

## THE MEANING OF RADICALISATION IN MODERN SOCIAL PEDAGOGY

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**Abstract/Izveček** The article defines radicalisation as part of the processes of modern liberation, which are recognised in the interlacement of emancipatory potential in social pedagogy and mobilisation in the theory of community development. In parallel to this, we problematise the internally divided socio-pedagogical attitude, which, on the one hand, seeks to liberate, and on the other hand, is repeatedly caught in the preservation of existing “oppressive” power relations. In doing so, we consider the concerns regarding political action as the goal of “radicalising” social pedagogy, which indicate that in social pedagogy we have internalized collaboration as a democratic “norm” of solving social and other societal issues and thus accepted it as the only formally realistic option to achieve structural change.

### **Pomen radikalizacije v sodobni socialni pedagogiki**

V prispevku definiramo radikalizacijo tudi kot del procesov novodobnega osvobajanja, ki jih prepoznamo v prepletu emancipacijskega potenciala v socialni pedagogiki in mobilizacijske dimenzije v teoriji razvoja skupnosti. Vzporedno problematiziramo notranje razcepljeno socialnopedagoško držo, ki po eni strani želi osvobajati, po drugi pa se vedno znova ujame v ohranjanje obstoječih »zatiralskih« oblastnih razmerij. Pri tem upoštevamo pomisleke v zvezi s politično akcijo kot ciljem »radikalizirajoče« socialne pedagogike, ki kažejo na to, da smo v socialni pedagogiki ponotranjili sodelovanje kot demokratično »normo« reševanja socialne in druge družbene problematike in jo s tem sprejeli kot edino formalno realno možnost za doseganje strukturnih sprememb.

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## Introduction

Social pedagogy, like work focused on community development, is a highly socially sensitive science (discipline) and profession, and as such is constantly faced with new challenges, which are primarily in the anticipation of responding and adjusting to rapid socio-political changes. In addition, it is a science that calls for critical reflection and social critique and is thus continuously positioned on the continuum of the dichotomy between the more radical and more conservative dimension of response/action. Its position on the continuum is mostly related to the socio-political order and its current situation. Referring to historical analyses (such as that of H. Marburger (1987)), it can be said that in times of turbulent social and political events (often in connection with economic crises), social pedagogy often takes a more radical, even revolutionary position; on the other hand, with the tendency to calm down social conflict, it seeks alternative options, acts as a peacemaker, a proponent of consensus and is thus more conservative (also curative). Despite the appearance of a predominant dimension (more radical or more conservative) over a period, social pedagogy mostly oscillates between one and the other dimension at the same time, making it internally split, contradictory, and sometimes incoherent. Regardless of the current position of social pedagogy in this dichotomy between the alternative and the conservative, both have in common a lack of the courage of hopelessness, which prevents us from experiencing “the trembling with complete negativity” and testifies to being trapped in a modern apocalyptic situation, as described by A. Zupančič Žerdin (2019, p. 86): “In an apocalyptic world, in the idle course of normalization and adjusting to one thing after another, day after day, our attitude toward the world is so ‘healthy’ that *it is even too healthy*. We have the strength and courage to endure everything.” Which means that the alternative, the potential, the “radicalising”, even the revolutionary, which are “stored” in the emancipatory potential, can be reduced to collaboration and adjustment at any cost, to eliminate conflict and establish “peace”. A good example of the latter is “reconciliation with fate” in the field of additional professional assistance and its arrangement in primary school, as stated by Š. Razpotnik (2014).

Even though the socio-pedagogical profession, with its professional views and moral and ethical concerns, draws attention to the anomalies of the existing arrangement, and with which practitioners also do not agree, both the academics and practitioners adjust to the current arrangement through rationalisation in the sense that it is better this way than being unable to implement such assistance at all.

The internally divided, ambivalent attitude is thus, in a way, a desirable, modern attitude of social pedagogical workers that more than fits political ideologies that abuse democratic values. It is about “peacefulness” (in the sense of an absence of conflict at all levels of functioning as a democratic norm) overriding activism or radicalisation according to Freire (2019), based on humanism (but not naïve humanism), freedom, and human/child rights. Such an attitude lacks the courage of hopelessness, the courage to perceive the hopelessness of a situation, which would allow them the possibility of another and therefore free choice as defined by Lacan and Hegel (Zupančič Žerdin, 2019). Free choice, however, plays a key role in the attitude of revolutionaries, as defined by Freire (2019), as it moves away from mere apparent efforts for change and is fuelled by the courage of hopelessness. In this way, it is radicalised and realized in a creative, critical, and liberated action when it comes to devotion to the chosen (moral-ethical, *author’s note*) position, to the extent that it no longer accepts established democratic ways of “peaceful warfare” (only in the form of collaboration and the search for social consensus at all costs) but, according to Freire (*ibid.*), patiently and persistently engages in efforts to change concrete objective reality (including by provoking social conflict, but not by forms of malignant aggression, as Fromm (2013) describes).

L. Eriksson (2011) also finds that, in the spirit of democracy, social pedagogy has, along with community work or community development and like most socially sensitive sciences, assimilated to action aimed at collaboration and the search for consensus, which moves it away from a more radical (also more political) approach to social reflection and critique through social conflict. As such, modern social pedagogy is more conservative, adaptive, also normative, and (still) has the function of a fig leaf, as defined by A. Frommann (Kobolt, 2001). In a way, the author (*ibid.*) comes to terms with the latter when she mentions that it is precisely because of this function that social pedagogy remains a relevant profession, although that function limits it.

