On critical psychology in Slovenia

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Abstract

This article presents the development of critical psychology theory and alternative practices in therapy and consultation in Slovenia during the 1970s and 1980s. From the perspective *Critical Theory* (*Frankfurt School*), German critical psychology and psychoanalysis, psychologists (a rather small number of them) problematized behavioural conceptions and positivism in psychology. At that time, young psychologists of different theoretical orientations initiated changes in social work with marginalized groups, changes in/of total institutions, they introduced alternative practices in counseling and therapy. Critical theory, field work, problematization of power relations within the institutions and in the society in general, far exceeded the frames of academic and professional psychology – it was implicit and explicit critique of social and political relations, and it was a type of social movement for autonomy of social and academic space. At the end of the article we sum up critical reflection on psychological concepts, developed after 1990.

Key words: critical theory, German critical psychology, de-institutionalization, social movements, Slovenia

Introduction

This article will present the development of critical psychology theory and alternative practices in therapy and consultation that have materialized in Slovenia during the 1970s and 1980s. Analysis will focus on the conditions that brought forth critical reflection on psychological concepts and practices. From our perspective, these conditions were political and academic. The wider political conditions that took place in Slovenia in the beginning of the 1970s engendered policy and social climate changes. In the academic milieu dissatisfaction with the narrow experimental focus of academic psychology and its attempt to "demonstrate" its scientific and supposedly non-ideological nature by modelling itself on the tradition of the natural sciences, and hence ignoring social problems and needs, brewed and took hold.

In the period since the establishment of the *Department of Psychology* at the *Faculty of Arts* of the *University of Ljubljana* in 1950[1] there really has not been any systematic and ongoing examination of the development of psychology, its ideological assumptions, or its role in power relationships, which are, in essence, the central research problem of critical psychology (Fox & Prilleltensky, eds. 1997; Parker, 1999). There has also been no organized group or

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[1]Only in 2007 was an independent Department of psychology established at the University of Maribor as well, while the University of Primorska introduced a course in biopsychology in 2009, though undergraduate courses in the social sciences and pedagogical faculties also include a range of subjects from the field of psychology.

movement of psychologists exploring these aspects of psychological knowledge. Academic psychology in the early decades of its existence in this country was explicitly behaviourist and positivist in its approach. In our view the key reasons for this are the following: lecturers at the *Department of Psychology* were educated in the United States of America, through American literature and praxis, which tried to give psychology the status of a scientific discipline by adopting criteria taken from the natural sciences, and these criteria were fulfilled by behaviourism and positivism. Also, at a time when the (single-party) politics and ideology in Slovenia and more widely in Yugoslavia tried to control academic knowledge as well, behavioural psychology due to its apparent values of neutrality and "non-ideological" character appeared as a field of scientific autonomy which would be resistant to ideological interpretations and possible exploitation for political purposes.

Under the influence of the late 1960s student movements and the new movements that emerged in the 1970s, some students who were active participants in these movements began to problematize the theoretical limitations of academic psychology at the *Department of Psychology*, and independently turned to other, primarily critical theoretical traditions and paradigms. Thus in the mid-1970s some younger psychologists began publishing theoretical work which could be categorized as critical psychology; they developed alternative counseling and therapeutic practices which could be termed emancipatory; they planned, carried out, and interpreted research which transcended the positivist stringing together of self-evident "facts"; they problematized the divisions between psychology and sociology and other social sciences which until then had been taken for granted. They found support for these efforts in the new autonomous media and independent publishing outlets and journals, which opened up a space for new ways of reflecting on psychology and social reality.

The social context for introducing a critique of psychology in Slovenia at the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s

The end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s marked a period of economic and political liberalization in Slovenia, in which students were important actors. During this time there was a notable increase in the number of young people continuing their studies in tertiary education, as well as in the mobility of young people more generally. The European and international space became much more accessible to them, and their political engagement in student and other civil society movements had a relatively strong social impact. Students took a more critical approach to political as well as academic regimes, and demanded openness and liberalization of public and academic discourse. However, this period of liberalization was abruptly halted in the 1970s and followed by a period of intensified ideological and political control and repression—the Yugoslav version of what came to be called "the leaden years." Nevertheless, in Slovenia at any rate this did not stifle critical civil society movements, thanks in part to the youth and student political organizations of the time.[2] These were able to

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[2] The youth organization (*Association of Socialist Youth*) under socialism was one of the official "sociopolitical" organizations, with a decentralized organizational structure at the national and local levels and having its representatives at all levels of political power. Formally it brought together young people between the ages of 14 and 27 years. Initially it was regarded as the "youth wing" of the *League of Communists*, but at the beginning of the 1980s, particularly in Slovenia, it began to assert its political independence. In the mid-1980s it developed into an autonomous political force which supported the new social movements that played a crucial role in the democratization of Slovenia. The new social movements formed the core of the independent public, and with the support of the youth organization, and in cooperation with it, they strongly influenced the emerging democratic culture in Slovenia in particular through the consistent support for human rights and civil liberties, legal security and rule of law, and social oversight of the operation of state – especially repressive – organs. An extremely important role in these processes was played by critical political and social theorists.

