

Faculty Conference Program

FRIDAY 5TH MAY 2023 | VALLETTA CAMPUS

FACULTY FOR

**Social
Wellbeing** 10⁺



L-Università ta' Malta
Faculty for Social Wellbeing

SOCIAL WELLBEING:
TRANSDISCIPLINARITY AT ITS CUTTING EDGE

Theme:

Over these last 10 years, the Faculty for Social Wellbeing has been instrumental in bringing together a number of burgeoning disciplines across the social field sector. These disciplines have striven to develop their identities through combined scholarship and engagement with social operators, service users, and policy makers. It is now time to take our research focus to the next level. This conference will be addressing the important concept of transdisciplinarity within academia in the social wellbeing field. The conversation that we would like to have during the conference would be two pronged: firstly, the conference will unpack the construct of social wellbeing more deeply; secondly, it will explore how diverse disciplines, together with stakeholders, could contribute to the collective discourse on social wellbeing, with the view of addressing real world concerns.

PROGRAMME

Compère	Annabel Cuff <i>Research Support Officer</i>
8:30am	Registration
9:15am	Audio visual
9:20am	DEAN'S WELCOME Prof. Andrew Azzopardi
9:25am	PRO-RECTOR'S WELCOME Prof. Carmen Sammut Student & Staff Affairs and Outreach
9:30am	KEYNOTE SPEECH Prof. Roger Slee <i>University of Leeds</i>
	Presentation Title: Wellbeing in an unwell world.
	Abstract: This presentation considers the state of the world in an era of what Manuel Castells records as multiple simultaneous crises. Central to this consideration will be an interrogation of the knowledge and dispositions required to generate the character and scope of social reform pursuant to being and living well.

11am Networking Coffee break

11:30am **Theme 1:**
Transdisciplinarity: Unpacking social wellbeing

PARALLEL SESSION A

Speaker 1:
Prof. Ruth Falzon
Department of Counselling

Presentation Title:
UM Erudition in the 21st Century?

Abstract:
As human beings, we live in groups and thus can present different persona in different groups. I am an academic, an advocate for dyslexia and empowerment, the matriarch within my external family since my parents died, a host for my friends, a neighbor in my village...However, when we are sent to school, we are all expected to be the pupils who find learning in school easy. Within the context of multiple intelligences, neurodiversity, and use of literacy, this presentation will focus on literacy in the 21st century, if/how our schools and university reflect this in their policies and practice, and if transdisciplinarity across academics is supportive or inhibitive to students' learning and performance.

Commentator / Chair:
Solange Bonello
Doctoral Candidate
Department of Gender and Sexualities

Presentation (20 minutes)
Commentator (10 minutes)
Discussion (30 minutes)

Speaker 2:
Prof. JosAnn Cutajar
Department of Gender and Sexualities

Presentation Title:
Ensuring the wellbeing of all – liminality, service provision and nationality

Abstract:
In this paper, the focus will be on some of the results which emerged from a needs assessment study which was carried out in Marsalforn and Xlendi in 2022 by The Malta Trust Foundation, financed by the Gozo Regional Development Authority. The focus of this study was to find out how satisfied Maltese and non-Maltese residents living in these areas were with the services offered in Gozo. Both Marsalforn and Xlendi have experienced an increase in population, and so, an ancillary objective of this study was to find out how prepared state and other entities were for this increase in non-Maltese residents living in this region of Malta.

Commentator / Chair:
Claire Casha
Lecturer and Doctoral Candidate
Department of Child and Family

Presentation (20 minutes)
Commentator (10 minutes)
Discussion (30 minutes)

1pm Networking lunch [Music Interlude]

1:30pm **Views from the World**
On Zoom:

Prof. Mark Vicars
Victoria University Melbourne, Australia

Prof. Louise Reardon
Centre for Urban Wellbeing
University of Birmingham, UK

2:15pm

Theme 2:
Care and control debate

PARALLEL SESSION B

Speaker 3:

Dr Maria Pisani and Dr Lorleen Farrugia

Department of Youth and Community Studies

Presentation Title:

“In detention I saw hell on earth”: giving voice, bearing witness, advocacy and preserving history

Abstract:

The presentation will first draw on research that explored the lived experiences of unaccompanied minors as they transitioned to adulthood. The findings of this research demonstrate how the State has not only failed in its obligation to protect the rights of young people seeking asylum, but has itself actually been a source of control, terror and violence. The second part of our presentation will explore our partnership with an NGO and our motivations, namely: to give voice, to bear witness, to develop an evidence base for ongoing advocacy, and to document and preserve for historical purposes.