Such a remark, probably taken out of a context in which there was no room for the broader development of thought, could also be understood as a surrender to fate, i.e., the acceptance that social pedagogy no longer contains socio-critical discourse and potential or a tendency to change, which could also be perceived in modern Slovenian social pedagogy. Without socio-critical discourse, it is transformed merely into the development of methods that make it recognizable and different from other sciences (*ibid.*), while at the same time it is subject to the traps of reductionism and instrumentalization (Lorenz, 2008).

Hämäläinen (2015), in contrast to A. Frommann (but 14 years later), says that he recognizes many societal (including socio-critical, *author's note*), general and therefore transnational and transdisciplinary topics within socio-pedagogical theory, such as ethics, gender, class, addiction, crime and poverty. The latter connects social pedagogy with the relationship between democracy and education, which in a way also establishes it as a political theory (*ibid.*). The author (*ibid.*) points out that, in terms of theory, social pedagogy has a completely emancipatory “nature”, since the focus of theoretical interest is mostly the moral-ethical aspect rather than the technical-rational one, and in it, the socio-ethical and socio-political issues and values are exposed.

L. Eriksson (2011) connects the reflections of A. Frommann (Kobolt, 2001) and Hämäläinen (2015), when in seeking common ground between “community development” and social pedagogy, she points out that in both, the mobilisation, caring (welfare) and democratic dimensions intertwine and include aspects of direct (methodical) action in practice as well as social criticism. The common thread of relationships between these dimensions is the “search for” or establishment of a balance between the collective (group, community, social) and the individual (*ibid.*); therefore, the dynamics of relationships is often contradictory, ambiguous, and especially related to historical and socio-cultural background. In the article, the author (Eriksson, 2011) focuses mostly on mobilisation in connection with the theory of community development (or work focused on community development), which can be a starting point for thinking about a socio-critical or even “radicalising” social pedagogy.

In the current social situation, when in the “Western world” we live individualism as a consequence of neoliberalism and capitalism, we can find sociological discussions similar to Galimberti's (2015a, 2015b), which (sometimes almost excessively and without critical distance) emphasize the importance of community for the holistic development of an individual.

Thus, there is a tendency to re-strengthen the caring and even more the mobilizing dimension in the community, taking into account the democratic principle, in which case, according to L. Eriksson (2011), it is about “liberation of citizens” with the help of human and material resources. According to the author (*ibid.*), those activities become crucial in which both social pedagogical workers and community members (citizens) act as agents in social change. The latter, however, is not produced by provoking social conflict, but through (dialogical, *author's note*) education that influences all the actors involved by mobilizing them, which in turn leads to a change in structures. Freire (2019) speaks similarly about problematic, dialogical education, which is already more radicalised, and Flaker (2012) describes this mode of action – through education, as one of the non-authoritarian practices (which we assess as radicalising social pedagogy) which are part of modern (social) movements. By describing the latter, he upgrades L. Eriksson's (2011) definitions, since he believes that modern movements “do not liberate, but occupy spaces, especially public ones, and re-appropriate them” (Flaker, 2012, p. 9). In this way, they are still a threat to the “empire” that wants the land/space for itself but move away from violence (although they are also likely to provoke social conflict, *author's note*). They are based on the rule of democracy of direct action, the basic starting point of which is the proposals that the actors are prepared to implement (*ibid.*).

Even though we are aware that social pedagogy and its practices cannot avoid being trapped in the machinery of capitalism, as described by A. Zupančič Žerdin (2019), or precisely because of this, from the point of view of developing socio-pedagogical theory, we find it important to revive, upgrade (also radicalise in the Freirean sense, *author's note*) and systematically develop the emancipatory potential, the mobilizing dimension of this science. Thus, modern neoliberal capitalist society demanded the reconceptualization of many fields (including scientific-professional ones) and transformations within the language. However, these processes were not followed by change in the form of social consciousness, “as the latter persist in ideological oxymorons, which largely disables the appropriate potential emancipatory action and facilitates the management of society” (Zadnikar, 2015, p. 21).

This is the case, for example, with the concept and notion of democracy, in which Badiou (2013, in Zupančič Žerdin, 2019) asks himself what the “phallic emblem” or the “authentic symbol” of our present time would be. He places the symbol in the word “democracy” and the way the latter works today. He says that the signifier “democracy” is in no way hidden; however, what is hidden, and what the author wants to point out is that it acts as a “phallus of our time” or even as our fetish.

He states: “Today, being a Democrat is a sentimental necessity. The brutal naked power that destroys us begins to be recognized and even loved by everyone the moment it is covered up with the word ‘democracy’” (Badiou, 2013, p. 213, in Zupančič Žerdin, 2019, p. 90). Therefore, when we problematize the democratic principle or democracy, we are talking about the ideological (ab)use of this concept, which is under the power of the ideology of happiness – as the absence of frustrations and conflicts – and promotes only one way of solving social problems (which is suitable to the government): collaboration aimed at peace or apparent consensus. With the latter, we have in mind the attitude towards the world, which is even too healthy and tolerates everything (Zupančič Žerdin, 2019) when it comes to collaboration, social adjustment at any cost with zero tolerance for violence, which does not distinguish between malignant and benign aggression, according to Fromm (2013), and in the absence of a “boss” (as A. Zupančič Žerdin (2019) speaks of him) is the only possible one. Non-authoritarian practices of modern “liberation” or reoccupation of space (let alone attempts to provoke social conflict) can be presented as violence in such an ideological discourse of power, despite all the peacefulness that significantly distinguishes them from more radical revolutionary movements (as known from the 1960s and 1970s), which also supported violence in the name of the struggle.

