

What can we learn from critical, liberation, and decolonization community psychologists of the global South?

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Abstract

The first part of this article illustrates how democracies are in crisis in many European countries and in the United States. The second part describes three important theoretical and political contributions made by critical community psychologists, decolonization, and liberation community psychologists to find theoretical constructs and action strategies that could enrich mainstream European and North American Clinical and Community Psychology. The third part explores how a thousand clinical psychologists, especially family therapists worldwide, have, through the Assisi Manifest, denounced the increase in psychological problems worldwide and the need to work not only with families but in the communities where people live. The last part outlines the major theoretical constructs and intervention methodologies we can integrate into our European community psychology activities and how to transform our “community homes” to decrease polarization and foster dialogue to foster better capabilities to care for one another and solve local and planetary problems.

Keywords: Democracy, critical community psychology, liberation community psychology, decolonization community psychology, family therapy, Assisi Manifest.

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Why democracy in Western societies is not doing well

Democracy in Western societies, from the United States to Europe, is facing a difficult period: countries are polarized and indebted, and many citizens, angry and worried over the level of immigration, crime, and living costs, abstain from voting or choose hard right parties. They blame mainstream and leftist governments who sustained liberal globalization which hurt many local people who lost their jobs in factories, when companies moved to countries where labor was cheaper. Many people feel alienated from elites who have promoted the knowledge economy and the technological innovators, who have become plutocrats, widening the gap between the ultrarich, the middle class, and the working poor (Francescato & Tomai, 2023; Putnam, 2023).

In Europe, the war in Ukraine has deepened the gulf between supporters of a European Union who want more ecological measures against climate change, common military and political foreign policy, and right-wing citizens who are against European federalism, globalization, and ecological measures, which have provoked the revolts of farmers. In the 2024 European election, many young people in Germany, who were green voters, voted AfD an extreme right-wing party (Scuetze & Maslin Nir, 2024).

Right-wing citizens fear the rising immigration of Muslims will dilute nationhood and endanger beloved traditions and values. The Hamas militants who, on October 7th, 2023, raped women, brutally killed 1,200 persons, and kidnapped hundreds of hostages have increased the fears of Israelis. Israeli soldiers looking for Hamas militants have killed more than 35,000 Palestinians, including 15,000 children, making it extremely difficult to create “the two-state solutions” and augmenting the danger of a new wider version of the historical religious wars between the many Muslims and Jews, who both believe God gave them the special right to live in the Holy Land (Pavoncello, 2024).

According to Friedman, our Western societies have lost many of their social, ethical, and political norms.

We have entered in the kinds of normless worlds where societal institutional and leadership norms are being eroded. No one has to feel shame anymore because no norm has been violated. People in high places have done

shameful things in the past in American politics and business. What is new is so many people doing it so conspicuously, and with such impunity, nothing is more corrosive to a vibrant democracy than when leaders with formal authority behave without moral authority (Friedman, 2024, p 9).

Moreover, civil discourse and engaging with those with whom you disagree has become difficult even in many universities, where heated debates are welcome. In recent years, in many top universities in the Western world, people have been divided between oppressed and oppressors, racists and antiracists, and cannot dialogue but often break into fist fights. In November 2022, the Heterodox Academy, a non-profit advocacy group, surveyed 1564 full-time college students ages 18 to 24. The group found that nearly three in five students (59%) hesitate to speak about controversial topics like religion, politics, race, sexual orientation, and gender for fear of negative backlash by classmates (Friedman, 2024).

Our recent wars have become, according to Stevens (2024), more dangerous because of the hatred that divides the contenders: «Hamas, Hezbollah, and their patrons in Iran openly call for Israel to be wiped off the map. In response, both countries want to fight aggressively, with the view that they can achieve security only by destroying their enemies' capability and will to wage war» (Stevens, 2024, p. 111).

