

- **with Stephen Cowden**

If you want to participate, mail to rudi.roose@ugent.be (mention seminar 1 or 2, or both)

Seminar 1 - Re-thinking Radicalisation and De-radicalisation

Monday June 26, 2023, 9.00 till 12.30 at Artevelde University of Applied Sciences, Campus St. Annaplein

- 9.00 – 9.30 Introduction by Rudi Roose (Ghent University)
- 9:30 - 10:15 Presentation by Stephen Cowden, Cathal Lynch and Tom Robinson (University of Gloucestershire)

‘Supremacism’: A paradigm for conceptualising the ideologies behind Radicalisation

Stephen, Cathal and Tom will open the discussion talking about their work on the ideologies which are used in the process of radicalisation, considered from a Social Work safeguarding perspective in the UK, the area they are both working in and researching. We argue firstly that the ideologies and ideas used within processes of radicalisation need to be seen as important in their own right and not simply as a reaction to wider social issues and difficulties. We then point to what we see as a series of common ideological features within the key different forms of radicalisation; Salafi-jihadism, Neo-Nazism and the newly emerging ‘Manosphere’. While we fully recognise that each of these has its own distinctive history, language, and development, from the perspective of those working in Safeguarding and preventative work in this area there is great value in understanding the common features in the structure of the arguments used to radicalise people. We use the term ‘supremacism’ to characterise this common ideological formation and argue this can form a valuable paradigm for conceptualising these issues. The UK’s Prevent duty has been a legal requirement for Local Authorities, Education, and the NHS since 2015, but research indicates many still ‘lack confidence’ in working with children and young people at risk of radicalisation. It is our contention that central to developing confidence in de-radicalisation work involves a greater understanding of the role of ideology in radicalisation. This sits alongside an understanding of the circumstances in which people become susceptible to the political message of ‘supremacist’ political movements.

- 10.15 – 10.30 Break
- 10:30 – 11:15 Presentation by Bart Van Bouchaute and Denoix Kerger (Artevelde University of Applied Sciences)

Get Up Stand Up. From ‘de-radicalisation’ to ‘re-politicisation’ with young people?

Bart and Denoix examined the effects of the Flemish policies on the prevention of ‘radicalisation’ on youth work with young people in a socially vulnerable situation. The involved organisations rejected these policies because of their stigmatising effects on the youngsters and the undermining of their trust bond with youth workers. However, their pedagogical approach, focused on individual identity development, involved a paradox: protecting youngsters against the stigmatising effects of the radicalisation discourse, but trumping out politicising work on perceived injustices. We developed a conceptual framework for a ‘repoliticisation approach’ as an alternative to the dominant ‘deradicalisation approach’. In action research we translated this towards a practical action framework by analysing how key elements could support youth workers in practices of politicisation. The results were translated into the manual ‘Get Up Stand Up’ and tested in training modules (Van Bouchaute et al. 2022). The research shows the need to (re)train youth workers to support young people in their struggle against different forms of injustice.

- 11:15 – 12:00 What can we learn about Radicalisation and Deradicalisation in the UK and Belgium?

An open conversation between everyone into the issues raised by both of these presentations, thinking about safeguarding and other social work responses to radicalisation and the similarities and differences in the legal and political context of both Belgium and UK.

- 12.00 Lunch

Seminar 2 - Social Work Under the Pressure of the Extreme Right

Tuesday June 27, 2023, 13:30-16:00 at FPPW UGent, Dunantlaan 2

- 13.30 – 14.00 Introduction by Rudi Roose (Ghent University)
- 14.00 – 15.00 Lecture Stephen Cowden (University of Gloucestershire)

Stephen Cowden will initiate this session which looks at the impact which the growth of the far right is having and is likely to have on Social Work as a profession, joined by Cathal and Tom.

The discussion begins with an account of the way the Extreme Right mobilised against lockdown measures during the Covid Pandemic. While 'anti-vaxxer' movements were politically diverse, he argues that far right used the Covid crisis as an opportunity to place their conspiratorial narratives before a wider audience, using a rhetoric of victimisation around pandemic related restrictions masks their deep authoritarianism and profound racism and misogyny. They draw on the same rhetoric in their use 'white replacement' theory, which is the key idea animating the contemporary far right, in both its secular and religious manifestations, and is related to the wider use of conspiracy theory and the strategic use of disinformation, particularly in the online space.

This points to the wider strategy the far right, which is growing both in the form of a social movement and as political parties seeking election and in some instances in government. We ask specifically what the growth of this means for Social Work; both in terms of Social Work's values, but also at the level of Social Work practice. Social Workers in the UK and Europe are now practicing in a context where conspiratorial narratives and ideologies are capturing the wider political imaginary, and where people are experiencing a radical level of uncertainty, insecurity, and distrust of state institutions, including Social Work, living as we in what Wendy Brown has called 'the ruins of Neoliberalism'. What does the rise of this language of blame and of shadowy forces controlling people's lives mean for social work practice? Can social work play a part in the process of imagining a more hopeful future?

- 15.00 – 16.00: Debate, chaired by Bart Van Bouchaute (Artevelde University of Applied Sciences)

Dr Stephen Cowden is Senior Lecturer in Social Work and Research Lead for Social Work at the University of Gloucestershire. He is a member of the editorial collective of the Journal *Feminist Dissent* and his most recent contribution to the journal is (with Nira Yuval-Davis) 'Contested Narratives of the Pandemic Crisis: the Far Right, Anti-Vaxxers and Freedom of Speech' *Feminist Dissent* Issue 6. He also jointly edited *The Routledge Handbook for Critical Pedagogies in Social Work* (2019).

Cathal Lynch is a PhD student in Social Work at the University of Gloucestershire whose work concerns looking at the UK Prevent Policy conceptualises processes of radicalisation. His background is as a children's Social Worker, particularly with children in care. He brings both the practical experience of this area of Social Work and his research looking at the way social workers are working with radicalisation and Prevent means.

Tom Robinson is a Prevent Practitioner/Deputy Named Safeguarding Professional in a mental health trust in the south of England. His role includes providing training to staff on Prevent and safeguarding, consultations on safeguarding and radicalisation, and representing the Trust at Channel Panels across Sussex. His prior experience includes Social Work in Children's Services and he also holds experience working in Prevent as Channel Coordinator. Tom is currently completing a part-time PhD in Social Work on the 'radicalisation of masculinity' and aims to develop a tool to support social works to safeguard young men from radicalisation.

Bart Van Bouchaute and **Denoix Kerger** are lecturers in the Social work program of Artevelde University of Applied Sciences. In recent years, they conducted research (with other colleagues) on the counterproductive effects of the prevention of 'radicalisation' and developed frameworks for 'repoliticisation' as an alternative approach.

Dr. Rudi Roose is professor of social work at Ghent University and chair of the Department of Social Work and Social Pedagogy.