

Vito Flaker

TOWARDS THE ORDINARY OF THE UNCOMMON
ON THE POSSIBILITIES OF A PARADIGMATIC SHIFT

Dr. Vito Flaker is assistant lecturer at the University of Ljubljana School of Social Work, chairing person of the Committee for Innovation in Mental Health Altra, former coordinator of Tempus Joint European Project and now coordinator of Joint European Network »Community Mental Health Studies – Training for Psychosocial Services«.

The author presents the conceptual synthesis which emerged during the Tempus-funded programme of community mental health studies – training for psychosocial services. The basic argument in the paper is that social work as a discipline without an institutional temple makes possible the syntheses of different conceptual frameworks. It is demonstrated and further articulated in some examples from community mental health work which is critical of institutional professionalism and its orientation towards revalorisation of the social role of users. In the practice of group homes, social work is described as an art of constructing artificial yet ordinary spaces and forms of living. Advocacy shows the important role of social work in mediation amongst different experiential worlds. In care planning, the tendencies are found for radical shifts in social work (direct funding); it shows the importance of clients' own stories and of ground-level analytical tools, as well as of the proactive orientation of the social work; and in particular, it demonstrates the transformative power of social work.

Shulamit Ramon

SLOVENE SOCIAL WORK

A CASE OF UNEXPECTED DEVELOPMENT AFTER 1990

Dr. Shulamit Ramon is senior lecturer of social work and director of the post-qualifying interprofessional Diploma in Innovation in mental health Work at the London School of Economics. She was associated to the Tempus project Community Mental Health Studies in Slovenia as researcher into community mental health systems. She is currently coordinating a Tempus programme aimed at setting up social work education in the Ukraine, and advises the new department of social work at Moscow School of Social and Economic Sciences.

The paper places Slovene social work in the context of recent political, social, economic and cultural changes in Slovenia. The framework of social work education and social services is outlined, and two important, surprisingly innovative projects are described and analysed: work with refugees and the community mental health studies programme. In conclusion, the author outlines the importance of these two projects for the theory and practice of social work in Slovenia.

Justin Bateman

EVALUATION REPORT

ON COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH STUDIES IN LJUBLJANA

Justin Bateman heads research and development at the Kent Social Services; he is also associate of the European Institute of Social Services.

The author has made extensive consultations with the students of community mental health in Ljubljana (the Tempus project) and has drawn from them and his observations the present evaluation report. In the second part, he also critically surveys the existing community care provisions in Slovenia. His findings show that the study programme has succeeded enormously, despite some shortcomings (lack of appropriate time management being the most notable one); that it

has strongly influenced the students' views as well as their practice, and that it promoted a series of new projects in the field of community care which had been virtually non-existent before.

Vito Flaker, Vesna Leskošek

THE IMPACT OF A TEMPUS COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH TRAINING PROGRAMME
ON SLOVENIAN MENTAL HEALTH SOCIAL WORK

Social worker and pedagogue Vesna Leskošek is manager of Youth Help Centre of Ljubljana Moste-Polje Social Work Centre.

The authors' assessment is that the role of social work in mental health prior to the programme was a marginal and subsidiary one. At the same time, the project could not be conceived but for the meaningful experiences of voluntary work and action research from seventies on. Beside new concepts (e. g., normalisation, the users' and feminist perspectives, the individualisation of care) the study programme initiated a whole series of different innovative projects which are changing the scene of social work practice. The authors conclude that two new actors appeared in the field of mental health previously dominated by psychiatry: social work and the users. So this educational programme, with its broad definition of mental health and activism of its students and staff, contributed meaningfully to the changes of the social work as a whole and in particular in the field of mental health.

Jelka Škerjanc

THE PROCESS OF SELF-ORGANIZING OF THE PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Social worker Jelka Škerjanc directs the experimental project called Individualized Forms of Care for People with Special Needs in the Slovenian coast region

The contribution presents the process of self-organizing of the people with special needs and their parents on the coast region. It started at the same time as community mental health studies. The author follows the thesis that handicap is a problem of the society that is incapable to organize so as to respond to the needs of its members. Since handicap is a politically created problem, it can only be solved in this field. People with handicap will overcome it only if they take control over their lives and over the social processes that determine their position. This will be possible when they can influence service planning and have relevant knowledge and information.

Marjan Vončina

THE IMPACT OF COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH STUDY PROGRAMME
ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL WELFARE SYSTEM

Social worker and sociologist Marjan Vončina is director of Social Work Centre in Ljubljana Moste-Polje and tutor on community mental health studies.

The author discusses the impact of the Tempus study programme on the system of social welfare in the framework of changes effected by the new Law of Social Welfare. The new circumstances produced a changed role of social work in that it has to work with the consent of users. The inclusion of users, through principles of good practice, has been introduced as a norm by the very community mental health studies programme. Another important role of the studies is that its participants have succeeded to organize a number of new social welfare programmes that secure the users' say. As a possible way to asserting the values based on the users' needs, the author proposes a greater distance towards politics and the creation of innovative programmes which will respect and further develop the skills of working with people.

Darja Zaviršek

ON THE TIMES WE STILL BELIEVED

THAT THE REMAINS OF EUROPEAN RADICALISM IN SOCIAL WORK WOULD SPREAD TO THE EAST

Dr. Darja Zaviršek is assistant lecturer of anthropology at the University of Ljubljana School of Social Work

The paper discusses the impact of community mental health studies on novelties in the curriculum of the School of Social Work. The impact on methodological and theoretical concepts of

social anthropology is pointed out. Some theorists have used social anthropology as a theoretical model, others have stressed anthropological approach to working with people. Guest lecturers on the programme have also introduced gender perspective into Slovenian social work and established gender as an analytical category. Many have stressed »gender-blindness« as one of the essential conceptual errors of social work. Most guests have been devoted to the traditions of radical social work and critical European sciences.

Vito Flaker

A VISION OF THE SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WITH LONG-TERM PSYCHOSOCIAL DISTRESS

On the basis of research as well as of knowledge acquired through Community Mental Health Studies programme («Tempus» for short), the author's vision of the development of community care for people with long-term psychosocial distress rests on the following basic principles: gradual deinstitutionalisation; establishing community services with an emphasis on the use of existent and ordinary resources; enhancing users' solidarity; developing and establishing methods specific for work in the community, which originate from holistic and contextual understanding of human distress; accepting challenge and change triggered by this process; and last but not least formulating mental health legislation that is capable of comprehensive and consistent protection of the users' rights. The concrete steps, possible in the near future, are proposed: strategic planning on the national level, interdisciplinary education and training, transformation of social institutions into community services, pilot experiments in direct funding and care planning, continuing and expanding experimental community mental health services, establishing housing resources, planning service networks on the regional and local levels, and supporting users' organisations.

Vito Flaker

COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH STUDIES – TRAINING FOR PSYCHOSOCIAL SERVICES REPORT ON THE PROJECT

The report begins with the background of the project, lists partners involved and describes the basis of cooperation. It states the goals of the project, describes the study programme and its structure, and evaluates the outcome. The project succeeded to establish community mental health as a special area in the curriculum, educated the core group of professionals in this field, initiated numerous practical projects, disseminated knowledge to the professional and lay public, introduced Slovenia to the international network of such efforts, and significantly added to the library stock on this topic. Indirectly, it has improved the study process in the school as a whole, initiated other developments in mental health and gave an additional push to some voluntary and non-government organisations, as well as to the users' movement. Although taxing, it was a source of great satisfaction as well as challenge to most participants. It can be concluded that the impact of the project will be felt long after its termination.