According to Martin Griffiths (2024), undersecretary-general for humanitarian affairs at the United Nations, the leaders of the world are «failing humanity by breaking the contract between ordinary people and those in whom power is vested». This is most evident in the leaders who, with such callous disregard for the consequences on their own people and others, remorselessly reach for the gun instead of pursuing diplomatic solutions. It is particularly egregious when it is permanent members of the Security Council, the United Nations, the body charged with maintaining international peace and security, who betray their solemn duties in this way, Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, an act of violation of the United Nations Charter is a clear example. The failure of leadership is evident in some nations' almost unconditional wartime support provided to their allies. You can see in Gaza, where civilian lives and infrastructures are experiencing excessive harm. Just look at the weapons that have continued to flow to Israel from the United States and many other countries, despite the obviously

appalling impact of the war on civilians. Leaders' failure is especially evident in that those who breach the UN charter and international law, this lack of accountability emboldens those for whom rules and norms are mere obstacles to their greed for power and resources (Griffith, 2024, p. 16).

In 2023, «the world's collective military expenditure rose to 2.4 trillion dollars, while the United Nations and other humanitarian organizations obtained only 24 billion dollars for humanitarian assistance, a mere 43% of the amount required to meet the most urgent needs of hundreds of millions of people» (Griffith, 2024, p. 16).

We need leaders who can solve conflict through negotiation instead of using violence and waging wars which not only kill thousands of people but displace millions of people forced to leave their homes. In 2022, Africa had 28 million, Syria 7 million, Yemen 4 million, Afghanistan 4 million, Armenia 600,000 displaced people (Pavoncello, 2024).

What can we learn from critical, liberation and decolonization community psychologists of the south of the world

Critical community psychology

Critical community psychologists developed theories inspired by the critical philosophy and critical sociology of the Frankfurt School, wherein, in the second and third decades of the 20th century, Mark Horkheimer, Erich Fromm, Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, and Jurgen Habermas worked in the Institute for Social Research. They explored how social structures and culture influence human actions, creating oppression of some groups through the diffusion of practices and social, psychological, and linguistic customs that are assimilated in subjective experience. Critical community psychology, like liberation community psychology, is concerned with addressing social injustices and promoting liberation from oppressive systems. It focuses on analyzing power dynamics, ideologies, and social structures aiming to uncover and challenge oppressive systems that marginalize certain groups and promote needed social change.

Critical theory supports social constructionism, which emphasizes the role of cultural, social, and psychological factors in creating

individual and collective experiences. It highlights how meanings are built through social interactions, and how these constructed realities can increase or challenge oppression. Oppression can be internal and external. When oppression is felt internally, a person may become the worst critic of his or herself, and feel guilty and powerless. When one understands that perceived problems are created by external social structures, this new awareness fosters resilience and hope that one can fight dominant ideas and enter a path of liberation from oppression.

In the sixties and seventies, critical philosophers in France (Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes, Jean-François Lyotard, Jacques Derrida, Julia Kristeva and Jean Baudrillard) explored the role of language and of social norms in promoting oppression. They criticize positivist theories and empiricism and argue that only a pluralism of theories, methods, and perspectives can be useful in research in social sciences.

Critical community psychologists adopt this pluralistic constructivist model because the constructs used to make research are cultural and not a representation of objective reality (Teo, 2012). They prefer to use a “transformative paradigm” that uses participated qualitative and quantitative methods to analyze social systems that produce injustice and inequality and consequently oppression, offering in their action research, individual and social empowering and transformative opportunities (Mertens, 2009).

One of the tools most used by critical community psychologists is Participatory Action Research (PAR), which involves collaborative research efforts between researchers and community members to address community issues and enact social change. It aims to empower communities by giving them control over the research process and facilitating collective action.

Prilleltensky and Prilleltensky (2006) have explored modes of personal, interpersonal, organizational, and community well-being, listing the factors that promote the different kinds of well-being. Community or collective wellbeing, for example, requires equity or social justice in the distribution of resources and duties and rights of community members. In 2015, Prilleltensky and colleagues (Prilleltensky *et al.*, 2015) published ICOPPE, a multidimensional model with six specific dimensions of well-being: Interpersonal, Community, Occupational, Physical, Psychological, and Economic. These models increase the critical awareness of the variety of potential oppressive

powers, but do not indicate how we can compel the oppressors to share the resources necessary to satisfy the needs of many oppressed people.

