

# A legacy of solidaric critique and hope for a better world: A meditation on the scholarly contribution of Ronald Sultana

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## Abstract

In this article, we reflect on the legacy of Ronald Sultana who died on Friday 24th November 2023. We argue that he was a major figure in the development of career guidance theory and practice of the late 20th and early 21st century. The article begins by reflecting on and summarising his contribution to the fields of education and career guidance. While we focus on his contribution in the field of career guidance, we also acknowledge that this work sits in a wider body of work in which Sultana's sociological imagination addressed the operation of the education system around the Mediterranean, across Europe and in the Global South. We explore Sultana's contribution to theory, policy and practice. We argue that in relation to theory he situated careers in context, carefully traced the range of political roles that career guidance could play and argued for career guidance as a force for social justice. In relation to policy, we highlight his role in international reviews and his critical commentary on this kind of policy borrowing and lending. In relation to practice, we focus on Sultana's development of resources and study programmes promoting lifelong guidance, and the leveraging of networking to develop a united community of professionals. Finally, we consider the challenges that Ronald left for us and discuss what those who seek to build on his legacy could do.

**Keywords:** Social justice; educational sociology; comparative policy.

## Introduction

As we peer through the tunnel of the future – darker than it has perhaps been for decades – we might wish to go back to the past, before the pandemic turned our lives upside down. We might be hankering for the normal, the way things were. And yet, if we are indeed to weave together a life worth living, then nothing better than the words of the poet Sonya Renée Taylor to express my thoughts and feelings today... and it is with her words that I'd like to conclude:

We will not go back to normal.  
Normal never was.  
Our pre-Corona existence was not normal  
other than we normalized greed, inequity, exhaustion,  
depletion, extraction, disconnection, rage, hoarding, hate and lack.  
We should not long to return to the old 'normal'.  
At present, we are being given the opportunity to stitch a new garment.  
One that fits all of humanity and nature.

(Sultana, 2021c, The Honoris Causa ceremony, Université Laval in Québec, Canada)

There are few, if any, other educational scholars that have left such a mark on the field of career guidance research as Ronald Sultana. Sultana made significant contributions that shaped theory, policy and practice within the field of education in general and in career guidance in particular. He passed away suddenly on 24 November 2023 at the age of 65 and left behind a legacy of ideas that will continue to influence research in comparative educational and career guidance policy for future generations.

While this article unpacks the central elements of Sultana's work it can never do justice to the many articles, books, book chapters blog posts and even creative pieces that he produced in a lifetime. We hope that this article will inspire the reader to delve into the parts of his work that connect most with your thoughts at this moment. We write it as Ronald's friends, colleagues and mentees who have had the opportunity to benefit from his thinking, writing and guidance over the years and now attempt to present some of his key ideas, so that others can continue to learn from him.

Sultana's work had a global impact and has been translated into several languages. He described his own contribution and approach as follows:

The field in which I flourished as an academic is education, a broad enough area that allowed me to 'husband' three related garden patches, namely [1] the links between education, work and employment [2] teacher education, and [3] comparative education. All my work in these three areas is informed by an engagement with sociology (and in particular critical social theory), and to some extent with philosophy, economics, history, and psychology, an interest that flows naturally from attempts to understand the interactions between individuals and society, and between agency and structure in particular historical conjunctures.

(Sultana, 2021a, p.83)

Within these 'garden patches' we want to focus especially on his interests in the links between education and work, particularly through his engagement in careers education and guidance and to reflect on his commitment to contextualised and comparative perspectives and his underlying passion for social justice.

Sultana was very productive and enjoyed writing, almost to the same extent as Baumann (2012) who wrote in his book *This is not a diary* that 'a day without scribbling feels like a day wasted or criminally aborted, a duty neglected, a calling betrayed' (p. 1). There was no doubt of Ronald's calling as a professor, scholar and mentor for research in education and career guidance. He was continuously critical, always insisting on a dialectical approach to the problems he scrutinised. This was often reflected in the titles of his writings: 'For a postcolonial turn in career guidance: The dialectic between universalisms and localisms' (Sultana, 2023a) and 'Lifelong career guidance: Between autonomy and solidarity' (Sultana, 2023b). He also enjoyed the play of words, this is evident from early on 'L-ghalliema, il-genituri u l-kunsilli ta' l-iskejjel: Pont fuq bahar li jaqsam?' (Teachers, parents and school councils: A bridge over a dividing sea? Our translation Sultana, 1994) and 'Underachievement: Are students failing school or are our schools failing students?' (Sultana, 1996). Sultana continued up until his passing to use the titles of his articles to make the reader reflect and think about his or her own position, often somewhat mischievously as in, 'Four "dirty words" in career guidance: From common sense to good sense' (Sultana, 2022a).