provide space for those movements within their organizations. Moreover, as a result of the student and other social movements there emerged several forms of autonomous media engaged in social criticism (independent youth magazines, student radio, informal public discussions on "critical" topics). Students from the social sciences, philosophy, and humanities were especially active in these media. In fact a critical group of humanistic intellectuals began to take root in Yugoslavia as early as the late 1950s and 1960s; this group urged publishing houses to issue translations of current critical texts, and problematized social reality at high-profile symposia. Yugoslav humanistic and critical Marxism had an important influence on leftist actors in the student movement at the end of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s. This influence was seen primarily in a critique of the repressive political system at the time as only superficially socialist, in the rejection of dogmatic Marxism, and also in the rejection of "bourgeois" sociology and psychology, particularly positivist concepts in the social sciences and psychology.

At the end of the 1960s and 1970s, in Slovenia some journals and publishing houses published or issued translations of fundamental classic works in different fields of the social sciences, philosophy, and psychoanalysis, thereby providing a theoretical foundation for critical reflection of social phenomena, processes, and events, while also opening up a space for critical domestic authors for theoretical (and political) reflection and analysis. In this way students of philosophy, the humanities, and social sciences gained access to contemporary writers of social criticism such as Adorno, Horkheimer, Habermas, Marcuse, Freud, and later Lacan, Foucault, as well as feminist writers such as Kristeva and Luce Irigaray soon after their works came out in the original language.

Students of psychology at first lagged behind in their critical engagement, due among other reasons to the rigid and positivist approach to the study of psychology in Slovenia. However, some students of psychology were also among those who participated in student and other movements, and these transferred the praxis of social criticism to the field of psychology. Under the influence of the *humanistic psychology* of Reich, Fromm, Rogers, Laing and other socially critical authors of the *Frankfurt School*, the German critical psychology of Berlin's *Freie Universität*, critical psychoanalysis and French structuralism, they began to question critically the positioning at that time of psychology in Slovenia and their own position in society. The critique was directed primarily at academic psychology and psychology courses, but at the same time alternative approaches were being developed in educational sciences and social work.

 The reasons for and causes of the critique of the prevailing study of psychology and the psychological sciences in general were many. The study of psychology at that time was possible only in the *Department of Psychology* at the *Faculty of Arts* in Ljubljana. It was based on the model of psychology as an experimental science following the natural sciences research paradigm, on behaviorist and cognitive psychology and on the training of psychologists for "practical work" (testing, clinical practice). Most lecturers at the department tried to develop a psychology which did not reflect social conditions, in other words as a positivist and value neutral science.

The prevailing spirit at the *Department of Psychology* became especially disturbing for those students who participated actively in the student movement in Ljubljana (the beginning of the 1970s) and later (the 1980s) in civil society movements (feminist, ecology, peace). For them psychology was important and meaningful as an emancipatory social critical science, not as the collection of psychological facts and the carrying out of experiments. Some of these

critically oriented young graduates continued their studies at German and French universities and as a result of this study abroad began to introduce alternative theoretical concepts of psychology from Marxist theory and Freudian-Lacanian psychoanalysis into the Slovenian space. These actors operated (and still operate) at three levels – at the theoretical level through critical reflections of concepts and methodologies, at the research level through the introduction of qualitative methods and discourse analysis, and at the level of psychological practice through the establishment of therapeutic, counseling, and educational work in communities and demands for the de-institutionalization and deconstruction of total institutions. Critical psychologists in Slovenia highlighted the neglected aspects of psychological processes and psychological research. They reconceptualized the phenomenon of authority: from the phenomenon of power and control to interactional relationship phenomena (Mirjana Ule, Eva Bahovec), problematized the epistemological value or limits of psychological findings (Vlado Miheljak), and drew attention to the epistemological advantages and emancipatory effects of qualitative and action research (Blaž Mesec, Bojan Dekleva, Vito Flaker), and the advantages of group dynamic forms of therapy work (Bernard Stritih, Gabi Čačinovič).

Theoretical reflection of positivist psychology – the challenge of German critical theory

The critique of psychological conceptualizations developed from different theoretical standpoints in Slovenia: it came up against the positivism and objectivism of classical behaviorism and neurophysiology on the one hand and the assumption of a conscious, autonomous subject on the other. The fundamental theoretical sources of this reflection are and have been historical materialism, symbolic interactionism, Freudian-Lacanian psychoanalysis, and Foucault's theorization of disciplinary societies and bio-politics and their "subject."