Critical community psychologists have been more successful in making mainstream moderate community psychologists become more aware of how most community psychologists work in universities or research centers supporting neoliberal ideologies, marginalizing women and nonwhite people, and promoting the entry of women and black and brown people in academia (Teo, 2005).

Building also on feminist theory, critical community psychologists challenge traditional ways of knowing and emphasize the importance of diverse voices and experiences in knowledge production. They highlight the intersectionality of oppression and the need for inclusive and participatory approaches to social change. Critical community psychologists often also draw on principles of community organizing and activism to empower communities and challenge oppressive systems through grassroots organizing, advocacy, and collective action. They underline the necessity to liberate oppressed people from both internal and external oppression using a “transformative paradigm” that includes both quantitative and qualitative participatory methods to analyze the social systems that produce inequality, injustice, and oppression and to offer marginalized people opportunities to transform their lives promoting personal, interpersonal, organizational, and community wellbeing as theorized by Prillentesky *et al.* (2006). These methods cover a wide range of goals aiming to develop capabilities and self-esteem, participation skills, and resilience, but also to take responsibility for decisions that involve personal and community life.

Critical community psychologists’ ideas have been welcomed in New Zealand, Australia, and South Africa, where Decolonization psychology has emerged, and in Latin America, where Liberation community psychology has gained a prominent space (Stevens & Sonn, 2021; Tebes, 2017). In the next paragraph, both are discussed because they share many points in common.

Decolonization and Liberation Community Psychologies

Decolonization and Liberation community psychologists aspire to challenge and dismantle systems of oppression, colonization, and

marginalization. They both aim to address social injustices and promote liberation from oppressive systems.

Several theoretical constructs and frameworks guide both decolonial and liberation practices in community psychology:

1. *Critical consciousness*: Rooted in Paulo Freire's work, critical consciousness involves raising awareness about power dynamics, privilege, and oppression. It encourages individuals and communities to analyze and challenge social structures and ideologies critically.
2. *Postcolonial Theory*: Postcolonial theory explores colonialism's enduring effects on societies and cultures. It underlines the importance of recognizing and addressing colonization's legacies, including power imbalances, cultural hegemony, and epistemic violence.
3. *Indigenous perspectives*: Indigenous scholars have contributed significantly to decolonial, and liberation thought in community psychology. Their viewpoints highlight the intersectionality of oppression, emphasize the importance of listening to marginalized voices and experiences, and value local indigenous knowledge. They prioritize understanding and respecting diverse cultural worldviews and knowledge systems. They challenge Eurocentric norms and promote indigenous and community-based ways of knowing.
4. *Feminist insights*. A special place is also given to both decolonization and liberation approaches in feminist ideas about males' domination over women and the use of violence to force women to submit to patriarchal rules. The feminist theory highlights the intersectionality of gender, race, class, and other identities, emphasizing the importance of addressing multiple forms of oppression simultaneously since individuals may experience multiple intersecting forms of oppression that shape their experiences and identities (Marcomin & Cima, 2018; Vandana Shiva, 1988).
5. *Community Empowerment*: Both colonization and liberation efforts often focus on promoting community empowerment and self-determination. This involves supporting communities in reclaiming control over their narratives, resources, and decision-making processes. This approach focuses on building the capacity of communities to identify and address their own needs and challenges, promoting self-determination and collective action. Emphasizing the importance of considering multiple levels of influence, from the

individual to the societal provides frameworks for understanding and addressing the complex dynamics of oppression and liberation within communities, guiding efforts to promote social justice and empowerment (Carolissen & Duckett, 2018).