Sultana wanted his readers, educators and indeed everyone to take a stance, show their convictions and, stand up for what they believed in. He was very clear about his convictions but remained open to the ideas and positions of others. His scholarly and pedagogic endeavor was non-dogmatic, curious and critical, and he was often able to bring together different perspectives and traditions to create new and productive syntheses. The only thing that he would not accept in his scholarship would be the idea of no position or supposed neutrality ('it is the worst that lack all conviction', Sultana, 2017a, p.313). His way of living and working was encapsulated by his belief that 'one never "arrives" or wins on all fronts, but one is always striving to understand, reach out, improve' (Sultana, 2022b).

Sultana's commitment to critical social theory meant that he was committed to building a radical imaginary, addressing the use of power, unmasking ideology, viewing the individual as existing in a dialectical relationship with their context and recognising that human beings have a bounded but transformative capacity for agency (Thomsen et al., 2022). These convictions ran through his work, which became increasingly critical, conceptual and theoretical as he moved through his career.

## Career retrospective

Ronald Sultana was born in 1958 and grew up in a middle-class family in Naxxar, a small Maltese village. His youth involved active participation as an educator in a religious association, the Society of Christian Doctrine, which shaped his values and passion for teaching. Academically, he was outstanding, earning a first-class honours degree in English, a Post-Graduate Diploma in Guidance and Counselling with Distinction from the University of Reading, and a PhD in Educational Sociology from The University of Waikato, New Zealand, among other qualifications. His doctoral research, an ethnographic study focusing

on the transition from school to work, significantly influenced both the methodology and subject matter of his later research and academic pursuits (Sultana, 1987).

Sultana held the position of Professor of Comparative Education and Educational Sociology at the University of Malta and was attached to the Faculty of Education throughout his whole working life. Over a 35 year-period he became a cornerstone of the Faculty not only through formal leadership positions, such as Head of Department and Dean, but also as an unofficial counsellor to both fellow scholars and students. His office was described by a colleague as the 'refugio peccatorum' (the refuge of sinners). He educated several generations of teachers, and his numerous books and papers are basic readings in various education and sociology courses.

Sultana was also the Director of the Euro-Mediterranean Centre for Educational Research (EMCER), which he founded in 2003. Through EMCER, he pioneered a Master of Arts programme in Comparative Euro-Mediterranean Education Studies and managed the *Mediterranean Journal of Educational Studies* that promoted knowledge sharing in the region. The Journal eventually transitioned into a book series. In 2006, he launched a Master's programme in Lifelong Career Guidance and Development in collaboration with the Centre for Labour Studies, which has been used as an example of good practice internationally.

Ronald Sultana, though left-leaning, did not align strictly with the policies or theories of any single party or faction. Remarkably, his most significant contributions to national policy in Malta were made during the 1990s and early 2000s under centre-right governments. He often worked behind the scenes on key initiatives like the establishment of the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST), Malta's primary TVET institution, as well as public school reforms (Wain et al., 1995). He also played a pivotal role in the development of the Personal and Social Education (PSE) subject in compulsory education (Sultana, 1992) and the national career guidance policy for schools (Debono et al., 2007). In Malta's career guidance field, Sultana assisted in founding the Malta Career Guidance Association and actively supported its activities over the years. He established a Guidance Forum, participated in national conferences, engaged in continuous professional development for practitioners, and consistently shared career guidance insights to enhance the skills of those in the field.

However, Ronald Sultana's influence reached far beyond his university and national boundaries. A prolific researcher and author, he edited and co-edited 40 volumes, and wrote over 120 peer-reviewed research papers and chapters (Calleja, 2023). As discussed earlier, he categorised his research into three main strands: the links between education, work, and employment; teacher education; and comparative education (Sultana, 2021a). This expansive focus stemmed from the necessity for academics in smaller countries like Malta to engage with a broad range of subjects. Although this approach presented challenges, Sultana recognised and embraced the advantages of a wide-ranging academic background. It enabled him to master various technical languages, forge diverse connections, and gain novel insights (Sultana, 2021a). Significantly, these three research strands often intersected and enriched each other.

