

### EDITORIAL

#### CHANGES IN EVERYDAY LIFE AND LIFE PRACTICES IN NEOLIBERAL SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RELATIONS

Up until the 1990s, scholarly consideration of everyday life was long underestimated in the social sciences on the grounds that, while interesting, its themes were only marginal and did not clearly shed light on the macro-social structures and processes. Therefore, it is not unusual that these themes were typically studied by female scholars. Not because as women we would feel they are close to us, but because male scholars took on more »eminent« themes, leaving the former to us women. Themes like everyday life, life courses and the related sub-themes, such as the relationship between public and private life, changes in family and partner relations, intergenerational and gender relations, along with identities, discrimination, poverty, inequalities, health, dietary practices etc., have proven to be relevant and even priority themes in the social sciences today.

This thematic issue presents analyses and reflections of 20 years' work of the Centre for Social Psychology. Since the Centre's very foundation in 1994, our research work has aimed to examine new contents, trends, activities, practices and institutions that belong to the microsphere of everyday life and the life course. In the two decades of its existence, the Centre's researchers have created an important social scientific body of knowledge in sociological fields that had long been underestimated. This thematic issue proves that it is through research into everyday life practices that the »grand social narratives« are best revealed to the analytical gaze.

We drew on the basic sociological findings according to which late modernity is influencing the everyday life of people in two key ways. It indirectly influences its alteration through the processes of globalisation and expansion of the world system of capitalism. And it directly influences it through processes of individualisation in the form of transferring responsibility for shaping one's own life to the individual. People's everyday life increasingly depends on global macro-events such as changes in the labour market, environmental and health risks, access to information and communication skills, and the growth of inequality and poverty (Beck, 1997; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2006). All of this poses a threat to basic material and social security, people's psychological well-being and their trust in the fundamental institutions of the system. Both globalisation and individualisation are rapidly »colonising« people's everyday life, bringing with it unprecedented uncertainties, risks and doubts, and undermining the foundations of the constitution of all other social worlds.

Foucault specifically highlighted biopolitics, that is, the systems of planned political governance of everyday life, as the distinguished dimension of micropolitics (Foucault, 1997). Over the last three decades, the concept of biopolitics has become very popular and therefore nearly emptied. That is why Paolo Virno suggests replacing it with the theoretically more elaborated concept of the socialisation of labour (Virno, 2004). The socialisation of labour is anchored in the individual's everyday life, representing the essential element of the micro-politics of everyday life. The modern socialisation of labour tries to make people accustomed to mobility, flexibility in relationships, managing a limited number of possible alternatives, the ability to keep up with the most unusual reorganisations of life and work, the ability to endure occasional unemployment, precarious jobs, self-employment etc. These abilities are not the result of industrial discipline, but of a wider socialisation that has its centre of gravity outside the workplace such as during growing-up, acquiring an education, within family and intergenerational relations, in changes in peer relations, in changes in social networks.

Outside-of-the-workplace socialisation mainly occurs in the sphere of privacy and everyday life. With this process being strategically important to modern capital, as expected their advocates make every effort to selectively support, through the mass media, mass culture, through politics of formal and informal education, those policies and ideologies of everyday life that enable the flexible availability of the workforce (Virno, 2004). Therefore, the individualised socialisation of labour is far from being an emancipatory act as it still seemed only as far back as the 1980s and 1990s. This is why the idea of the separation of private spheres from politics and the apparently apolitical nature of everyday life conceal the constant conflict between diverse micro-ideologies and micro-policies. Conflicts between the 'conservative' and 'liberal' micro-policies regarding gender roles and gender identities, oppositions and conflicts between different parenting practices and regimes, inter-generational relations, dietary regimes, the division and use of leisure time, and conflicts of micro-ideologies regarding the mechanisms of control, definitions of the self, ethnicity, class, religion etc. turn out to be the fundamental social conflicts at the level of privacy and everyday life. The themes of macro-politics and macro-ideologies penetrate the everyday world through the filters of micro-policies and micro-ideologies. On the other hand, the micro-ideologies reflexively influence the public sphere.

The global processes' negative effects by way of exacerbating social inequalities are challenging the discourse about welfare Europe not only politically but also sociologically (Giddens, Diamond and Liddle, 2006; Butler and Watt, 2007; Bauman, 2005; Gray, 2004). The individualisation of care for

one's own well-being re-establishes increased social inequalities whereby those who possess more economic, cultural and social capital are more equal. The less equal, those with less capital and support, are increasingly being pushed out and marginalised. Inequalities and the continuous reduction of the welfare state create environments in which groups traditionally deprived in everyday life (women, minority ethnic groups, the disabled etc.) are joined by newly emerging non-traditional groups (the poor, refugees, migrants). The consequences are not just individual, but also social as new groups of people are excluded from democratic participation (active citizenship). All this strengthens social oppositions, tensions and distrust. The transfer of the responsibility for one's own life course in high-risk populations to the individual level often leads to cultural and political isolation, passivity, the concentration of conflicts in the private sphere, feelings of powerlessness and personal inaptitude. They are exposed to several life risks, among which the most sensitive are health risks. Therefore, this is the basis of 'individualisation' that many once considered a historical *novum* that would liberate the individual from the identification mechanisms of gender, generation, religion, nation or class. Conversely, it makes them even more available to the post-fordist production process.