In favour of stepping out of “ideological contamination”, the paper first aims to define radicalization based on Freire's (2019) definition, with the help of critical comparative theoretical analysis, and then to define and highlight the importance of radicalizing processes of modern liberation for modern social pedagogy with the help of the intertwining of emancipatory potential in social pedagogy and mobilisation in community development theory in the national and international context.

In the discussion, we pursue the following objectives: 1. Problematizing the internally divided, ambivalent attitude of social pedagogy / social pedagogical workers, which on the one hand, and mostly only seemingly, seeks to liberate, and on the other hand, is repeatedly caught in maintaining the existing oppressive power relations; 2. Innovative integration of the emancipatory potential of social pedagogy and the dimension of mobilisation from the community development theory (especially at the macro level); 3. Defining radicalization also as a possible way out of the dichotomy of the conservative vs the alternative; and 4. Seeking more effective, “radicalising” socio-pedagogical interventions (actions).

Concerning the objectives, we answer four basic research questions: 1. How (if at all) to intervene and overcome the characteristic dichotomous constellations of this science, profession, and occupation by problematizing the internal fragmentation and ambivalence of social pedagogy on both the theoretical and practical level?; 2. How to connect the socio-pedagogical emancipatory potential and mobilisation from community development theory in a new, innovative way?; 3. How to upgrade the radicalization according to Freire (2019) to offer a more pervasive, almost revolutionary alternative to the current internally divided social pedagogy?; and 4. Which are the possible modern, radicalising liberation practices?

However, since we enter the discussion with an awareness of the impact of individualization (Zorc Maver, 1997), focusing only on the lone individual (Zadnikar, 2015), the grip of instrumentalization and reductionism (Lorenz, 2008; Kobolt, 2001) and other social processes, caution would be advisable in understanding and interpreting all activist-coloured notions that can expect (too) much from radicalization and revolutionism in social pedagogy, although we would already define our discussions and proposals in the paper as radicalising, even revolutionary for the profession and science.

### **The importance of modern radicalising content and practices in social pedagogy**

To avoid terminological confusion, we will first define how we understand the concept of modernity in the article and connect it with the concept of radicalization as the central concept of the discussion.

“Modern” in our case is associated with recent times or the present, but for accurate theoretical analysis, we find it necessary to define modernity in terms of time (quantitatively) and semantically (qualitatively), especially in the case of fledgling Slovenian social pedagogy. Therefore, could we say that when we talk about modern Slovenian social pedagogy, we talk about all 30 years of social pedagogy in Slovenia? In a way, the answer is yes, because it is based on modern findings of foreign socio-pedagogical theories and practices that we have implemented (and still do) in Slovenia. Also, from the humanistic point of view, the very beginnings of socio-pedagogical activity in Slovenia could be defined as modern and contemporary (taking into account the qualitative rather than quantitative meaning of both words), unlike some current socio-pedagogical practices (as well as theoretical discussions), which have undergone processes of “correction”, merely tertiary prevention and normativity, and are, in this qualitative sense, obsolete.

That is why we will not limit ourselves to a quantitative definition in relation to modernity, but only to a qualitative one, in which the criterion for modernity is objective and not the ideological adequacy of a professional/theoretical perspective, concept, practice, activity, etc. for the present time, current socio-political events, the demands of society, social reality, etc., which at the same time maintains a specific socio-pedagogical value, moral and ethical mission and socio-critical attitude.

From the point of view of socio-critical distance/reflection and socio-political events, the question of modernity is still relevant, because *modern* in our case does not necessarily mean being in accordance with current socio-political expectations if they are strongly ideological. Liberating social pedagogy (through the process of radicalization (Freire, 2019)) should recognize such ideologically contaminated expectations and respond to them following its mission, vision, and values, as written in the Code of Ethics for Workers in the Field of Social Pedagogy (2004), to meet the set criterion of professional and scientific adequacy. When we talk about radicalisation, we think of the criticism that fuels creativity and liberates, “involves a greater commitment to the chosen position and therefore allows for greater engagement in efforts to change concrete, objective reality” (Freire, 2019, p. 11). At the same time, it is about the ever-present “alternative” thinking, social-critical action, and thoughtful activism, as described by Flaker (2012) and Freire (2019).

In his work *Direktno socialno delo* (Direct social work), Flaker (2012) presents a collage of theoretical alternatives and thoughtful activism, which presents us with an example of radicalising practices.



We understand the latter as the realization (process) of radicalization, and we also want this in social pedagogy. The work (ibid.) is about Exit in the broadest possible sense of the word (or at least an attempt to do so), which we want to emphasize by using a capital letter. In the present article, we replace the term Fight for, which was used by Flaker (2012) to describe events related to Direct social work, with the term Exit. In this sense, the meaning of the word Exit is both an abstract and a practical category, although we are aware that, as an ideal and in this sense a norm, it is easier to think about it in theory than in practice.

Namely, the notion of Exit raises doubts about whether it is possible to leave a certain ideology at all without already being part of another (on both an abstract and a practical level), as well as concerns expressed by A. Zupančič Žerdin (2019) regarding the feasibility of an individual's exit from capitalism, which proves to be a practically impossible move.

Nevertheless, we define Exit as primarily a more radical (even radicalising) struggle against the interlacement of prevailing ideologies (from political, scientific and professional, to purely practical), in which social pedagogical workers are also trapped. It is based on the rule of the democracy of direct action and does not ask what we could do but what we will do and, in this sense, it plans concrete activities (ibid.). We believe that the search for and implementation of such responses are also required in socio-pedagogical activities, which could in the long term contribute to a liberating transition from the corrective, adaptive, and purely integrative to the participatory, inclusive, and multicultural work environment and practices at all levels of operation. On the other hand, in the spirit of the rule of direct action, it would be necessary to seek and persistently demand answers to the question of why the Exit (of Direct social work) had and still has a limited action range, which we have already indicated by problematizing the Exit from ideology.

