

Peace, Equality and Social Justice and SDG 16 Conference

19-20 May 2022, De Montfort University, Leicester



Building and Consolidating Sustainable Societies

On 19-20 May 2022, De Montfort University holds the first of its annual multi-disciplinary conferences focusing on subjects related to the 'Peace, Equality and Social Justice' (PESJ) theme and United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG16). The theme of this first conference will be 'Building and Consolidating Sustainable Societies'.

The conference aims to address many of the sub-themes within PESJ, such as, for example: freedom of the media; trust, social cohesion and stable communities; reducing violence and conflict mitigation; tackling gender and racial inequalities; promoting a strong civil society; protecting children, women and refugees from exploitation; equal access to justice and/or education; combating national and transnational organised crime, financial crime and corruption; promoting accountable and transparent institutions and/or strong democratic and inclusive political systems; inclusive growth and promoting health equality.

The conference spans two days and includes a series of academic presentations and panel discussions that align with the PESJ theme and UN SDG16 and some of the excellent work being conducted at the university within our remit as the educational hub for that SDG. This is a high-impact event for the university and its academic staff, providing genuine visibility for our research.

Professor Kenneth Morrison

Theme Director for Peace, Equality and Social Justice

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

DAY ONE (Thursday, 19 May)

9.30am: Introduction to the conference: Professor Katie Normington (Vice Chancellor, De Montfort University, Maher Nasser (Director of Outreach Division, United Nations) and Professor Kenneth Morrison (Research Theme Director for Peace, Equality and Social Justice)

10am-1pm: Morning session

10am: Core Challenges Facing Modern Societies Within the Context of PESJ and the UNSDG 16 Framework (Chair: Professor Julia Shaw).

This panel will consider some of the core challenges facing modern societies within the context of 'peace, equality and social justice' and the UN SDG framework, both of which require multi-partner engagement to address global injustice and inequality. Drawing on a range of eclectic and interdisciplinary perspectives, we will explore current issues arising within inter alia international human rights law, public finance law and policy-making. Legal, and wider political and cultural, contexts will be investigated in relation to advancing the articulation and protection of the rights of marginalised and disadvantaged groups in society, with the aim of highlighting areas in need of further debate and urgent reform. Our discussion will begin with a brief critique of the normative function of law, the 'legal tradition, which conveys its power while at the same time concealing its historical and geographical origins. These cultural markers are grounded in a predominantly Western language of law and located in a form of discourse which comprises law's unconscious which, in turn, invests many modern legal institutions with their distinctive character and authority. In a globally-integrated, interdependent and increasingly complex world, it becomes pertinent to ask 'what ought to constitute law and justice for all'?

11am – 11.30: break

12pm: A Global Initiative to Enable Better Criminal Justice Outcomes for Societies (Chair: Professor Dave Walsh).

This panel will convey details of a global project illuminating the various interview/interrogation techniques used with victims, witnesses and suspects in countries across the world, detailing developed actions already undertaken alongside forthcoming plans to develop international networks and research collaborations between researchers (and researchers and practitioners) in those countries where research remains under-developed, and also between these and researchers in those countries where research is more established. In total, around 80 countries will be included in the project. The aim is to positively influence practice, policy, law and research in countries where it becomes known (or already is) that the police undertake poor practice. Often, we find that these practices are conducted in ignorance of those found through scientific endeavour to be more effective in interviews with victims, witness and suspects in providing more reliable and detailed information that positively informs criminal investigation, which enable better justice outcomes.

1pm: Buffet lunch in the Vijay Patel Building

2pm-4pm: Afternoon session

2pm: 'At Least the Word Peace is Not Forbidden Yet': Expanding Narratives for Equality and Justice from Journalism to Languages (Co-Chairs: Professor Stuart Price and Dr Giuliana Tiripelli; Guest Speaker: Dr Giovanna Fassetta, University of Glasgow).

"At least, the word peace is not forbidden yet", said a TV correspondent covering Ukraine on March 3, 2022, to end their coverage of the dispute about the term "war" to discuss the Russian aggression. Peace is an ideal aim, which is shared by everyone, including those who wage occupation wars. This is because the peace idea contains unpacked discourses that major actors in a conflict can exploit for political purposes. Media Discourse Centre (MDC) researchers and practitioners have studied how the media contribute to the discursive confusion about peaceful and just societies, with an emphasis on a critical analysis of saturated ideological perspectives and mainstream media discourses of conflicts, journalism, and peace negotiations. This multidisciplinary panel outlines this critical work of the MDC, and it highlights important synergies with research on intercultural communication and languages, which offers refreshing opportunities for producing change through research about media and social discourses.

