

## **Workshop application**

for the 4<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Dialogical Practices, “Getting Closer, Towards a new human alliance”, 12<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> of October 2017, Turin.

**Workshop group:** Indra Simhan, Dr. med. (thematic introduction of workshop and paper 4), Elise Gill, M.P.S. (paper 1), Kari Vik, Ph.D. (paper 2) and Rolf Rohde (paper 3).

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Workshop abstract (3000 signs):

### **Communicating with our youngest citizens – how a reflective view on the interaction supports our dialogue with infants.**

The workshop focuses on communication with our youngest citizens. Infants are wired for communication and relationships and depend upon contact to be able to develop and thrive (Hart, 2009). While many adults intuitively enter communication with infants, some experience difficulties in recognizing their signals or in reflecting upon the infant as a person. This obstructs communication and hinders the infant in developing and being heard and understood (Sharp & Fonagy, 2008). We as a society also miss the opportunity to take infants’ perspectives and share in the communication seriously.

We present 4 papers on different aspects of adults’ difficulties in entering conversations with infants. They show how an outside view, by video- interaction guidance, helps carers, parents and professionals to become more aware of what is stopping us and what is needed from us to join the infant in dialogue. Video-interaction guidance (using the Marte Meo method) accepts all dialogue participants and offers a space for reflection and change (Aarts, 2000). It allows us to become more aware of the signals the infant is sending into the conversation, of how we respond to them, and what can hinder meaningful dialogues with our youngest citizens (Vik and Rohde, 2012).

Paper 1 shows video-guidance as a port of entry for parental sensitivity towards the infants, a process of becoming more emotionally available to the infant’s initiatives. Papers 2 and 3 present findings from a Tanzanian institutional setting. A rich description shows how focus on developmentally supportive elements in the interaction promotes dialogues between infants and caregivers. Paper 4 presents reflections around parents with a painful early history, and their infants who experience communication fraught with defense.

The overarching topic is an exploration of how meeting infants can challenge adult preconceptions and defenses, and what this means for the individual dyad and for us as a society. Meeting each other in dialogue with equal value and importance from birth

promotes a humane and dialogical stance. Society as a whole benefits from recognizing its youngest citizens.

Aarts, M. (2000). *Marte Meo: basic manual*. Harderwijk, Aarts Productions.

Hart, S. (2009). *Den følsomme hjernen*. Hans Reitzels Forlag, København.

Sharp, C., & Fonagy, P. (2008). *The Parent's Capacity to Treat the Child as a Psychological Agent: Constructs, Measures and Implications for Developmental Psychopathology*. *Social Development*, 17(3)

Vik, K. and R. Rohde (2012). *Tiny moments of great importance: The Marte Meo method applied in the context of early mother-infant interaction and postnatal depression. Utilizing Daniel Stern's theory of 'schemas of being with' in understanding empirical findings and developing a stringent Marte Meo methodology*. *Clin Child Psychol Psychiatry*.