6. *Structural Transformation*: Decolonization in community psychology advocates for structural transformations that address the root causes of inequality and injustice. This may involve challenging neoliberal policies, advocating for redistributive justice, and promoting policies that prioritize the needs and rights of marginalized communities (Mignolo & Wash, 2018).
7. *Decolonizing Research and Practice*: Decolonization and liberation both critique standard psychological research and prefer transforming research and practice paradigms that are more inclusive, participatory, and culturally responsive. This includes challenging traditional research methodologies, promoting community-based participatory research, and valuing indigenous and local knowledge systems.

Both liberationists and de-colonialists have created pedagogical, political programs to favor liberation from prejudices and to promote the full development of oppressed persons and groups. Moreover, they both favor a “relational epistemology” where individual freedom is less important than the caring relations Indigenous people have always practiced, promoting mutual aid and a sense of community. They argue we should follow these indigenous ways of life, of caring and of accompanying the other and being responsible for the growth of the relationship instead of the ontological separation of human beings, that our “selfie” consumer society preaches through media and socials to convince us we should pursue the beauty of competing with one another (Maldonado-Torres, 2016; Montero, Sonn Burton, 2017; Franciscato, Tomai, 2023; Sonn *et al.*, 2002).

Maria Gopel (2016) thinks that in order to make sense of the world, humans invent ideas and stories about why they are here, what is the aim of their life, and how to relate to their natural and human environment. This process develops individual mindsets that lie at the heart of identities and social paradigms that structure socio-political development but also canonized knowledge and cultural narratives that become structural and even material features. Subjective ideas and inter-subjective narratives are intricately linked with the “objective” world

and they also impact future thinking. Therefore, they can be a source of vision, innovation, creativity and flourishing progress, but also a source of mental barriers, strategic power or even forceful domination.

According to Maria Gopel (2016), neoclassic economists have sustained the principle of “utility maximization”, which is regarded as a fundamental universal law that humans selfishly, insatiably, and rationally pursue the never-ending maximization of pleasure. All other concepts and explanations derive from this core idea, and the prime source of pleasure is considered to be consumption. Reflexivity is an empowering and emancipating activity: it helps us to assess the underlying assumptions and unstated ideas upon which social processes and institutions have been built, justified, maintained, and adapted and, therefore, empowers us to break free from them if necessary.

Original viewpoints of decolonization and liberation that we, Westerners, can use when working with marginalized groups in our society

Decolonization community psychology has explored in depth the consequences of colonialism, which used the concept of race to justify the oppression and discrimination of natives, whose dark skin was a visible sign of their inferiority. They underline that colonial experiences and prejudices still influence also contemporary social and psychological dynamics. Colonial experiences are transmitted through collective memory to other generations and they shape the identity and the conscience of colonized people.

Decolonization community psychologists have examined existent power relations and dominant narrations that maintain the oppression of colonized communities even today. They have promoted the diffusion of new viewpoints, especially from indigenous epistemologies. They have also underlined the importance of community people’s active participation in pursuing social and political changes.

Decolonization has underlined the importance of *Healing historical traumas and fostering reconciliation between colonized and colonizer communities*. This requires acknowledging past injustices, addressing intergenerational trauma, and working towards healing and reconciliation processes. Decolonization’s supporters want to undermine the

competition that leads to conflicts and wars that characterize countries as the Western neoliberal nations and even state capitalists governed by autocrats like Russia, China, and North Korea.

Liberation theories focus on empowerment promotion, social justice, and liberation from oppressive structures through social action and active participation of community residents. Liberation community psychologists favor the promotion of the rights of women and the demolition of patriarchal norms as a crucial part of social liberation. They fight racism and promote the empowerment of people of color. Moreover, they promote sexual freedom and dignity to people who have different sexual orientations, gender identities, and modes of loving. They aim to achieve a planetary liberation and to rehumanize persons considered inferior and nonhuman in different parts of our world. These viewpoints have found an ally in a philosopher, Joan Carl Melich (2024), who maintains that metaphysical philosophy has neglected the body as feminists have affirmed; we should recognize the fragility of our bodies and pursue empathy, pardon, compassion, care of ourselves and others with embraces and caresses to comfort each other. We need to dissolve the duality of metaphysical philosophy between body and soul because it is the body that feels, enjoys, and suffers. We need to caress our bodies more to make life bearable in spite of all the suffering that our bodies experience.