According to Freire (2019), the process of radicalization is included in the pedagogical (also political) action as such, since the latter is defined as problematizing education and thus as a revolutionary future. It is thus prophetic, offers hope, and “is a humanistic and liberating act” (ibid., p. 64), which presupposes the emancipation of the oppressed (which is not possible without provoking social conflict). It can be implemented only by a society that has carried out a revolution without any of the revolutionary leaders taking power.

When we introduce Freire's (2019) revolutionary pro-active principle, it should be noted that “on the outskirts of the developed world, where individualisation and disintegration of the community have not reached so deep and the new political subjectivities are still able to establish a recovery of the community”, appears a whole range of transformations of pedagogical and social action, also as a result of local needs (Zadnikar, 2015, p. 18, 19). Therefore, such a pro-active principle could serve as a model and inspiration for radicalising (social) pedagogic action in (Western) European countries; however, the cultural and socio-political differences of such conceptual transfer should be considered.

The essence of this principle is the dialogic nature of education, which is recognized as a practice of freedom (Freire, 2019, p. 73): “If the problematizing concept of education is to be a practice of freedom, its dialogic nature must begin not only when teachers-students find themselves with students-teachers in a pedagogical situation, but earlier when the first one wonders what they will talk about with the others. This concern for the content of the dialogue is, in fact, a concern for the program content of education.”

The latter does not imply subordination or imposition but is “an organised, systematic and in-depth return to the people of what the people have previously handed over to the teacher/student in an unstructured way” (ibid., p. 74). With this type of action and education, we are not only in apparent participation, but we live full participation, in which the roles of teacher and student are constantly exchanged and coordinated regarding the content of education and cooperation. In such an organisation, the key role is played by the people, in which we include all stakeholders of the revolutionary educational processes and socio-pedagogical activity, both teachers and students, social pedagogical workers, users and clients. We believe that Freire's (2019) argumentation and explanation of the use of the terms teacher/student and the people tend to eliminate authoritarian, hierarchically conditioned practices of power, in favour of the dialogical negotiation of a non-authoritarian leader, an “authentic revolutionary” (ibid., p. 75), whose sole purpose is the liberation of the people (of which he himself is a part) in constant cooperation with them. It is because of that argument that we maintain the concept of the people in other parts of the text, which do not relate to Freire (2019), but with the difference that in those sections the term is used in quotation marks.

In this way, we also seek to emphasize the importance of radicalization within the symbolic, i.e., language, which is not an insignificant part of the problematizing, dialogic education that liberates and of the participatory discourse.

Full participation, originating from the life world of “the people” is, among other things, the vision of social pedagogy and its practices, which is also stated by Marovič and Bajželj (2015, p. 26) who point out that “participation, as a basic premise of human rights and democratic society, offers different ways of communication, integration, and the design of aid processes. It represents a fundamental element of socio-pedagogical orientation in the life world of an individual and means the opening of various opportunities for developing social skills, building identity, gaining self-reliance, self-confidence, developing prosocial behaviour, opportunities for cooperation, co-organization, and empowerment of an individual.”

However, contemporary sociological debates (Galimberti 2015a, 2015b; Rutar 2002; Salecl 2017, etc.) point out that these (socio)pedagogical practices under the influence of capitalism and neoliberalism are increasingly losing their “visionary character” and resorting either to “naïve humanism” and/or to productivity/goal orientation, which measures only the effect, efficiency or even surplus of work; in both cases, they therefore come to terms with the funding concept of educational activity by adapting to the situation.

The latter could be prevented by a sensitive, patient, humanist, and “revolutionary” leadership/leader, in which the object of action “is the reality to be transformed by them together with other people” (Freire, 2019, p. 74). Only in this way can we get to know the actual living situation and the efforts and aspirations of the people, which then serves as a starting point for composition of the program content of education or political activity. In this way, we also avoid the political trap pointed out by Úcar (2013) and which will be specifically discussed below, namely, that socio-pedagogical activity is expected to provide momentary, ad hoc, and imposed solutions to structural problems and direct intervention in system structures. Here we defend Hämäläinen's (2015) thesis, which says that socio-pedagogical theory and practice are always political, but at the same time we heed Freire's (2019) warning that this is precisely why it is necessary to critically evaluate the living situations of the educators, politicians, and the people, which makes it possible to “understand the structural conditions in which the thought and language of the people are dialectically framed” (ibid., p. 78).

It follows that the program content (socio-pedagogical, *author's note*) of the action is the domain of both the leaders (teachers, politicians, social pedagogical workers, etc.) and the people (*ibid.*), and therefore, according to Úcar (2013), non-political or indirectly political. The author (*ibid.*) on this point somewhat differs from Freire (2019), believing that we need to clarify the limits of socio-pedagogical action, and thus in some way he recognizes the “investment” model of politics with top-down, enforced structural measures, while Freire (2019) speaks of liberating, problematizing education as the only truly humanistic and political practice, whose sole aim is the liberation of the people.

### **The intersection of emancipatory potential and mobilisation as a driving force for radicalising socio-pedagogical social activity**

As we can see, our conception of radicalising activity includes both the tendency toward emancipation of science, the profession, and all its stakeholders, i.e. the emancipatory potential, as well as the mobilisation through which this potential should be expressed in a way that would provoke social, structural, professional and also political changes important for the profession. Therefore, we are talking about radicalization as an intersection of emancipatory potential and mobilisation.

D. Zorc Maver (1995, 1997, 2006) and Š. Razpotnik (2006, 2014) speak directly or indirectly about the emancipatory potential in connection with social pedagogy when discussing the social and professional role/function of social pedagogy.

