, Italy
 Community social work - Nino Žganec, University of Zagreb, Croatia

September

Social work theories and methods - Nina Schiøll Skjefstad, The Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim, Norway;
 Social work and deinstitutionalisation - Andreja Rafaelič, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia
 Social work and social policy - Gurnam Singh, Coventry University, UK
 Community social work - Ronald Lutz, University of Applied Sciences Erfurt, Germany
 Social work with children and families - Jenny Zwijnenburg, Summa College, Eindhoven, Netherlands
 Social work and spirituality - Ksenija Napan, Massey University, New Zealand
 Social work and children in conflict with law - Jodie Hodgson, Manchester Metropolitan University, UK (guest director)

Applications

Applications through Inter-University Centre or event organisers.

Abstract submission dates:

June session: 13. 6. 2022

September session: 5.9.2022

After submission abstracts will be assessed and participation will be confirmed and circulated to the participants (published on the webpage of IUC).

Information

Event organisers:

Jana Mali (June), Michaela Moser (September)

School coordinator:

Vito Flaker, Faculty for Social Work, University of Ljubljana

Inquiries and information:

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Accommodation and other logistic information

available at IUC: <https://iuc.hr/accommodation>

Fee

Fee €75

for faculty and practitioners

Fee €55

for students

Payable to the IUC at the time of event.

COURSE DIRECTORS:

Miroslav Brkić, University of Belgrade, Serbia; Janet Carter Anand, University of Eastern Finland, Kuopio, Finland; Steve Case, Social and Policy Studies Unit, Loughborough University, UK; Vlado Dimovski, Faculty of Economics, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia; Marsida Grami, University of Tirana; Vera Grebenc, University of Ljubljana; Sabina Hadžibulić, University of Stockholm, Sweden; Jodie Hodgson, Manchester Metropolitan University, UK; David Kergel, University of Oldenburg, Germany; Tanja Kleibl, University of Applied Sciences Würzburg-Schweinfurt, Germany; Ronald Lutz, University of Applied Sciences Erfurt, Germany; Jim Mandiberg, Hunter College, New York, USA; Jana Mali, University of Ljubljana; Michaela Moser, University of Applied Sciences St. Poelten, Austria; Ksenija Napan, Massey University, New Zealand; Mari Nordstrand, The Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim, Norway; Andreja Rafaelič, Institute for Social Care of Slovenia and University of Ljubljana; Shula Ramon, University of Hertfordshire, England; Christine Rekhla, University of Applied Sciences Erfurt, Germany; Branka Rešetar, University of Osijek; Gurnam Singh, Coventry University, UK; Nina Schiøll Skjefstad, The Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim, Norway; Torill Tjelflaat, formerly NTNU Social Research, Norway; Paul Stubbs, Institute of Economics, Zagreb; Ana Štambuk, University of Zagreb, Croatia; Lorenzo Toresini, formerly Centre for Research in Mental Health Merano, Italy; Riitta Vornanen, University of Eastern Finland Kuopio; Joe Yates, Liverpool John Moores University; Jenny Zwijnenburg, Summa College, Eindhoven, Netherlands; Nino Žganec, University of Zagreb.