Melich suggests we have to stop reasoning using a metaphysical dualistic configuration, in which there are opposing poles: the first pole is positive, the second negative and the second is subordinated to the other. Soul and body, sky and earth, right and left, male and female, light-shadow, science and poetry, reason and passion, depth and surface oral and writing, high and low, absolute and relative, objective and subjective, reality and fiction are some of the most common dual opposing poles, that have built a totalitarian philosophy.

Melich is convinced we need more ethics, and if we recognize our condition of vulnerability, we can promote patterns of care of self and care of others based on caress, compassion, and consolation. He thinks we should no longer ask the Kantian question “What should I do”? But “How can I respond to the call of another?”. Listening is crucial to understanding the requests of the other.

Liberation community psychology has also focused on *Black liberation theory and Liberation theology*. Black liberation is based on the

experiences of Black individuals and communities and focuses on understanding and addressing the psychological effects of racism and oppression while also promoting empowerment and resilience. *Liberation Theology* emerging from within religious contexts, advocates for social and economic justice, often emphasizing the liberation of marginalized and oppressed groups.

The guiding principles that we Western community psychologists can adopt are: epistemic justice, humanization of oppressed people considered less than humans, a relational ontology that promotes care of self and other, conscientization that reveals the tie between social struggles and empowerment, the role of narratives that can promote generative communities, the need to examine historical origins of a problem, giving more voice to narratives of marginal groups, and plan interventions pinpointing at what levels can desire changes be promoted (small groups, territorial organizations, local communities, regional, national European Union, planetary level).

Recent textbooks confirm that critical community, decolonization, and liberation ideas are now discussed and compared within European and American community psychology literature. Carolissen and Duckets (2018), for example, criticize European and American epistemologies and make a long list of good ideas coming from decolonization literature: refusal to pathologize marginalized persons, rediscovering forgotten historical events, creation of new archives, promotion of new narratives and especially of Indigenous knowledge, using reflexive and ecological modalities. Other authors (Fernandez *et al.*, 2021) underline the importance of promoting epistemic justice, universality, inclusion of indigenous traditional knowledge, promotion of ethical and historical awareness, and critique the subjective bases of power and privilege, but they especially recommend that we should focus of problems which have worsened in this new 21st century: increasing worldwide racism, class and gender inequalities; the widespread use of violence, and the surge of migrants escaping climate change disasters and wars and armed conflicts.

Manuela Tomai and I (Francescato & Tomai, 2023) underline in our introduction that in the last decades, a plurality of factors, including the Covid pandemic and media and social, have increased a global cultural rise of narcissistic individualism at the expense of relational connectedness. We, as clinical community psychologists, think that

we desperately need the growth of relational ontology that promotes care for self and others, downplays the merits of individual freedom, and enhances the values of caring relations, promoting mutual aid and a sense of community. Many family therapists worldwide share our concern as described in their Assisi Manifest

The Assisi Manifest

In July 2023, over a thousand psychotherapists from over 50 countries and of every orientation gathered in Assisi (Italy) for three days to celebrate family therapy, its impact and potential, and to exchange ideas. They decided to publish a Manifest that documented how mental health was worsening in the world and what could be done.

They wrote that

the overreliance on hospitalization and overuse and at times abuse of labels and medications have increased due to the search for a quick and inexpensive fix. Financial pressures on underfunded mental health systems also played a role as did the global cultural rise of narcissistic individualism at the expense of relational connectedness. Family fragmentation compounded by atrocities and wars all over the world, displacement and forced migrations, gender and wealth inequality, and climate change pose huge challenges for families and ultimately individual wellbeing.