Critical theory of society and German critical psychology formed an important point of departure for critiques of mainstream positivist psychology, and they characterized in particular the development of social psychology in Slovenia. The reasons for this were both theoretical and political. The German student movement, which had many adherents in Slovenia, was associated with the disputes over "positivism" in the social sciences and related disputes over positivism in psychology in the Federal Republic of Germany from the 1950s on (e.g. Adorno, 1957), with the Frankfurt School (Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse, Habermas), the Marxist reception of psychoanalysis (Reich, Bernfeld) and German leftist psychology ("Holzkamp's" *critical psychology*, Lorenzer's *critique of the subject*, Keupp's *critical interactionism*, etc.).

In the 1970s and 1980s some students and younger psychologists from Slovenia continued their studies and specialization at German universities, where they came into contact with critics of psychology and authors of social-critical psychological theories, in particular those which were based on critical theory of society and critical theory of psychoanalysis. The findings of German critical psychologists (in the broader sense) were important for their Slovenian followers since they showed that the domination of the ruling social structures and classes is maintained through the practical and mental disarmament of the individual in such a way that the individual is not aware of this domination and unthinkingly consents to it. As a substitute for autonomy and freedom the individual is offered apparent islands of limited freedom and individual choices. The limitations of these islands are usually concealed by a favorable material standard, by a narrowing of interests to personal and consumer ones, which leads to depoliticization and the maintenance of inequality. If this concealment does not help,

there are other means available, for example mass ideological and political indoctrination (e.g. "the defense of democracy", "socialism," "gains of the revolution," and similar). This kind of indoctrination strives to channel potential protest into manufactured clashes with a variety of external and internal "enemies."

Thus at the beginning of the 1980s we can already find some critical theoretical analyses of psychological concepts and theories (see Ule, 1981): critical authors explain the crisis of psychology as a result of the increasing irrelevance of psychological theories, inadequate and mutually contradictory theoretical concepts, and a contested self-understanding of psychology as a nomothetic science built on the model of the natural sciences. Psychology is understood as a historical science, as it was presented in 1973 by Kenneth Gergen, an American representative of the constructionist orientation in psychology. Gergen presents psychology as a historical science dealing with historically arising patterns of human social behavior, experience, and thinking based on the operation of historically arising and misappropriated social models and norms, not on the operation of pseudonatural psychological facts and social limitations on individual behavior. Such a psychology in his view cannot be value neutral, and does not have illusions that it exists and is valid outside the social contradictions in which it arose.

In 1983 the journal *Anthropos*[3] published a special section under the title *Critical Psychology*, in which there was a translation of Holzkamp's paper from the *First Congress on Critical Psychology* in 1977 on the psychological conceptualization of relations between people and their life circumstances, along with four articles contributed by Slovenian psychologists (Bahovec; Leban; Miheljak; Ule). The authors reflected on the conditions in which German critical psychology developed, the challenges it presented to psychological theorizations and research, and the limitations and paradoxes it came up against. Ule (1983) presents the social critical orientation in West Germany (the student radical movement *Zerschlagt die Psychologie*, "Holzkamp's" *critical psychology* and psychoanalytical *critical theory of the subject*), analyzes the historical context in which they developed and spread their influence in academic psychology, and their theoretical foundations. The author focuses in particular on the fundamental social and historical conditions of psychological findings and psychological phenomena, a critique of the positivist concept of psychology as a nomothetic and behavioral science, and the possibility of psychology as an emancipatory field of knowledge. Miheljak (1983), who in his analysis of Holzkamp's demarcation between traditional academic and critical psychology focuses on the problem of the epistemological value of psychological "theories," likewise concludes that these are places of crucial differences between the two approaches. In fact the central theme of Miheljak's article is Holzkamp's "positive" project of critical psychology which was to consolidate psychology anew as a science. This attempt is the subject of the critique which Bahovec and Leban direct at German critical psychology. One of the foundations of this project is the functionalist assumption which, as demonstrated by Bahovec (1983), in the last instance leads to determinism and makes it impossible for critical psychology to thematize the contradiction between the hypothetical "material interests" of people and their thinking and action, between "objective" conditions and subjective factors. It is thus a problem which the critical theory of society (Adorno, Horkheimer) successfully thematizes by simultaneously referencing both historical materialism and psychoanalysis. Leban (1983) looks at Haug's tackling of the ideological nature of traditional psychology and draws attention to the problematic "return" to the terrain of traditional psychology – to specific individual processes.