Sultana's research was consistently informed by his commitment to a comparative perspective and a deep-seated drive for social justice. His work often delved into themes

like neoliberal oppression, the north-south divide, and the politics of emancipation (e.g., Hooley et al., 2018, 2019; Sultana, 2011, 2014a, 2017b). Always self-reflective, he was particularly concerned with the role of experts like himself, who acted as 'boundary persons', mediating policy lending and borrowing between countries (Sultana, 2011).

Throughout his career, Sultana's writing prowess was inextricably linked to his personal influence. Known for his eloquence, playful wit, deep expertise, and intellectual humility, he captivated audiences at conferences worldwide. This charm and skill not only resonated with his listeners but also opened doors to numerous collaborations on international research and policy projects including work with a variety of prestigious international organisations (Sultana, 2021a).

Sultana published many significant contributions about educational policy focusing on various Mediterranean and Arab countries and territories (e.g. Mazawi & Sultana, 2010; Sultana 2002, 2008). This included work which looked at: the quality of education in the Euro-Mediterranean region (Sultana, 2016); the struggles for democracy through education in the region (Mazawi & Sultana, 2010); gathering comparative educational research in the Mediterranean (Sultana & Buhagiar, 2021); 'authentic education' that encourages students to 'comprehend, challenge, and contest' (Sultana, 2021b); the problematic issue of private tutoring (Bray et al., 2013); as well as a focus on specific initiatives such as early childhood development in Jordan, and girls' education in Egypt (Sultana, 2009a); analysing vocational school reforms in Albania, Kosovo and Turkey and so on (Sultana, 2008). Most recently he edited a volume exploring the influence, and relevance, of Dewey to Mediterranean education (Striano & Sultana, 2022)

But he will arguably be mostly remembered for his work on the transitions between learning and work, and on careers education and guidance which included important contributions to theory, policy and practice in Malta, Europe and the wider Mediterranean region, and the world. Ronald Sultana worked in tens of countries and contributed reports for all the major international bodies involved in career guidance. He was also a member of the editorial board of several international journals, including the *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, and held the position of International Fellow at the *National Institute for Career Education and Counselling* (NICEC) in the UK.

In 2021, Sultana received an Honorary Doctorate from Université Laval in Québec, Canada. In 2023, he was honoured with the ESVDC 2023 Distinguished Scholar Award by the European Society for Vocational Design and Career Counselling. These honours recognised his innovative contributions to career guidance theory and practice, notably his focus on social justice and equity.

## His contribution to career studies

Sultana described his area of interest as the links between 'education, work and employment' and as the associated 'interactions between individuals and society, and between agency and structure in particular historical conjunctures' (Sultana, 2021a, p.83). He was fond of troubling concepts like 'career' and 'career guidance' noting that such terms are 'quite distant from the kind of modest occupations the vast majority of "common"

people in the global South are involved in' (Sultana, 2017b, p.9). As a result, he toyed with alternative language and ways of describing this activity such as 'livelihood planning' or 'authentic education for meaningful work' (Sultana, 2017b; 2021b). These were not merely academic language games, but rather a deep concern about the relevance of his key concepts to those outside of the global elites, and a critical engagement with the normative values and ideologies that such terms carried. Sultana always remembered that the Global North represented a minority of the world's population and asked whether models for research, theory, policy and practice were mindful of the broader global context.

Yet, he did come back, time and again to the concept of 'career' pairing it variously with 'guidance', 'education', 'development' and other terms. Ultimately, he preferred to trouble the terminology than abandon it. He drew attention to the multiple rationalities that inform career guidance in many places and sought to redefine and reorientate the activity around more emancipatory definitions. In his book on career guidance in the Mediterranean he proposed a definition of career guidance as:

A dialogic, mutually pedagogical relationship, that serves to conscientise individuals and groups about the social forces that define the world of work and affect the range of opportunities available to them, while at the same time equipping them with the political skills, networks, community resources, values and dispositions to struggle for social and work arrangements that are equitable and just, where one's development and self-fulfilment advances the development and fulfilment of others.