The neoliberal economic and political system marks the transition from the welfare state or from care by the state for the welfare of all people to the state having the characteristics of the so-called »workfare state« (Holden, 2003) or to individualised responsibility for one's own survival: from care for the public good to the right to choose that is believed to also be provided by the marketisation of public systems. People find themselves in unequal positions because of other people's actions and/or due to structurally-institutionally conditioned circumstances that either push them into positions of inequality or keep them there. Although both spheres are interconnected, the structural-institutional one is more fatal. Mechanisms that produce inequality are the result of long-term actions and processes that are normally invisible or self-understood because inequalities are ideologised as the result of natural or naturalised differences (Olin-Wright, 2010; Pascall, 2012; Krugman and Wells, 2012).

The main aim of this thematic issue is to identify and analyse the risk factors and spheres in people's everyday lives. The area of our specific interest is people's individual experiences of the obstacles, exclusion and lack of opportunities that are the outcome of these policies and practices, and are experienced by people in their everyday lives. Systemic mechanisms are highlighted that either facilitate or obstruct this state of the art, people's survival strategies and adjustments are illustrated along with particular obstacles that make their social integration difficult. This thematic issue includes the following inequalities within its primary focus:

*Inequalities in the spheres of privacy and intimacy* that with the new flexible employment patterns, changes in parenting roles (particularly fatherhood), the new division of family and housework, diverse family lifestyles and the marginalisation and exclusion of some of them (single-parent families, homosexual families), as well as the processes of differentiation, individualisation and rationalisation of sexuality have become an extremely important research field, including for the development and efficient implementation of social and family policy leading towards a higher quality of life in Slovenia.

*Inequalities in life courses and transitions*, mainly in the transitions from youth to adulthood which in the new conditions of growing up and in the increased marketisation of education are proving to be an important research field. School and education play a considerable role in the elimination, maintenance or production of inequalities. We analyse inequalities during youth and in the transitions to adulthood, the effects of the covert marketisation of education, paying special attention to vulnerable groups of young people.

*Inequalities in the spheres of health and quality of life*; factors such as poverty, social exclusion, discrimination, poor housing conditions, and low professional status are important determinants of a major share of diseases, death and inequality in health. Research shows that more egalitarian societies are more healthy, successful and creative because they manage to harness more human potential than societies with greater inequality (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009).

Regardless of the sphere in which they are identified, inequalities are often considered as having only one dimension and are attributed to a single reason or a very limited number of factors. Public policymakers usually still focus on just one dimension of an inequality and ignore other dimensions. The one-dimensional identification of inequality can have highly negative social consequences: it can be more easily abused to further stigmatise and victimise those who are marginalised. Moreover, it does not allow for the planning of adequate antidiscrimination policies – which should encompass several axes at the same time.

The sources of inequality are interrelated, complementary and influence each other, which is why in our consideration of multiple inequalities we use the concept of intersectionality. Multidisciplinary analysis of everyday life requires the use of classical analytical methodological approaches (e.g. the combination of quantitative methods of data acquisition and the use of qualitative methods such as the biographic method, in-depth interview, critical discourse analysis, focus groups). All of these basic methods have been used in our past research work and they also form basis for the analyses in this thematic issue. But, first and foremost, our research of the everyday

world and everyday life transcends the traditional methodological division of subject and object of research since we, researchers of everyday life, are also co-participants in it.

The epistemological starting point of our research is people in social contexts, rather than institutions or systems. This explains why we specifically focus on categories such as: meaning, sense, knowledge, routines, the construction of reality and everyday life. Further, we see the sense of our research work also or perhaps mainly in nurturing the subtle sensitivity to those groups of the population and life spheres which are the key constituents of »the life world«, but are simultaneously underestimated politically and in research. The research of everyday life with the use of combined methods and phenomenological insights enables people from the social margins to »speak« through researchers, to allow »their voice to be heard«. Therefore, the main intention of the studies presented in this thematic issue is to analyse risk factors and areas in everyday life, and find possibilities for the better participatory position of people concerned the most by social inequalities and risks. During the two decades of our research work, this orientation has been consistently enforced.

Mirjana Ule  
guest editor

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