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[3] "A journal for cooperation between the humanities and natural sciences, for psychology and philosophy"

That same year the section "*A critique of academic psychology*" was organized at the Slovenian *Meeting of Psychologists*, in which, for the first time at such a large meeting, there was discussion about the crisis of psychology, the relationship between the individual and the social in conceptions of the psychological subject, and about positivism in (psychological) science. Prior to this discussion, in which psychologists who do not consider themselves (and are not considered) critical psychologists took part, these questions had already been raised within the *Slovenian Psychological Association*, in particular in its theoretical section and section for group dynamics. At the meeting in the plenary lecture Janek Musek, in an in-depth analysis of conceptions of the psychological subject, critically addressed the Cartesian and bourgeois conceptualization of the conscious subject through a radical problematization which questions the self-referentiality of the conscious subject, emphasizing that psychology is most discomfited by psychoanalysis with the concept of the unconscious, since it "takes away support from our thinking" (1984, p.15). Other articles problematized positivistic "productive eclecticism," especially the ideological nature of Piaget's developmental psychology, which was very popular in Slovenia at the time (Bahovec, 1984a, b); the problems of psychology and social sciences in general with their own scientific object and contradictions stemming from the fact that they are fated to auto-reflexivity (Čefarin, 1984); the uncritical adoption of the methodology of traditional natural sciences in psychology and the equally uncritical rejection of empirical investigation in general in some critical approaches (Miheljak, 1984); the psychologism of individualistic conceptions of "personality" (Pavlović, 1984); individualistic conceptions of social interactions in social psychology as a symptom of discomfort and fear of real interactions or of difficulties which arise immediately in crossing the safe boundary between individual psychology in and sociology (Ule, 1984).

The relationship between the individual and the social in conceptualizations of the psychological subject are also a central problem examined by Mirjana Ule in the work *Od krize psihologije h kritične psihologije* (*From the Crisis of Psychology to Critical Psychology,* 1986). In this analysis she argues the fundamental thesis that psychology is a social science and shows the ideological nature of assumptions of the natural sciences and individualistic psychological paradigm. In so doing she adheres consistently to the (psychoanalytical) thesis on the internal 'conflictedness' of the subject and the ambivalence which the social and political system cannot eliminate no matter how "good" it is. Although the author observes that the crisis of psychology has been noted many times in the short history of psychology, she believes that the crisis of psychology in the 1980s has a paradigmatic character, that it concerns the replacement of the positivistic paradigm of psychology with a reflexive and emancipatory psychology, and the need for psychologists to change from being neutral observers to positioned subjects in the research process.

As the main symptoms of the crisis the author cites the low relevance of psychological theories and findings, the fragmentation and weak interconnectedness of theories in psychology, and the failure to consider social and historical conditions of psychological phenomena and "facts," or in other words the retreat of psychology from social relevance. She finds that the most important theoretical problem of psychology is an explanation of the process of the social self-positioning of the subject, i.e. a process which encompasses everyday reproduction of those subject structures which make it possible for the subject in modern societies (whether capitalist or socialist) to apparently function smoothly without visible resistance. In the opinion of the author the crucial question is when and how this process goes wrong and how it is expressed in the psychosocial life of the individual. This

process is a mediator between the individual and (the rest of) society, since it "converts" social relationships and social interactional patterns into the individual's "inner nature" and "transfers" the individual's psychological and personality traits to their interpersonal relationships and social roles in life. Ule emphasizes that only an individual who manages to discard the mask of superficial individuality and apparent freedom offered by modern society and its influential subsystems is able to cope with the contradictions of his social self-positioning.

In the author's view the crucial contribution of critical psychology is the distinction between the actual society in which we live as integrated "social individuals" and alienated social subsystems which attempt to rise above society and act as its representatives, while subordinating all social developments to special interests (e.g. the interests of capital, political elites, powerful institutions). However, this type of distinction is dependent not only on the consciousness and knowledge of the individual but also on the social processes which bind individuals together in their common efforts to change conditions. The emancipation of individuals is then expressed as one pole of the social emancipation of people in general, which means that we are set the task of how to connect the emancipation of real societies from domination by particular social subsystems with the emancipation of real societies from appearances of superficial individuality and apparent freedom. This "task" implies relinquishing the idea of the person as a subject centered on himself who can achieve harmony in himself and between himself and the world around him without respect to general social conditions. The author concludes that the process of transformation of subject structures is universal. This universalization of subject structures comes about not only due to globalization in the economic sphere, but also due to the universalization of cultural patterns of life, models of consumption, and lifestyles. The book *From the Crisis of Psychology to Critical Psychology* triggered the first public debate on theoretical methodological problems of psychology and was published in its entirety in the journal *Anthropos* (1987). The book garnered considerable attention among philosophers, psychologists, and sociologists, yet tellingly it never became part of the curriculum studied at the Department of Psychology.