They both highlight the importance of exit from the purely corrective function, which they also see in the strengthening of social criticism through the reflection of own practices and increased engagement in solving social problems. Zadnikar (2015) also calls for the latter (engagement, *auth. note*), but he highlights not social pedagogy alone but the entire pedagogical and, to a certain extent, also psychological conglomerate. Within these, the pedagogical part “blindly serves the ruling systemic imperatives” (*ibid.*, p. 19) and then complains that it is their victim, while the other, psychological part of this conglomerate, is not only in the “service” of the system, but even has the upper hand in it, since it forms part of the intervention professions. Therefore, the author urges: “They should transform their pedagogy and join social movements. It is hopeless to merely protect the level of wages and not sabotage the wage ideology of education /... / and not change the concept of one's work and introduce the pedagogy of liberation” (*ibid.*, p. 19).

Most of these authors (Eriksson, 2011; Flaker, 2012; Freire, 2019; Zadnikar, 2015; etc.) in their call for change, emphasize the importance of a group or a community, so it is not surprising that L. Eriksson's paper (2011) first presents the basic technical and theoretical bases of community development, which is multidimensional, even contradictory, and incoherent, like social pedagogy. In connection with the latter, she is primarily interested in mobilisation as one of the most important dimensions of community development, because with its fundamental objective, i.e., "liberation of citizens" using the human and material resources in the community (*ibid.*), the latter approaches closely to the content of socio-critical (radical) social pedagogy (about which H. Marburger (1987) writes in more detail).

The author recognizes the presence of mobilisation in social pedagogy, especially at the point of community campaigns in which both social pedagogical workers and "the people" are co-creators and agents of the content and, consequently, of structural and societal changes. This dimension is intertwined with others (especially the welfare and democratic dimensions) and hence mobilizes actors in different ways towards achieving the ideal/norm – the mobilisation of "the people" (Eriksson, 2011). According to the socio-political situation, the latter may also be interpreted in different ways, even being used as a means of manipulation, and is always torn between adaptation (mobilisation imposed from above) and radicalisation (hence also emancipation and activism from the bottom-up).

In addition to the common ground in mobilisation, the author (*ibid.*) points out some general similarities between the tradition of community development and social pedagogy, for example, holistic understanding of education, learning, and development, the focus on work with marginalized groups, and the constant tension between the radical and conservative strategy of mobilisation, which in both traditions is manifested in the form of professional and social dilemmas. If we focus on social pedagogy alone, we would point out the following: 1. the dilemma of the position of social pedagogical worker as a professional (*ibid.*) and also as an "executive" (in a corrective and adaptive sense) (Foucault, 2004); 2. the question of the balance of responsibilities, freedoms and rights between the individual and the group, community and "the people" (Eriksson, 2011); 3. The eclecticism and fragmentation of social pedagogy, in theory and practice, as an obstacle to community action (*ibid.*) and at the same time protection of the individual's integrity;

4. the issue of the “pure pedagogical nature” of social pedagogy (ibid.), which in our opinion occurs in practice as a widening of the gap between theory, in the direction of demarcation of what is and what is not social pedagogy, and practice, in which individual content/disciplines cannot be so sharply limited, and at the same time, schooling as a central subject of (school) social pedagogy, in which it often succumbs to the so-called “primacy of intervention professions” (psychology, psychiatry, psychotherapy (and counselling service) - as named by Zadnikar (2015)); 5. and last but not least, the dilemma of the border between civil society and the public sector (ibid.), because current social pedagogy often thinks of and seeks to support, above all, the first, but reproduces and works for the second (in favour of the public sector and its systemic order).

Some of the dilemmas arising from the tensions between various mobilisation strategies can show that the emancipatory potential and mobilisation together, in a process of radicalization, are *conditio sine qua non* or the driving force behind the modern “radicalising” socio-pedagogical practices that attempt to overcome these tensions and dilemmas. Emancipatory potential can be expressed only through mobilisation; therefore, in this sense, the two are inseparable, because the former may exist, but without the mobilisation of direct action it does not materialize. We could also say that emancipatory potential is already *a priori* covered by the mobilisation dimension, since without a tendency for emancipation in the desired direction of change, there is no “fuel” for mobilisation. However, at the level of practice, only the intersection of the two processes can create the necessary sufficient energy, i.e., the fuel for thoughtful activism.

The question of the fuel, the driving force, is the nerve point of modern activism, which with all its emancipatory potential, fails to achieve the desired changes (if we think of the Exit or the Fight for (Flaker, 2012)). We ask ourselves whether the emancipatory potential lies outside the mobilisation dimension and only inside the democratic dimension. If mobilisation is an ideal/norm at the cost of social conflict in the former, then such a norm in the latter prevails in the form of cooperation with the aim of consensus, which is, as evidenced by several professional practices, not always possible to achieve.

The classic response to the persistent failure of this democratic principle is nihilism, but we should not / do not want to accept this response, notwithstanding that at the moment we can think of the exit more as it is explained by A. Zupančič Žerđin (2019), who states that an exit from capitalism that manipulates democratic principles is the only possible solution, but at the same time, we emphasize that such a solution is utopian, and the individual cannot perform it alone. Isn't this a call for a "revolution"?

The content and concepts that have been identified show that modern social pedagogy as a radicalising practice (and theory), is the most uniform, compared with its other professional and scientific content. Its basic meaning is to facilitate the realization of the ever-present emancipatory potential of science and the profession, which is also reflected in the tendency to seek answers to social dilemmas and questions by going beyond them; however, the realization of this potential can be achieved by mobilizing the people to seek answers that can be realized.

