

Congress of the Swiss Sociological Association 2024
University of Applied Sciences Northwestern Switzerland, Basel (MuttENZ),
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Call for Papers

Workshop Session: Decolonising Social Work while Dealing with Structural Conditions of Vulnerability

Organizers:

Barbara Waldis (Institut Transdisciplinaire de Travail Social), Kris Clarke (Social Work, Doctoral Programme in Gender, Culture, and Society, FI)

The workshop addresses the question of the personal, collective, and institutional resources of people or groups in dealing with vulnerable situations from the perspective of decolonial social work. Social work emerged in line with the construction of colonial nations, advocating for social justice while operating within oppressive structures. Indeed, social work sets out to integrate people into dominant societal norms through state policies that routinely ignore the diversities of experiences (Clarke, Yellow Bird 2021). Decolonial social work critically examines the oppressive nature of structures and practices, also beyond national frameworks (Gray et al. 2013) and is grounded in the recognition that collective responsibility, accountability, and emancipatory social work should be the starting point. Further, decolonial research seeks to explore how social work has been historically complicit with the carceral methods of the state, often imbued with coloniality and Eurocentrism. We explore diverse conceptualisations of vulnerability in connections with social work that see it as something more than a condition to be pitied or rescued from. Following the ethics of vulnerability (Butler 2004), we value care as a fundamental relational quality that makes us human and challenge the view of 'the vulnerable' that should be subjected to paternalistic and colonial interventions rather than empowered to collaborate in collective resistance.

The workshop aims to explore in a theory-guided, practice-oriented way the manifold understandings of decolonial social work perspectives on vulnerability across borders. The workshop participants will explain the concept of vulnerability regarding the chosen situation, the perspective of decolonial social work, and discuss ways in which redesigning relations in their field of social work – be it research, intervention processes or institutional design – opens up more possibilities for action for vulnerable people and groups.

We are looking forward to receiving your proposals.

- Deadline for submitting abstracts: 5 January 2024
- Length of abstracts: max. 2000 characters (spaces included)
- Language(s) of the workshop: English
- Email address(es) to which proposals must be sent: barbara.waldis@unine.ch; kris.clarke@helsinki.fi

References

Butler, Judith. *Precarious life: The powers of mourning and violence*. verso, 2004.

Clarke, Kris, and Michael Yellow Bird. *Decolonizing pathways towards integrative healing in social work*. Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon ; New York, NY: Routledge, 2021.

Gray, Mel, John Coates, Michael Yellow Bird, and Tiani Hetherington. *Decolonizing Social Work*. Burlington: Ashgate Pub. Company, 2013.