Another influential analyst of German critical psychology during that time was Vlado Miheljak, a social and political psychologist who studied under Klaus Holzkamp in Berlin. Miheljak's attention was directed the entire time on the scientific nature of psychology, on the criteria of scientificality for psychological conceptualizations, on the relationship of these conceptions towards the natural sciences and social sciences, on their contradictoriness, lack of theory, and eclecticness (Miheljak, 1983; 1984; 1985; 1990). He developed his research and findings into a book in the mid-1990s, *The Camera Obscura of Psychology* (1995).

However, these critical discussions were (and still are) confined to a relatively narrow circle of psychologists. In fact the only event that unsettled the wider "psychological public" was the publication in 1984 of a translation of French philosopher and psychoanalyst M. Tort's book *Le quotient intellectuel* (the work came out in the original in 1975). Tort's uncompromising critique of the concepts and measurement of intelligence and the use of test results deeply discomfited many psychologists. The author was most frequently criticized for not being a psychologist, and especially since he published questions from intelligence tests which are still in use. The fierce negative reactions to his book drowned out the domestic critiques of the concept and measurement of intelligence, such that not even the publication of this book stimulated broader critical debates over the use of intelligence testing, the effects of this use, or the ideological assumptions of the concept of intelligence itself.[4] [5]

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[4]Only with the 1996 *Elementary School Act* the practice of testing incoming schoolchildren was ended, and the requirement that parents give consent for the collection of any data beyond what is required for issuing reports of

The movement for the de-institutionalization of residential treatment and psychiatric institutions

In the 1970s and 1980s counseling and therapeutic practices and total institutions, along with political and social movements and critical theoretical reflection, were the focus of reflection and practical interventions. Common to all these alternative practices, which arose from critical psychological theoretical concepts, was de-institutionalization. De-institutionalization was not limited to the attempt to shut down all total institutions and replace them with alternative approaches responding to the problems of people in the environment in which they live, i.e. in a community. De-institutionalization was (and still is) also understood as an attempt to transform relations between experts and users of their services, as a shift of power to the user, and as a change in epistemology itself, and in the conceptualization of distress and assistance, recovery, and the shift from esoteric knowledge to the usualness of the exceptional (Flaker, Mali & Urek, 2008).

The process of de-institutionalization in Slovenia began in a residential treatment institution for underage boys in Gornji Logatec, where a unique project called *Experiment in Logatec* took place from 1967 to 1971 (Vodopivec, 1974). The goal of the project, which stemmed from the principles of anti-authoritarian upbringing, was a change in the educational paradigm in an institution that was otherwise highly authoritarian. The purpose of the project was to introduce different educational styles (permissiveness) and other (democratic) relations between the teachers and the residents. It was also the first action research project in which researchers and professors from the Institute of Criminology went out into the field, designed an innovation, monitored it for research purposes, and reported back on it (Skalar, 1974). The experiment had an international impact. Above all it had an important long-term impact on the profession, providing legitimacy to new methodologies in research and practice (action experiment) and the discovery of new theoretical traditions such as, for example, Lewin's field theory.

The experiment introduced the technique of "group dynamics", which also came from Lewin's school (Lewin, 1947). The leaders of the project invited international experts, among them Otto Wilfert, to assist in the establishment of sensitivity in group relations and democratic relations with residents. Psychologist and lecturer at the School of Social Work Bernard Stritih and his co-workers took part in Wilfert's "sensitivity training" sessions. Bernard Stritih at that time became a leading proponent of the development of group work and action research in Slovenia. Group dynamics as a way of changing relationships in a community was one of the fundamental ideas and tools of action research and was at the same time a technique used by professionals in their work with clients and a way of actually changing relationships, thereby also becoming an integral part of the anti-authoritarian and anti-institutional movements in Slovenia.

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pupils' progress enacted into law. However, the reason for this was not due to considerations about the concept of intelligence, the class bias of testing, and the segregational effects of test results, but rather the fact that this was required by the previously adopted *Personal Data Protection Act.*

[5] In 2000 the translation into Slovene of S. J. Gould's book *The Mismeasure of Man* was also published. This, however, did not generate much of a reaction. The fact that Gould did not publish test questions is probably not the only reason for this lack of response. The reasons could be more easily sought in the changes of the academic culture, which had become socially passive and unengaged, and in the rise of neo-liberalism, which granted psychological testing the status of a practice enabling economic selection and "human resources management."

The experiment in Logatec fundamentally changed professional views regarding the operation of residential treatment institutions in Slovenia and the operation of total social institutions in general. Professional expertise in the true sense of the word was introduced into their performance. Theory and practice were verified, and there was a coordinated effort to include all experts involved in the field of juvenile delinquency in the process of change. In addition to direct changes in residential treatment institutions, there was also a broader change in the entire system of treatment of young people and children. On the one hand this facilitated the dissemination of the new approach to educational and social work beyond a single institution, while on the other it of course contributed to better communication in the field.