The process of radicalisation in our case is thus actualized in the common goal of all activities of radicalising education, dialogic education, which is the search for common program content through dialogue (which is one form of mobilized emancipatory potential), in the meaning of exploration, as Freire (2019) would say, of the thematic universe of the people or the collection of its generative themes. In this way, the people can also re-appropriate certain spaces that were taken from them, as described by Flaker (2012). However, since, as pointed out by Freire (2019), this search and exploration cannot be run by a society (science, the profession, *author's note*) that has not yet implemented revolution, it would be appropriate to highlight the question of the method of this revolutionary action, which the author (*ibid.*) does not specify in detail because he is more concerned with the activities that happen after such a revolution. Namely, this revolutionary method (Freire, 2019) reopens a dilemma that we seek to overcome by finding an answer to the question of the internally divided, dichotomous attitude of social pedagogical workers.

On the one hand, the author (*ibid.*) talks about revolution and radicalisation, i.e., activism (at the time of revolution), and on the other hand, about dialogue and consensus as democratic principles (after the revolution), which clearly does not exceed dichotomy/fragmentation. The paper itself does not delimit revolutionary action to the period before and after the revolution, because with the tendency to transcend the dichotomy, we include in it Freire's (2019) pre-revolutionary and revolutionary processes.

Both the former and the latter cannot be considered separately from (not only, but also) political action; it is thus especially important to know the dangers of Úcar's (2013) political trap.

### **Integrated “radicalised” action and the political trap**

If, when thinking about the political dimension, we seek origins in Greek philosophy, which deduced that as stakeholders in public space, we (the people) are always political animals, then we can fully agree with Hämäläinen (2015), who says that socio-pedagogical theory and practice are always also political. However, Úcar (2013) warns that in such an understanding, we become caught in the political trap. He emphasizes that bringing social pedagogy and politics closer or even equating them has led to confusion about what social pedagogy can and cannot do. According to the author (*ibid.*), starting with Freire (1985), it was clear that any educational activity is also political rather than vice versa.

The latter would mean, according to Petrie (2002, in Petrie and Cameron, 2009), that all social pedagogies are political because they have planned and unplanned goals or purposes, and thus exert a social impact in various fields while being implemented within the relationships of power and control that are present in every social situation. Nevertheless, according to Úcar (2013), some structural phenomena (poverty, exclusion, unemployment, etc.) are not pedagogical and cannot be tackled by educational practices alone. The latter include social pedagogy, which through its orientation, seeks to improve the living conditions of its clients, as well as the situation in the community through pedagogical activities. According to the author, this cannot be done directly through these activities, but improving citizens' living conditions is more a matter of politics and regulation (*i.e.*, including social work, *author's note*). However, social pedagogy can play a decisive role in improving social conditions through educational practices, but there is one significant difference between socio-pedagogical activity and political measures, namely the pace of change in both cases.

Socio-pedagogical activities as part of educational processes are slow and often follow structural changes and policies, while political measures are expected to address (per the top-down principle, *author's note*) acute, emergency social and other problematic situations (*ibid.*).



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The author (*ibid.*) believes that social pedagogy should not be a response to structural problems, although this is often expected of it (and of other sciences). These unrealistic expectations, however, then affect its public image, in which its (non)effectiveness is also assessed. It is therefore essential when dealing with the political trap, to distinguish between the political and the socio-pedagogical, as well as to determine the contact points between both (*ibid.*). One such contact point, which can prevent social pedagogy from falling into this trap, can be found in radicalisation as a role for social pedagogy – which is a combination of its emancipatory potential and mobilizing dimension and is powered more by activism (radicalism (Freire, 2019)) than fanaticism (Marburger, 1987; Razpotnik, 2014; Zorc Maver, 2006) – and in the social pedagogical worker in the role of politician (Storø, 2013) or in that of a (professional) activist, “an authentic revolutionary” (for the definition of this phrase, see Freire (2019, p. 75)). In both cases, it is an awareness that political decisions and consequently regulations can have a significant impact on the work of the social pedagogue, who is defined by Storø (2013) as a policy and regulation executor (described by D. Zorc Maver (2006) as a corrective function of a social pedagogical worker), while also problematizing this role. We believe that this awareness enables a critical distance to political ideologies and a professional stance in relation to political decisions that directly or indirectly affect socio-pedagogical work and its users, the people. It is about the active citizenship (participation) of social pedagogical workers and related activities (measures) in the event of a clash between professionalism and political decrees (which are supposed to implement political ideology). In this way, we avoid sectarianism and move toward radicalisation, according to Freire (2019), as a form of conscious, committed social engagement. While the latter does not rule out the trend toward structural change (in which social pedagogy could also be seen as political), the aim of such activism is essentially to promote professional positions and arguments in favour of users, the people and, consequently, of society as a whole. It is as if, in this case, social pedagogy would provide an opportunity for meta-analysis based on meta-theory, which would allow certain social activities in the direction of change, as Maryanowicz-Hetka (2016) speaks about in more detail.

## Overlooked opportunities to activate socio-pedagogical radicalised practices

We see the first mobilisation within emancipatory potential, if we do not want to fall into the political trap (Úcar, 2013), in the (socio) pedagogical power carried by theory and practice of social pedagogy. We are not talking about pedagogical power, which would result from a position of strength, which assumes that the one who owns it (*the strength*) is the only one who knows things; neither are we talking about the power that social pedagogical workers have in direct practice with users, but about the power that places academics and students among professional social pedagogical practitioners, who together represent the teachers/pupils and the people. We start by assuming that the training of future social pedagogical workers is one of the socio-pedagogical professions (vocations) or practices that are bound by a code of ethics with full responsibility, and indirectly this includes students as future holders and providers of this profession. As has been established, Úcar (2013) considers that with socio-pedagogical education, we cannot and must not intervene directly in structural change, but we can do so indirectly and with the help of the latter. The question is, however, how and where can we do this, and whether we can bring together the public sector and civil society (in the form of social movements and multitudes).

