IMAGINING THE CHILD'S MIND / ZAMIŠLJANJE OTROKOVEGA UMA

29. januar 2026 ob 09:00 do 30. januar 2026 ob 15:50
Modra soba (5. nadstropje), Univerza v Ljubljani, Filozofska fakulteta, Aškerčeva cesta 2, Ljubljana
Organizator: Filozofska fakulteta UL, Javna agencija za znanstvenoraziskovalno in inovacijsko dejavnost Republike Slo…, European Commission, University of Copenhagen, Danish National Research Foundation

In the period following the Second World War, several (international) initiatives brought the issue of children's mental health to the forefront. The political will to address this area – undoubtedly shaped by an awareness of the war's impact on new generations – was accompanied, affirmed, and in some respects even anticipated by developments in various academic and scientific fields that took on the task of understanding, guiding, and treating the "child's mind." Notably, the "psy" disciplines, pedagogy, criminology, social work, sociology, and anthropology entered into a shared and evolving dialogue on this subject. Child psychiatry established itself as a distinct medical discipline. Psychological perspectives contributed to a shift in the paradigm of childhood and suffering, partially supplanting earlier frameworks focused on morality and education.

The following decades witnessed an explosion of research into childhood mental disorders, their diagnosis, and classification – developments that certainly did not take place in a political, social, or cultural vacuum. Since both the concept of mental health and that of childhood – individually and in their interrelation – are historically, culturally, and socially constructed, the definitions and strategies used to address issues in relation to children's mental health have differed across contexts and over time.

The conference aims to deepen our understanding of these distinctions through insights from researchers in the fields of history and related disciplines, with particular attention to the dynamics of change after 1945. The conference papers will explore how definitions of and responses to children's mental health were shaped by the legal and institutional frameworks of individual states and international organisations, and how these definitions were subject to more or less explicit forms of political (mis)use. To what extent did the Second World War – and other major political transformations – constitute a turning point in shaping policies and practices related to children's mental health across different contexts? How far were these measures and approaches determined by state authorities, and to what degree were they also influenced/shaped by various actors within the system – medical professionals, parents, and even children themselves? The papers will also encourage reflections on the ways in which scientific paradigms reflected, reproduced, or transcended ideological divisions between the Socialist and Capitalist states.

PROGRAMME

DAY 1: Thursday, January 29, 2026

09:00–09:15 Registration

09:15–09:30 **Welcome speeches / Introduction**

9:30–10:30 **Children between environment, heredity and politics, I**

Filippo Masina: Relief, Care, Re-education. Childhood and the Containment of "Deviance" in Postwar Italy, 1945–1968

Matteo Perisinotto: Public Opinion and Juvenile Delinquency in Trieste During the Two Post-War Transition (1915–1918 and 1945–1949)

10:30–11:00 **Coffee Break**

11:00–12:00 **Children between environment, heredity and politics, II**

Anna Toropova: Children's Trauma in Late Stalinist Psychiatry and Culture
Anne Oommen-Halbach: Child Aggression Research in the Shadow of War

12:00-13:00 **Lunch**

13:00–14:30 **Child guidance and the "maladjusted child"**
Veena Roshan Jose: Art and Play as Windows to Trauma: Visual Narratives in Post-War Child Guidance Clinics
Krittapak Ngamvaseenont: The Making of the 'Modern Child': From the Child of the Future in the Second World War to the Nervous Child in Cold War Thailand
Shilpi Rajpal: Making Good: Childhood, Maladjustment and Mental Hygiene in India

14:30–15:00 **Coffee break**

15:00–16:30 **Institutional care and abuses**
Jelena Seferović: Youth with Mental Challenges in Croatia at the Crossroads of Support and Punishment in 19th–20th Century
Heiner Fangerau: "Improving the Pedagogical Scope?" The Medical Abuse of Children in the Federal Republic of Germany after the Second World War
Laura Schettini: Between Abandonment, Business, and Criticism: Institutions for "Subnormal" Children in 1960s and 1970s Italy

DAY 2: Friday, January 30, 2026

09:00–10:30 **Institutions, reforms and activism**
Marina Dal Cin: Child Mental Health and the Making of Care in a Border City: Evelina Ravis and the Medical-Pedagogical Institute of Trieste (1928–1954)
Jesper Vaczy Kragh: Deprivation and Reform: Child Psychiatry and Institutional Care in Post-War Denmark
Niamh Cullen: The 1968 moment and the Liberation of Children among Anti-Authoritarian and Feminist Activists in Italy

10:30–11:00 **Coffee break**

11:00–12:30 **Research and the future citizen**

Kristen Loutenstock: Metaphors of Productivity: Diagnosing Autism and the Creation of the Child-Product

Boontariga Puangkham: The Making of the Cold War Child Psyche. A Transcultural Perspective on Child Psy-Sciences in Thailand, 1950s–1970s

Michael Pettit: Head Start or False Start? Great Society Social Programs and the Development of the Competent Child

12:30–13:30 **Lunch break**

13:30–15:00 **War narratives through children's eyes**

Shivender Rahul: The Witnessing Child: Memory, Trauma, and the Politics of Post-War Mental Health, 1945–1970

Marilia Fotopoulou: "I Would Never Capture Migrants": Rethinking Children's Resilience through the Collections and Practices of the War Childhood Museum in Sarajevo

Anna Di Giusto: When Institutions Fail: A Teacher's Response to Unaccompanied Ukrainian Minors in Italy (2022–2024)

15:00–15:30 **Final discussion**