In the 1970s a number of other projects for children and youth were initiated based on the experience with the group dynamics approach. At the fore was a change in relations between children and adults, but these projects were also a response to the inability of children's institutions to respond to their problems (Stritih & Mesec, 1977). Researchers, experts, and students from different fields, not just psychology, participated in these projects in an effort to develop new approaches to dealing with people's problems. One such project consisted of summer holiday (therapeutic) camps for children who were considered problematic, and who were left largely uncared during the holidays (for example, the *Rakitna Project*). These camps represented new spaces of freedom for children who for various reasons suffered deprivation. In these spaces children together with adults could explore either their repressed feelings or their internalization of authoritarian relations. Researchers did not make systematic evaluations of changes in the lives of children, but participants shared the impression that the impact of these colonies on children was very positive. Adults and children found that it was possible to achieve changes in behavior without punishment, through respectful relationships and the greater autonomy of children in decision-making. This was not only a practical critique of authoritarian relationships and a demonstration of the possibility of a different way of organization and functioning, but also an implicit critique of institutions – *ordinary* (schools, preschools) and *special* (children's hospitals, counseling services, juvenile facilities, etc.). Although the holiday camps did not directly involve specific institutions, they received considerable attention from the public.

A step from experimentation in the new space created by researchers to the real space of social organizations was represented by work in the scouting organization. This work began within the wider project of *action research in the local community of Štepanjsko naselje*[6] (Šuštaršič, Stritih & Dekleva, 1977). It dealt with the inclusion of children who had been excluded from other free time activities into a scouting organization. These were usually children who used the services of some institution, most often a counseling center, residential treatment institution, and sometimes, a psychiatric hospital. Through scouting they were included in an organization that was not intended for "special forms of education, treatment, etc." (Stritih et al., 1980; Stritih, 1981; Flaker, 1981). The scouting organization during that period was a fairly hierarchical body based on discipline and punishment. These kinds of organizations usually exclude rather than include those who are considered "disruptive". For this reason the inclusion of stigmatized children necessarily influenced the change of the organization in the direction of democratization. Anti-social, disruptive, and defiant behavior from that time on was a sign that something was wrong with the community and not with the member of the community. The democratic community worked on behalf of the welfare of those included also after their return from the summer holiday camps, when the children were

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[6] Štepanjsko naselje was one of the high-rise apartment neighborhoods in Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia.

once again included in social institutions, and this in turn influenced change in these institutions.

Summer therapeutic camps were not only a gathering place for non-conformist young people from various institutions but also for volunteers who wanted to contribute something. These were generally students of psychology and social work who wanted to develop new methods of work, learn therapies, and become meaningfully involved. Thus these colonies and camps became a sort of hub and cradle for the movement.

In addition to the summer camps, there were some other projects that took place during the same period which introduced community alternatives into traditional institutional services. Thus for example the project *Action research of groups of juvenile offenders*, led by Bojan Dekleva, researched and introduced group work, in part on the streets, in local communities and centers for social work (Dekleva, Flaker & Pečar, 1982). All this work was explicitly aimed at the transformation of institutions (Stritih, 1981), and at providing responses which institutions were not giving. There was an implicit critique of what the institution offered as well as a specific change. These projects also had an impact on research and theory: later on the work became the subject of theoretical discussion on upbringing and education (Bahovec, 1988; Baskar, 1988; Miheljak, 1988; Salecl, 1988; Ule, 1988)[7], on the theory of upbringing (Bahovec, 1990; Baskar, 1990; Kodelja, 1990)[8], on the socialist concept of the "universally developed personality."[9]

All these projects introduced and developed volunteer work, which is important for the process of transferring power to users, one of the key goals of de-institutionalization. During this time, i.e. at the beginning of the 1980s, de-institutionalization began also in the literal sense in residential treatment institutions, as indicated by the Logatec experiment. In 1981 two staff members at the Logatec institution[10] founded the first residential group in Ljubljana. In the mid-1980s a group for the reform of residential treatment institutions was founded, but the planned changes were not realized in their entirety (Dekleva et al., 1993). Theoretical and moral support for all the efforts mentioned was provided by the *Section for group dynamics and personal growth* at the *Slovenian Psychological Association*, made up of experts involved with the techniques of group work and humanistic psychotherapies, which were new at that time; they also actively participated in the projects mentioned. The section organized summer schools each year (at the end of therapeutic camps in the same location); these were intended for therapeutic and personal experience, but they also examined various innovations and provided a forum for people working to change the institutionalized system of social services (Zaviršek & Flaker, 1995).