(Sultana, 2017b, p.11)

This was then built on in a subsequent book on career guidance and social justice which added the important ideas that career guidance should be about empowering people to 'imagine the world as it could be', 'build solidarity' and 'take both individual and collective action' (Hooley et al., 2018, p.20). In this he drew directly on key ideas that had influenced his thinking throughout his career like Mills' (1959) concept of the 'sociological imagination' and the critical pedagogy tradition which flowed through Freire (1970), Giroux (1988) and Simon (Dippo et al., 1991; Simon, 2009) amongst others. This kind of deep engagement with sociology and critical theory remains unusual within the career guidance field although such intellectual resources may be becoming more influential, at least in part due to the efforts of Sultana.

## Contributions to career theory

Sultana's theoretical contribution to the field of career guidance is threefold. Firstly, he argued, as other sociologically minded theorists have before him, that both careers and career guidance unfold within a context, with Sultana particularly minded to view this idea of context through a geo-political lens that often serves to reframe the opportunity structures of any particularly (Global North) country. Secondly, he carefully traced the myriad of roles that career guidance can play, showing how its practice is enmeshed in wider ideologies and structures of power. And, thirdly, he argued that career guidance has the potential to be an emancipatory form of education, both helping individuals to find new horizons and providing them with tools through which they can act on and diminish inequalities in their societies. Sultana's work on bringing the context of career and career

guidance to the forefront of theorising is critical. His aim was 'to develop theoretically informed accounts of the field as it is conceived and practised in context' (Sultana, 2017b, p. 3). Careers are not something that happens in abstract globalised spaces, what Arthur and Rousseau (2001) celebrated as 'the boundaryless career'. Instead, careers are rooted in spaces, places politics and culture. 'Contexts matter' Sultana argues, and not just to what jobs one might do, but also to what it is possible to think and dream. Careers in North Africa are different from those in Germany, because of the large informal labour market, the cultural and religious fatalism of the population, and the enormous inequality (Sultana, 2017b). Without a deep understanding of context, we cannot 'understand the extent to which our theories, with their universalising tendencies, are both plain wrong, and equally, plainly dangerous' (Sultana, 2018a, p.49).

He recounted a story of travelling on a train from Casablanca to Rabat and overhearing a holidaying British couple reflecting on the 'career choices' of an eight-year-old shoeshine boy (Sultana, 2017b). The anecdote serves to illustrate the vast gulf that exists between the habitus of the British couple, to whom concepts like vocational choice and agency are central, and the shoeshine boy to whom choices have never been afforded. Context is not merely about politics, wealth, class, culture or place, but a dynamic mix of all of these which means that any career theory has to come up with serious answers to questions about who the theory is useful for, in what circumstances and under what conditions. So, Sultana's theorisation of 'chameleon careers' which he built from his own experience of careering in Malta, as well as interviews in other small states, was advanced as a particular career formation which emerged in a particular political economy, rather than as a universal truth that could be extrapolated from his own experience to all contexts (Sultana, 2010).

Just, as context matters for the development of careers, it also shapes both how career guidance works as we will discuss further in the sections on policy and practice. Sultana remained sceptical about attempts to transplant forms of career guidance from one context into another, without attention to the context, and was fond of quoting Sadler's (1900) dictum about the frequent failure of attempts to borrow educational policies and approaches, rephrasing it optimistically as follows:

Of course, one cannot take a flower from the mountains and plant it in Malta, in the hope that it will flourish in our arid clime... but knowing that others have found ways of making flowers bloom irrespective of season should at least challenge our complacency: education can be and should be both a heritage and a portal for all, not just a few.

(Sultana, 2022b)