If we think in a somewhat utopian way and give a positive answer to that question, then we can start in the following order: 1. at the faculty level with all the opportunities offered by study programs and other training courses, consultations, conferences for social pedagogical workers and other professional workers; 2. at the level of the professional association with the various events and congresses that are offered by it; 3. followed by a public scientific area at a national and international level, in which social pedagogy should be more actively involved; and 4. with student and other movements, which should be encouraged and strengthened by socio-pedagogical studies, etc. Nevertheless, it seems important to us that these are forms of planned, inter-related and well-considered activity, which we see as the central role of the professional association or chamber. We continue seeking an answer to the question of the appropriate form and direction of the intersection of emancipation and mobilisation of socio-pedagogical education at all levels that could offer ideas about and answers to these socio-political dilemmas.

In theory, the emancipatory potential can be mobilized through critically discursive, meta- and socio-analytical analysis and reasoning, which at the same time demonstrates the topicality of the question and the need to revive the socio-critical emancipatory potential of social pedagogy, as was evident in the 1960s and 1970s (Marburger, 1987). Contemporary theoretical discussions (Eriksson, 2011; Galimberti, 2015a, 2015b; Razpotnik, 2014; Salecl, 2017; etc.) highlight the question of society and community, which we see as an opportunity to promote socio-pedagogical movements in the direction of indirect commitment to the social changes necessary to improve social justice, social solidarity, and the inclusive community. However, we must not forget the important difference between activism, on the one hand, and fanaticism, on the other, or as Freire (2019) would say, between radicalism (which is creative and fuelled by criticality) and sectarianism (which generates myths and alienates). In the case of the former, it is about dialogue and involvement in the processes of liberation (ibid.), humanization and democratization of society, which can become part of a socio-pedagogical education, and in the case of the latter, the (socio) pedagogical activities can be turned into political struggle and propaganda (Marburger, 1987; Úcar, 2013), where social pedagogy is established as a social system in which its activities have a narrow-minded focus on the correction and preparation of people to fit political ideology (Hämäläinen, 2015) and thus has a corrective function (Zorc Maver, 2006).

Š. Razpotnik (2014) points out that socio-pedagogical, pro-active action should go beyond institutional frameworks and open a space for critical reflection on current social developments. The latter could be linked to the somewhat visionary reflection by A. Bogdan Zupančič (2018), who sees the opportunity to overcome such (institutional frameworks, *author's note*) in higher education, which should use its intellectual potential to exit system frameworks and create a public, socio-pedagogical intellectual space. If we refer to the question of the importance of community in this public space (Bertoncelj, 2017; Bogdan Zupančič, 2018; Eriksson, 2011; Razpotnik, 2014), then we see social pedagogy as the central protagonist in the strengthening of such a professional community, both in theory and directly by active agency and intervention in practice.

The greatest deficit in the mobilisation of emancipatory potential can be observed in the academic field, especially at the level of student resources, as well as in the academic involvement of social pedagogy at the level of the resources for social pedagogy as a science.

Within the latter, we believe that there is a lack of socio-spatial structures and communicative sectors, referred to by D. Zorc Maver (1997), which would address the issue of the status quo to develop critical discursive analysis and scientific discussion. Thus, in the course of the study program, as shown by content analysis, very little space is devoted to socio-analysis, as imagined by Bourdieu (2012; Gaber, 2012), which places Homo Academicus under scrutiny in a way that allows in-depth reflection. “Bourdieu thus explicitly talks about himself and tests the power of scientific reflection when discussing his own world” (ibid., p. 261). He understands sociological reflection both as the moral responsibility of scientists and, above all, as a way of sociological control of the distortions that affect scientists' constructions of the research subject, which result from the (dis)position of the sociologist in academic space and, more generally, in the social world in which he occupies a contemplative stance (Wacquant, 1990, in Gaber, 2012). We see this kind of socio-analysis as an opportunity to work at an academic level, an opportunity for cooperation between academics in practice and with students, since in this way they interfere with the self-evident and status quo. In this way they would live social constructivism, which is referred to by Storø (2013) as a basis for socio-pedagogical activity.

They would enter a process of continuous questioning, which would be based on needs, not only of direct professional practice but also of academic and student practice, and eventually lead to issues such as the overburdening of academics with practice, the gap between theory and practice, the lack of vision and system in research, and student absenteeism, which was highlighted by D. Zaviršek (2017) as a taboo theme. A short presentation of the socio-analysis – which is the product of the author's position in the field and at the same time “the product of the author who turns the whole apparatus of socio-analysis inwards” (Gaber, 2012, p. 260), into his own field of activity – could be one of the ways of, if expressed in socio-pedagogical language, “socio-spatial structures and communicative sectors” (Zorc Maver, 1997) or “radicalising” practices, which, in its various forms, would promote the necessary vital socio-political points and encourage change, to which we are ultimately bound by the code of ethics.

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**Conclusion**

By problematising the internal fragmentation and ambivalence of social pedagogy at both theoretical and practical levels, the article shows that the dichotomous constellation of this science, profession, and occupation forms a single nerve point in modern socio-critical discussions on social pedagogy, which may take, somewhat paradoxically, the role of emancipatory potential. In combination with mobilisation from the theory of community development, the latter represents, in an innovative way, an upgraded process of radicalisation by Freire (2019) and thus offers a more incisive alternative to the internally-split social pedagogy, also with the help of new “radicalising” liberation practices.