The founding of therapy colonies and camps as outlined above, and the introduction of work in communities, was closely associated with the anti-psychiatry movement. At the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, critical intellectuals[11] and therapeutic practices became

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[7] See Problemi – Šolsko polje 1988, 1, 1.
[8] See Teorija vzgoje: Moderna ali Postmoderna? (Theory of upbringing: Modern or Postmodern?) Šolsko polje 1990, 3.
[9] The Pedagogical Institute organized a colloquium in 1985 on this topic, as part of studies on the development of personality. A wide circle of philosophers, psychologists, teachers, and sociologists took part, and a collection of proceedings entitled *Vsestransko razvita osebnost? (Universally developed personality?)* was published in Problemi 1985, 4.
[10] Franci Imperl and Irena Benedik
[11] Joint issue of *Problemi*, 10-12 and *Časopis za kritiko znanosti, domišljijo in novo antropologijo*, 11, (1975), devoted to anti-psychiatry

an important element in Slovenia. A landmark event in this respect was the founding of the *Society for Mental Health Assistance.* Among social psychiatric attempts can also be considered the founding of the *Vsemirje Club for the Prevention of Drug Addiction* (Krese Šalamun, & Ziherl, 1975). This was a space for experimentation intended for youth who enthusiastically embraced alternative ideologies and lifestyles. The club organized various events and workshops for yoga, macrobiotics, massage, as well as new forms of humanistic psychotherapy (for "normal" people) and experimental theatre—in this alternative space (and at that time there were very few alternative spaces of any kind) a community of young people was indeed created. The actors in these developments began to link up with a network of alternatives to psychiatry in the Yugoslav space, a crowning achievement of which was the conference *Psychiatry and Society*[12] in Belgrade (1987), at which participants also met with David Cooper and Felix Guattari.

In the second half of the 1980s the effort to de-institutionalize mental health care continued. One of the most important projects was the attempt to de-institutionalize the psychiatric hospital of Hrastovec (located in a castle), which was a synonym for an almost completely sealed off total institution.[13] In 1987, on the initiative of staff in Hrastovec, the first international youth camp was organized there.[14] The goal of the camp was to open up the institution and introduce forms of work into it which would be respectful of the residents and meet their needs more closely. The project itself originated from the anti-psychiatric movement which was being realized in the immediate vicinity, in the closing of psychiatric hospitals in Trieste, headed by Franco Basaglia. Theoretically the project was based on Goffman's conception of stigmatized identity and the analysis of total institutions, and on the Foucauldian analysis of disciplinary societies. In collaboration with Hrastovec, a few more camps were organized with Hrastovec residents outside Hrastovec – in Ljubljana, Portorož, and Idrija. These camps demonstrated that closing off residents was in no way a necessity, and activists in the framework of these camps prepared for the opening up of a social space and disseminated critical awareness of total institutions and the injustices which happen to people with long-term mental health problems.

In 1988 a group of young professionals organized the *Committee for the Social Protection of Madness*, which still operates today under the name *Altra – Committee for Innovation in Mental Health.* The *Committee*, which along with others (ecologists, peace activists, women, etc.) operated as a "new social movement" under the umbrella of the youth organization, became a gathering place for volunteers and young professionals in need of protection and support. Their most notable action was support to heroin users, who demanded access to methadone therapy – this therapy later on became in fact established, and one of the long-term successes of the movement was the founding of the society *Stigma*, which carries out a program for reducing the damaging effects of use of illegal drugs.

Thus in less than a decade (1976-1984) in Slovenia the continuity of summer (therapeutic) camps was established and a network of volunteers and engaged experts was created, mainly in the field of work with children and young people. This network was associated with research and university circles and included in an international network of anti-institutional movements. It developed practices of group and community work and began to link up with political processes and agents of political change. In this way the movement, which was at

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[12] Organized by Lepa Mladenović; Gabi Čačinovič, Ana Rojnik and Vito Flaker took part.
[13] The Hrastovec institution followed the principles of de-institutionalization fairly successfully.
[14] Led by psychologist Vito Flaker, at that time teaching assistant at the School for Social Workers (today the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Ljubljana).

first directed towards individuals, at the end of the 1970s became increasingly articulated and radically socially critical. In the next phase, from 1985 to 1990, it was an important factor in the alternative political movement which was based on respect for human rights and which expanded the space for citizen initiatives. Throughout it functioned as a movement – without a formal structure and organization, and supported by the youth organization (see note 2).

Conclusion

The influence of the critique of positivism and the problematization of the unreflected ideological assumptions and epistemological foundations of psychology in the 1970s and 1980s in Slovenia in different fields of psychological sciences and practices was as strong as individual critical theoreticians, researchers, and therapists managed to assert. Programs and projects whose goal was the empowerment of the marginalized (people with mental health problems, users of illegal drugs, people with physical, sensory, and mental disabilities, the homeless, members of ethnic and sexual minorities, refugees), and the protection of their rights and de-stigmatization, have been continuing the tradition of the movements from the 1980s. In addition to individuals from that time who are still active, new generations of volunteers continue these programs and projects and further develop them.