Career guidance, Sultana would always remind us, is not a neutral tool which we can simply apply to anywhere. It is a practice that we must remake in different contexts. Furthermore, career guidance is not just one thing done for one person or purpose, but rather 'can take a wide range of forms and draws on diverse theoretical traditions' (Hooley et al., 2018, p.20) and which is deployed for a wide range of political and ideological purposes which Sultana (2014a) summarised as technocratic, developmental and emancipatory rationalities. Guidance has a 'dark side' and can end up having 'reproductive rather than transformative or emancipatory outcomes' often through the way that it

shapes possibilities and accommodates people to the opportunity structure (Sultana, 2014a, p.18). Sultana goes on to ask 'in which way/s does career education and guidance participate in the deployment of power, and on whose behalf, towards which ends?' and providing the somewhat gloomy answer that 'here one may be tempted to come to a simple, but probably simplistic conclusion, namely that career education and guidance, as an institutionalised social practice, will tend to be reproductive' (p.19). In this dialogue he recognises the way in which career guidance is embedded within wider processes of politics, policy and ideology and how any theories or readings of its value, impact and potential need to be grounded in this kind of analysis of the context of practice. Career guidance is delivered in schools, universities and public employment services and funded by politicians to achieve particular aims. It is only through understanding this contextualised practice that we can formulate meaningful and usable theories.

However, the gloomy recognition that career guidance is often in the service of technocratic politicians pursuing often questionable policy aims, is not the whole story. Throughout his work, but especially following the publication of three hard hitting papers in 2014: 'Rousseau's chains: Striving for greater social justice through emancipatory career guidance'; 'Career guidance for social justice in neoliberal times; and 'Pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will?'; 'Troubling the relationship between career guidance and social justice' (Sultana, 2014a, b, & c), he argued that career guidance was not simply a technology for social control, but rather could be co-opted into an emancipatory project for liberation. These ideas were explored through a special issue of the NICEC Journal (Hooley & Sultana, 2016) and two edited volumes (Hooley et al., 2018, 2019). Building on these focused contributions he pursued the fight for social justice pluralistically in relation to the experience of multi-cultural societies (Sultana, 2017c), migrants and refugees in the labour market (Fejes et al., 2022) whilst arguing for a post-colonial turn (Sultana, 2023a) and opposing neo-liberalism and austerity (Sultana, 2018c). He also began the process of developing new models of practice (Hooley et al., 2021) and re-engineering the language of career guidance to empty it of neoliberal assumptions (Sultana, 2022a). This work in theorising career guidance as an emancipatory force clearly stands as one of Sultana's greatest theoretical contributions to the field.

## Contributions to policy

As already discussed above, Sultana played important roles in the politics and policy of career guidance in his native Malta from the 1990s. But from the early 2000s he began to contribute to a series of international reviews of career guidance that fed into 'the most detailed comparable database on career guidance that has ever been produced' (Sultana, 2017b, pp.3-4).

As a policy expert he undertook comparative work for major organisations such as Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the European Union (EU), the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN), the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) and the European Training Foundation (ETF). These reviews resulted in several technical and policy reports focusing on career guidance in Europe (Sultana, 2004; Sultana & Watts, 2006), in small states (Sultana, 2006) in the Mediterranean Region (Sultana & Watts, 2007), and addressing key issues such as the development of career management



skills and flexicurity (Sultana, 2012). *Career guidance: A handbook for guidance policy-makers* (Watts & Sultana, 2004), also based on such reviews, proved to be an important resource for policy makers across the world and was translated into several languages. The whole project of completing these international reviews 'led to opportunities for policy lending and policy borrowing on an unprecedented scale' (Sultana, 2009b).

Despite growing doubts about these kinds of international policy borrowing and lending roles, Sultana continued to engage in these studies almost until the end of his life, with a review of 'career development support systems in the Western Balkans' completed in 2022 (Sultana, 2022c). Optimistically, Sultana hoped that such processes could foster mutual understanding, learning and development. Yet, ever reflective, he also articulated his doubts about both the process of many of these reviews, particularly the imperialist undertones of experts travelling from the most developed countries to opine on those that were judged as 'in need'. He critiqued the normative and universalising approaches to policy and practice development that the reviews tended to produce and outlined concerns that the process of policy borrowing and lending tended to benefit the lender more than the borrower. He wrote of his feelings about the ethical and epistemological responsibilities that he carried in the role of 'boundary person', mediating between the global and the local (Sultana, 2011).

What on earth are we trying to do here? Are we pushing a practice that has little if any cultural and social anchorage, particularly among the poorer sections of the population that, incidentally, make up the vast majority in both the urban and rural areas? To what extent is career guidance at all meaningful – or appropriate?