They were gravely concerned about the dramatic rise in adolescent mental health issues since the beginning of the COVID pandemic. Teenagers were more at risk in a fragmented society “where family disintegration, single parenthood, and absent fathers are becoming a norm”. They wrote that “unresolved parental and intergenerational conflicts, and marginalization along with the deleterious impacts of social media, are damaging adolescents “healthy development”, and that children and adolescents should be heard in therapy for family healing, without prejudice and labeling and without parent blaming. They underlined “the interconnectedness of couple crises (including those of same-sex and non-traditional family units) with the broader family structure offering a path to couples for healing and resilience within the family with a multigenerational approach as a component”.

With this Assisi Manifest, they declared

the need to acknowledge the interconnectedness of individuals, families, communities, and societies, and incorporate family therapy as a vehicle for accessing resilience and healing. With the fresh perspectives and enthusiasm of the younger generations of family therapists and the emerging movement of therapists in Asia, Latin America, Africa, and Eastern Europe, along with the lessons we learned through our history, we seek to reinvigorate an understanding of families and communities, their cultural values and resources.

In the Manifest, they also state that death and trauma are inevitable conditions of our existence:

However, we die and suffer in different ways according to our cultural traditions, religions, and spiritual beliefs. Categorizing mourning as healthy or pathological based on outdated individual, temporal, and linear stages of grief is inaccurate and reductionistic. As family therapists, we can facilitate relational processes that strengthen families and facilitate coping with expected life events as well as traumatic losses linked to the violence, wars, and forced migrations we are currently witnessing on an unprecedented, global scale. As multigenerational systemic and community therapists, we understand how such experiences impact families over generations, and intervene to help them overcome current and historic traumatic and painful experiences by promoting reconnection and forgiveness.

The proponents of the Manifest also underline that social and cultural discrimination create many problems but that by bringing family therapy outside the therapy room in the streets, shelters, churches, and community centers we can increase resilience in coping and surviving: “Our world is increasingly divided and fractured by cultural discrimination, economic injustice, racism, homophobia, transphobia, sexism, political repression, warfare, and natural disasters; we must recognize not only the vulnerability of families and children caught in these difficulties but also their resilience in coping and surviving”.

The Manifest ends with a call for action:

advocating for social justice via empowerment, inclusivity, and the recognition and establishment of basic human rights. Considering the current political and religious divisions in our world as evidenced by growing populist political movements, devastating wars in Eastern Europe, the Middle East,

Africa, Asia, and elsewhere, as well as waves of migrants and refugees, now more than ever, it is time to recognize and strengthen the family as the foundation of society and thus an important vehicle for healing.

Conclusions: for constructing a plurality of better futures

Critical, liberation, and decolonization community psychologists are mostly members of small groups who believe very strongly in what they are doing and share their ideas and experiences worldwide. We, as clinical community psychologists (Francescato & Tomai, 2023) believe so much in the power of small groups that in our last book, all the methodologies we proposed: to work empowering individuals and groups; improving associations and institutions; developing communities; building social networks to increase social support; offer empowering training for young people who dream for a better future or older persons who lost or want to change their job; promoting affective educations for kids and adults who need to enjoy more positive emotions and deal better with negative emotions like rage, jealousy, envy, which increase episodes of violence against women, children, migrants; to fight climate warming, and basically to do well participatory action research; and self-help groups are all based on small group work. That is why we give large space in discussing small groups as behavior setting and intervention tools and the need to train people to be good participants and facilitators of group work.

We are not the only ones, Robert Putnam (2023) documents that in the last 120 years there has been in the United States an alternation between: “the society of I”, strongly individualistic, socioeconomically, politically polarized, that promotes private and public narcissism and the “society of we”, more egalitarian, more collaborative, that values social responsibilities more than individual interest. Putnam examines all the changes that have brought on the two different kinds of societies in different historical periods. For instance, our contemporary “society of I” has been promoted after the Sixties by right-wing and left-wing activists who have been elected at the local, state, and national levels and have become more extremists, increasing political polarization. This has created a situation in which instead of behaving like adversaries, they often perceive the members of the

opposite coalitions as enemies, and sometimes they physically fight when trying to pass controversial laws. Putnam believes that since so many elected politicians no longer respect one another it has become very difficult to pass laws for collective interests.