The process of reflection of psychological concepts continued after 1990; however, it appears that it had less of an impact compared to that of the preceding couple of decades. In 1991a group of younger psychologists took active part in a congress on critical psychology in Vienna entitled *Gemeinsamkeiten und Differenzen einer kritischen Psychologie*, at which for the first time there was a marked schism between the older critical psychologists and younger critically oriented social psychologists (Keupp, Rommelspacher). M. Ule presented the paper *Psychology and postmodern subjects* at the congress, and discussed the possibilities and impossibilities of psychological intervention and the need to emphasize once again the extent to which new tendencies in the development of subjective structures allow something like critical and emancipatory psychology. Other presenters also addressed new conditions of contemporary life, which move between increasingly greater possibilities of action and ever new risks. All of this has an influence on new patters of everyday life, social relations, and identities.

The earliest issues of *Psihološka obzorja (Horizons of Psychology)*, an academic journal published since 1992 by the *Slovenian Psychological Association*, promised a lively continuation of critical production through the publication of theoretical debates on the scientific status of psychology and the un-reflected ideological assumptions of key psychological concepts. Among other papers, in 1994 it published a translation of the work by E. Roudinesco *Situation d'un texte: qu'est-ce que la Psychologie*? (the original came out in 1993). In this work Roudinesco starts from the radical Canguilhemian critique of psychology as a "science" without an identity, based on the principle of the utility of a human being, not seeking anything other than an always questionable efficiency; as such it is a crucial element in power-relations. After 1990 some important monographs by Slovenian critical psychologists also came out which explicitly problematized psychological concepts, e.g. *The Camera Obscura of Psychology* by V. Miheljak (1995), *Body and Power* by D. Rutar (1995), *Kindergartens for Today* (eds. Bahovec and Kodelja 1996), *Modern Identities in the Whirlwind of Discourses* by M. Ule (2000), and the collection *Prejudices and Discrimination* (Ule, ed., 1999), which deconstructed the individualistic conceptualization of these political and social phenomena.

Critical theoretical reflection from that time onward has less frequently directly addressed concepts developed by psychology as a branch of knowledge. At the core of critical theorizations and research are the processes of subjectivization, stigmatization, and exclusion; one of the crucial theoretical frameworks is theoretical psychoanalysis. Processes of subjectivization and identification (gender and sexuality, marginalized ethnicities, physical handicaps, mental health, addiction, etc.), values, political and life orientations are examined by critical authors in the contexts of social and political inequality, subordination and domination, institutional barriers and stigmatization processes. In this way new theoretical and research areas are created in which the traditional boundaries between scientific disciplines are blurred, and new centers of theoretical thinking emerge which grapple with psychological phenomena in a manner cultivated and encouraged (also) by critical psychology. This does not mean that the "division of labor" among disciplines studying humans no longer exists. In academic psychology in Slovenia, for example, conceptualizations of the person, personality, self, "subject" which are reduced socially to the interpersonal, to "specific others," still predominate, while an analysis of contexts in which these mutual relationships are constituted is left to sociology and other social sciences. At the same time one of the crucial questions of critical approaches is avoided: how to conceptualize the psychic as always-already social. Thus even G. H. Mead's interactionist theory of the self does not garner particular attention in prevailing conceptualizations, and even less so psychoanalysis with the concept of the unconscious (despite the otherwise influential theoretical psychoanalysis in Slovenia). One of the symptoms of the division of labor among disciplines is also the fact that in Slovenia only rarely do critical approaches directly confront cognitive and positivist approaches. A sort of "peaceful" coexistence rules among them, as Canguilhem (1989) would say, but this is more a consequence of lack of communication than mutual acknowledgement.[15] Psychologists who, based on their attitude towards the prevailing paradigms in academic psychology, conceptualizations of psychological phenomena and/or practical work with users of psychological services, can be classified among critical psychologists generally speaking do not work in central "psychological" institutions (i.e. they work outside the departments of psychology, the psychological society, and also rarely publish in Slovenian academic journals in psychology).

German critical psychology in the 1960s raised the question of how to find a space for non-bourgeois engagement and how – if at all – "to remain a psychologist while so doing" (in Ule, 1983, p. 135). This "if at all" is today because on the one hand the division of labor among disciplines is in no way essential, and on the other hand, there is practically no productive dialogue between critical approaches and traditional positivism that is any more current than that that occurred 40 or 50 years ago.

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[15] One of the rare attempts at a (re)establishment of a dialogue was a discussion on identity at the 2002 Congress of Slovenian Psychologists (participating were Bečaj, Ule, Musek, Černigoj, Mencin Čeplak).

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