3pm: Building Stronger Communities: Developing social action through an online programme (Chair: Mark Charlton)

The online programme consists of six weeks of online materials and seminars. Online materials include recorded lectures, podcasts, videos, blogs and articles. Each week participants engage with materials that take between one and two hours to work through, with additional resources for optional further study. The programme includes three live online seminars and a live online panel discussion with survivors, activists and genocide scholars from Bosnia, the UK and USA. During the programme, participants are encouraged to critically reflect on their thoughts and feelings of engaging with the materials with a view to prompting and supporting sustainable social action to build stronger communities after the programme has ended. The live, online seminars encourage participants to form communities of support by undertaking collaborative discussions of their responses to the programme materials. Participants provide a personal narrative, alongside self-evaluation questionnaires before, in the middle and at the end of the programme. This supports participants to track changes in their perspective on the preparedness to undertake social action to build stronger communities. This panel consists of papers presented by academics involved in the development, delivery and evaluation of the Building Stronger Communities online programme. Topics covered will include the context and theories underpinning the programme, reflections on the delivery to the first cohort of the programme and a discussion of initial findings from the evaluation of the programme.

4pm: Break

4.30pm: Keynote speaker: Dr Paul Lowe, University of the Arts London. Lecture title: 'The Art of Testimony' (Introduction: Professor Kenneth Morrison).

This keynote lecture explores how a range of artists from the former Yugoslavia, from the generation that experienced the war as children, have explored the resonances of the conflict across the region in their subsequent artistic practices. Their works address personal and public human rights, the complexities of transitional justice, and the contested term of 'reconciliation'. Artists, including Adela Jušić, Vladimir Miladinović and Mladen Miljanović, each drew upon their lived experiences and archival material from a range of sources including the court transcripts and evidence submitted to the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY). The paper draws on research undertaken as part of 'Art & Reconciliation: Conflict, Culture and Community', a multi-year, collaborative and inter-disciplinary research project funded by the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) as part of the Partnership for Conflict, Crime and Security (PaCCS) research programme and Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF).

5.30pm: Close of Day One

DAY TWO (Friday, 20 May):

9.45am: Introduction (Mark Charlton)

10am: Panel: Counter-Narratives: The Lived Experiences of Peace-Building in Peripheral Places (Chair: Professor Richard Hall).

This panel discusses counter-narratives of peace-building and social justice that challenge dominant views of community-building. It explores the experiences of very different, marginalised groups in urban/rural spaces in Cuba and England, to explore the variety of textures that peace-building might take in a world shaken by intersecting crises. At the heart of this exploration are the relationships that these different groups have with concrete places, and how hearing their material histories enables different readings of peacebuilding, beyond labelling marginalisation and imposing reductionist solutions. Within this lies a focus upon the spaces/institutions for new conceptions of social justice, that critiques the material, cultural and historical bases for intersectional, intergenerational and intercommunal inequalities. In developing these counter-narratives, the panel refuse reductionist, hegemonic narratives of development, and instead situate peace-building and social justice as a differential, place-based process grounded in trust and mutuality.

11am: CHAMPIONS: Covid-19, Temporary Accommodation and Children's Rights to Safety, Health, and Education (Chair: Dr Nadia Sviryzdenka).

Families living in temporary accommodation (TA) have been some of the hardest hit in the pandemic, and children under 5 are the most vulnerable. The early years are a vital foundation for child development, yet children in TA already suffer significant health and educational inequalities due to deprivation. They are more likely to suffer child mortality, 2-4 times more

likely to suffer from illness compared to the general population, and more likely to live in digital poverty. These inequalities were exacerbated by the pandemic, as it pushed 700,000 more families into poverty. This panel reports early findings from the CHAMPIONS Project, an ESRC-COVID funded England-wide project exploring the impact of COVID on children under 5 living in TA and making recommendations on how best to support them through pandemic recovery. This presentation will share findings of a mixed-methods study with families, structured around the SHE Framework, which focuses on children's rights to be Safe, Healthy, and Educated. It will examine the impact of intersecting housing and health inequalities on children's health and life opportunities during the pandemic and discuss the support that families and professionals believe children need now.

12pm: Inclusive Growth, Vulnerable Unemployed Adults, High-Skilled Migrants and Refugees (Chair: Dr Amarachi Amaugo).

'Inclusive growth' has been highlighted as an important stream of work within this broad theme and within the Faculty of Business and Law's research plan. The term, 'inclusive growth', however, remains contested and contentious. Some definitions focus on providing more opportunities for marginalised and excluded groups within society to enter the labour market. Others go further and emphasise the importance of shaping the economy around 'better jobs' or 'decent work' as well as widening labour market participation. For many, the term, 'growth', is also problematic in light of environmental concerns, and may be seen to play into the hands of a neo-liberal agenda. Linked to this are questions around whether social inclusion should be viewed in narrow economic terms, or include other forms of socially valuable activities beyond paid work. This panel will highlight research currently being undertaken by the People, Organisations and Work Institute (POWI), looking at the unemployed, the socially marginalised, and migrants and refugees, and the challenges they face in terms of economic and social inclusion in the UK.

1pm: Closing remarks by Professor Kenneth Morrison & Heather McLaughlin

1.15pm: Close of conference