The contemporary “society of I” has been shaped by technological innovations, in particular, according to Putnam, by social media that have greatly expanded the fragmentation of “identity groups” and increased the opportunities to find occasional sexual partners but diminished relational capabilities developed in face-to-face communication, and especially lowered the desire and the ability to engage in long-lasting relations. In fact, in many countries many adults live now alone. Moreover, individualist consumerism has been increased through influencers, promoted by financial capitalists who distribute high profits to those who convince their followers to buy their special products.

Putnam also found that in all historical periods, political alternances have been brought about by small groups, who create experiments from below and built networks to spread the desired changes. Nowadays, many small groups are tired of living in a society that is unequal and violent against women, the homeless, and migrants. According to Putnam, thousands of small groups in the United States are pushing for welfare at the community level. This is also happening in Europe: Di Maria has explored the unconscious power of small groups in group therapy (Di Maria & Falgares, 2021), Arcidiacono *et al.* (2021) document how small teams of researchers have found how social sites like Instagram, or online platforms can also promote a sense of community. They have examined projects that use the web to reach men who tend to use violence against women or use the metaverse to have men become aware of what causes them to lose control of their emotions. Menegatto and Zamperini (2018) investigate the problems of detention and security; Gatti and Procentesi (2020) explores how Instagram use develops a sense of community in open neighborhoods, and again, Gatti and Procentese (2022) examine the social added value for neighborhood-related social media. In the last two chapters of our last community psychology handbook (Francescato & Tomai 2023), about forty community psychologists narrate their professional history. Some work with women victims of violence or women forced to become street prostitutes, others bring local volunteers in retirement

centers for poor elders. Still some innovators create well-being among fighting tenants of condominiums. Most of these projects have been done by small groups of students, supervised by one or two community psychologists.

Several European academic community psychologists have formed international groups in common projects to help the homeless through Housing First (Ornelas 2008) to assist persecuted migrants (Esposito, 2017) in fighting climate warming and creating energetic communities (Francescato, 2020; Francescato & Tomai, 2023). Other community psychologists try to diminish school dropout, drug abuse, bullies, and cyber bullies and promote democracy through circle time and other effective strategies. (Francescato & Putton, 2022) and preventing violent political radicalization (Meringolo, 2020).

Promoting Community Centers (“Case di Comunità”) in every neighborhood to foster psychological well-being and caring relations

In the introduction of our manual, we propose that community homes should not have only doctors, nurses, social workers, and clinical psychologists who will promote health but also wellbeing, offering a variety of workshops, from yoga, meditation, affective education, and empowering training to forge new futures. (Francescato & Tomai, 2023, chapters 11 and 12). Moreover, the homes will also have actors, musicians, and singers who will run theatrical, singing, and dancing courses. Various studies have confirmed that these workshops promote well-being and a sense of community and develop caring relations, and generative relations (Lavanco & Novara, 2013) that nourish the “we” needed to balance the individualism and the “society of I” that separates us from others.

These community centers (“Casa di Comunità”) will develop a new form of prevention, limiting the polarization that now prevents people from even listening to different viewpoints. The centers will be a place where citizens, diverse in age, gender, class, and political orientation, can develop the art of feeling well together and create a web of caring relationships among each other. They can be inspired not only by what Indigenous communities have done for centuries but also by what self-help groups and feminist groups have done in

the last decades (Vandana, 1988), (Thunberg, 2022), (d'Aubonne, 2022), and (www.Effe_rivista_femminista.it.) Only if we build places where everyone is welcome, people with different values can begin to talk and listen to each other and take care both of themselves and their communities. In these community centers (“Casa di Comunità”), citizens can find ways to acquire new members for community projects; share different narratives (Rappaport, 2000) can discuss local issues and global problems like climate change, developing a planetary sense of community that diminishes antagonism among rival identity groups, reminding us of our common humanity and of the frailty of our small planet.

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