We start by discovering the importance of the intersection between the emancipatory potential and mobilisation dimension as a driving force of socio-pedagogical radicalising action or the realization of (the process of) radicalisation, the aim of which is modern liberation. The modern, internally divided attitude is merely indicative of the apparent ambivalence of socio-pedagogical activity in practice, since it does not contribute to socio-critical, revolutionary action at the macro-level, but often represents an ideologically contaminated democratic norm, in purely individual-centred professional conduct (mainly in the mezzo (institutions) and microsphere (practices)); it should therefore be replaced by an emancipatory attitude on the part of “professional social activists” or even “humanitarian social revolutionaries”.

Whatever the name, the proactive radicalising professional attitude should integrate the whole continuum of the dichotomy between the conservative and the alternative, and include the following: indirect political efforts for bottom-up structural and economic social change; reflection on and distancing from prevailing political, professional and other ideologies; testing and questioning the established democratic patterns of professional behaviour – and in this way, it might have introduced more determination, perseverance and perspicacity or radicalisation, including by provoking social conflict as a form of benign aggression (as indicated by Fromm, 2013).

As such, the radicalising socio-pedagogical attitude would be the most appropriate response to the new form of capitalism (Boltnaski in Chiapello, 2005, in Grušovnik, 2019, p. 191), which works so as to discourage the constant problematising of ideological (ab)use of democratic principles when it acts as an “extremely flexible economic and socio-political system, /... / that always manages to absorb its own critique and eventually turn it into the production of surplus value and the reproduction of the means of production.”

With revolutionism in socio-pedagogical thinking and activity, this science and discipline would also be recognised as a part of critical pedagogy and avoid only the “artistic” critics of capitalism, which “the changed form of the free market economy /... / managed to appropriate, and thus make for ideological concepts par excellence” (Grušovnik, 2019, p. 192). In this way, it would in some way go beyond the internal fragmentation and its conflict nature as a “process of education (and action, *author’s note*), which will not be satisfied only with activity versus passivity and authenticity versus non-authenticity; instead, justice and equality could be its priorities to the same extent as freedom, authenticity and personal self-realization, and its main wager will be what Freire (again in connection with the theology of liberation) calls “communion” (*ibid.*, p. 193).

Freire's introduction of “communion” (2019) into the socio-pedagogical context enables us to define the radicalising co-operation that goes beyond cooperation as a democratic norm, and in which there is a kind of fusion of leaders and people (in our case social pedagogical workers and users, *author’s note*) and whose essence is to communicate without coercion and social expectations and thus to enable human revolutionary action. Therefore, it is “sympathetic, loving, communicative, humble and liberating” (*ibid.*, p. 161). This manner of social-pedagogical co-operation can avoid the political trap, since it is an informed action, a co-existence between social pedagogical workers and users who join the former on the path of liberation (including their own).

The users are thus co-creators and active participants in radicalising processes (even political ones), enabling them to participate fully and encouraging autonomous decisions. Such co-operation mobilises emancipatory potential in the form of the so far overlooked socio-pedagogical radicalising practices.

We see an opportunity, perhaps among the most important ones, which in connection with teachers is highlighted by M. Mihačič Hladnik (1995) and Rutar (2002), in the public intellectual (including critical, *author's note*) space that takes account of the reflective and meta-analytic position. In the latter, teachers (or teachers/students) as intellectuals (teachers/students, informed individuals) are autonomous and responsible holders of this space.

We believe that such a space (including social movements, multitudes) – which should also be provided by the study program, and where, for the time being, it is more student absenteeism than anything else (Zaviršek, 2017) – would mean a more serious entry into the public sphere as a part of civil society, including for Slovenian social pedagogy, and would enable autonomy and taking responsibility, which, in a way, both teachers and social pedagogical workers evade by resorting to nihilism.

If the central holder and the protagonist of such a public space was an independent research group of stakeholders at all levels of the socio-pedagogical occupation (which could also be developed by a professional association or chamber), it would probably be possible to secure a sufficient politically and ideologically impeccable space, where the systematic development of social pedagogy as an independent scientific discipline and a critical reflection of the developments in practice would be realized – an informed questioning of the status quo and the search for common program content, using all known tools and those yet unknown (among which we could place the “reflexive tool of understanding cultural invasion, which we need to discuss the development of modern capitalism and try to respond accordingly” (Grušovnik, 2019, p. (193)) that allow such questioning. We believe that such an independent scientific group would contribute to the specialization of research, somewhat paradoxically, also by drawing a dividing line between scientific and practical social pedagogy, which we consider important for establishing the partial autonomy of social pedagogy as a science, which is of constitutive value for the latter (which is stated in more detail by Hämmäläinen, 2015). This is particularly the case if we seek to engage in more in-depth linguistic analyses or analyses of spoken acts in the meta-analysis processes, which could indicate the ideological function of (ab)use of words, as Zadnikar (2015) reminds us.

In this case, it would be necessary to mobilize (the most overlooked) emancipatory potential of the academic field of social pedagogy in the form of socio-analysis. This would allow social pedagogy to enter the sphere of critical pedagogical thought, both at the level of theory with discussion and at the level of practice, by implementing Freire's (2019) and Flaker's (2012) (modern) liberation practices. Thus, at least for Slovenian social pedagogy (which is internally split and ambivalent), it seems that it is currently engaged (also theoretically) in all the practices in which it operates and responds to social issues following democratic principles and norms (in the form of curative and top-down approaches); it therefore runs out of energy, time and space for self-exploration and radicalising action, including that in the form of problematising and liberating education.

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