Commentator / Chair:

Dr Mary Grace Vella

Lecturer

Department of Criminology

Presentation (20 minutes)
Commentator (10 minutes)
Discussion (30 minutes)

Speaker 4:

Dr Marlene Cauchi

Department of Counselling

Presentation Title:

The Breakdown of Care in Maltese Society: Reflections from a Group Analytic Perspective

Abstract:

What kind of society perpetuates such horrors as those we have seen in Malta over the last years? Whilst individual psychology may offer some insight into intrapsychic processes underlying specific events or people, it is imperative that we adopt a group psychological view of societal forces promoting such phenomena as structural oppression and silencing of the Other, crass materialism, splitting, and scapegoating. Such dynamics seem to suggest a fracture in the very fabric of society: a dehumanising process whereby the values of solidarity, compassion, and care for other human beings are neglected. They highlight a culture of selfishness and lack of concern for those who are not a part of a person's inner circle of relationships. This presentation will thus utilise group analytic principles, such as the foundation matrix, basic assumptions, the anti-group, and malignant mirroring, in an attempt to shed light on the breakdown of care in contemporary Maltese society. Whilst the presentation will seek to propose a way forward, it will focus on the questions we need to ask ourselves as participants in this societal dynamic.

Commentator / Chair:

Christian Vella

Doctoral Candidate

Department of Gerontology and Dementia Studies

Presentation (20 minutes)
Commentator (10 minutes)
Discussion (30 minutes)

3:15pm

**Theme 3:
Community Engagement**

Speaker 5:

Dr Katya De Giovanni

Lecturer

Department of Psychology

Presentation Title:

A Psychologist and Academic in Politics

Abstract:

Over the years, the contribution and overall interest of resident academics to serve in parliament has been scarce in Malta. This presentation aims to explore the possible reasons for this, and highlights overlooked contributions that academia can give to parliamentary work. The role of the backbencher is highlighted and discussed in the midst of the work carried out at the University of Malta. This paper also aims to instigate a discussion on the way forward with regards to our direct contribution to what happens in parliament which is where decisions affecting our own lives are taken.

Commentator / Chair:

Prof. Marceline Naudi

Department of Gender and Sexualities

Presentation (20 minutes)

Commentator (10 minutes)

Discussion (30 minutes)

Speaker 6:

Dr Daniella Zerafa

Lecturer

Department of Social Policy and Social Work

Presentation Title:

Care and Control – Two Sides of the Same Coin?

Abstract:

Social wellbeing transcends individual wellbeing and hence implies interactions and relationships. As academics in this field we accept the privilege of providing the space and opportunity to those who decide to embark on a journey to develop into professionals who are of service to those whose individual and social wellbeing is usually challenged. In the process we invite them to consider various intricacies and nuances which are integral to practising in the social field. One intricacy relates to the notions of care and control. As our social welfare systems became more developed, the concept of risk took on a more central position in the everyday work of professionals working in the social field. This presentation will focus on how professionals navigate through a minefield, as they balance care and control in their everyday work with service users. It will explore how these professionals, especially frontline professionals such as social workers, are expected not to be too risk averse, whilst simultaneously giving their all to carrying out professional assessments and developing care plans that ensure that their service users are not harmed or harm others. This presentation shall consider how possible it is, in practice, to position care and control as sides of the same wellbeing coin, and, whether professionals can reasonably be expected to satisfy the demands of both these notions.

Commentator / Chair:

Matthew Vassallo

Doctoral Candidate

Department of Psychology

Presentation (20 minutes)

Commentator (10 minutes)

Discussion (30 minutes)

4:15pm

Closing

Dr Claire Azzopardi Lane

Deputy Dean

Dr Gottfried Catania

Deputy Dean

Organizing committee:

Prof. Andrew Azzopardi	<i>Dean</i>
Sharon Bajada Stride	<i>Faculty Office Team</i>
Amy Camilleri Zahra	<i>Department of Disability Studies</i>
Claire Casha	<i>Department of Child and Family Studies</i>
Dr Marlene Cauchi	<i>Department of Counselling</i>
Prof. Marilyn Clark	<i>Department of Psychology</i>
Annabel Cuff	<i>RSO</i>
Charlene Fabri	<i>Faculty Office Team</i>
Prof. Marvin Formosa	<i>Department of Gerontology and Dementia Studies</i>
Dr Natalie Kenely	<i>Department of Social Policy and Social Work</i>
Prof. Marceline Naudi	<i>Department of Gender and Sexualities</i>
Dr Mary Grace Vella	<i>Department of Criminology</i>

Special thanks to Valletta Campus Events Team led by Lucienne Bugeja.

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