(Sultana, 2011, p.276)

Once again, the centrality of context comes through in Sultana's work. In dialogue with Marcelo Ribeiro, a colleague in Brazil, and increasingly influenced by theorists Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999), Raewyn Connell (2007) and Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2006), Sultana conceptualised these as epistemic problems in which local approaches to knowing and doing must be respected (Sultana, 2018a). This does not mean that there is nothing to be gained from policy borrowing and lending, but rather that if such work is to be successful it needs to open up 'discursive spaces that bridge current global divides and inequities in the production of knowledge' and amplify 'multiple voices, by accommodating indigenous practices' rather than serve as a process of transmission from the Global North to the Global South (Sultana, 2018a, p.50).

## Contributions to practice

Sultana's engagement in comparative research and policy on career guidance heightened his awareness of the disparities in the quality of career guidance practices, not just among countries but also within different institutions in the same country. Recognising the need to enhance the capabilities of career practitioners, he collaborated on international projects through ERASMUS+ to develop valuable resources, such as *Enhancing the quality of career guidance in secondary schools: A handbook* (Sultana, 2018b).

Understanding that robust career guidance education programmes are crucial for the field's professionalisation, Sultana dedicated considerable time and effort to training career

guidance practitioners both in Malta and internationally. He co-founded an open-course on career guidance and social justice offered as part of the Nordic-Baltic VALA network and in recent years, supported education authorities in Cyprus, Slovenia, Scotland, Egypt, Palestine, and the Faroe Islands in developing career education programmes.

Sultana (2018b) advocated for the formation of well-rounded professionals or 'reflective practitioners', a concept adopted from Schön (1983). He believed this could be achieved by fostering a combination of knowledge ('*savoir*'), skills and competencies ('*savoir faire*'), and personal and professional demeanor ('*savoir être*'). Perhaps noting a general undervaluation of the latter aspect in career guidance programmes, he emphasised it in his teachings, including the importance of professional ethics. Sultana also explored creative avenues in conveying his message. He crafted a visual meditation titled 'A Commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion' (Sultana 2021d) to accompany a manifesto for inclusion, encapsulating ideas and proposals contributed by over 600 academics and practitioners from across the globe (Sultana 2017a).

Sultana firmly believed that an effective career guidance system must address individuals' lifelong guidance needs, seeking to integrate services both within and outside educational systems. Towards this aim, he advocated for holistic career guidance programmes that adopt a lifelong and lifewide perspective on career development, engaging practitioners from schools, public employment services, and adult career guidance providers to study together. This interaction was intended to foster a shared set of values and vocabulary, important elements in the formation of a unified profession across the different roles of researchers, practitioners and policymakers. Sultana also acted as a supporting expert in the establishment of the European Doctoral Programme in Career Guidance and Counselling (ECADOC) and ran a very memorable ECADOC summer school in Malta in 2019.

Furthermore, Sultana leveraged his network to enrich the field at gatherings, attended by scholars, students, practitioners, and various stakeholders, facilitating a cross-pollination of insights and practices. By encouraging diverse participation in educational and training events, ranging from formal university programmes to workshops and conferences, Sultana aimed to build a community of career guidance professionals equipped with a common understanding and commitment to lifelong career guidance and development.

## What is to be done?

Ronald Sultana leaves a legacy of scholarship in education and career guidance and those who would like to honour his work are, in our view, given some significant signposts as to what to do next.

We would like to finish as we started, with Ronald's own words. In the quote that follows, Ronald reminds us that the purpose of academic work is not to offer a quick fix, but rather to foster reflexivity, ask difficult questions and offer a critical take on the common-sense assumptions of the world. From this we can draw five lessons from his thinking and writing to guide us as we move forwards. Firstly, to engage in continuous critical self-reflection. Secondly, to keep contextualising and analysing education and career guidance practices as they unfold in everyday life. Thirdly, to keep in view dimensions of power whether economic or cultural. Fourthly, to advocate for scholarship that transcends borders and boundaries,

whether they pertain to national borders or disciplinary divides within academia, and fifthly to continue with our collective endeavour to realise better, more inclusive, and more equitable societies.

To provide policy directions now would be to foreclose analysis, and while it is vital that policy and research do not ignore each other, it is equally important that they are not collapsed into each other either. What I have tried to do in this paper is to 'claim sanctuary' by distancing myself a little from the urgency of the demands of policy and practice with their understandable concerns for prompt and immediate action in order to prise for myself some space for critical self-reflection

(Sultana 2011, p.280).

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