



**Book of Abstracts**  
*Plenum Conference*

*Challenging Social Work: Borders,  
Boundaries and Bridges*

TISSA **2019**

Welcome in Münster  
Germany

# OUR SPONSORS

**HO  
GENT**



Hochschule für Angewandte Wissenschaften Hamburg  
Hamburg University of Applied Sciences

Bildungs- und Förderungswerk  
der GEW im DGB e. V.



**GHENT  
UNIVERSITY**



WESTFÄLISCHE  
WILHELMS-UNIVERSITÄT  
MÜNSTER



Ministerium für Kinder, Familie,  
Flüchtlinge und Integration  
des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen



## Table of content

Pedagogics in the Era of Social Entrepreneurship: the Status of Logics of Care and the Market by Toon Benoot and Rudi Roose.....	2
A reflexive model for challenging boundaries in the slipstream of non take-up by Liese Berkvens , Hans Grymonprez and Britt Dehertogh.....	3
Migrant Communities & Informal Refugee Support in Germany by Hannah Blome Heyenn and Kamila Schöll-Mazurek .....	4
Challenges and Perspectives of the Geman Welfare State System - Introduction in the National Day by Karin Böllert .....	5
The caged bird sings: young generations versus older generations in social work by Steven Brandt , Rudi Roose and Griet Verschelden .....	6
"When they kick at your front door" - On the current relationship between out-of-home care and the police in Germany by Zoë Clark and Fabian Fritz.....	7
Can gender quotas break community disengagement from local decision-making? A critical case test by Marsela Dauti .....	8
“What is that sound? Who else is there?” Guidelines for video calling in health and social care by Sarah De Coninck .....	9
Epistemic injustice in / and social work by Luc De Droogh.....	10
Discretion as a way to (re)politicise social work by Jolijn De Haene and Griet Verschelden .....	11
Social Impact Assessment: Borders and Bridges by Cristiana Dias de Almeida and Cristina Maria Pinto Albuquerque .....	12
Strategies to prevent harmful alcohol consumption by Nistor Gheorghiu.....	13
An exploration of the experiences of young people in residential care settings in Ireland and Germany by Joseph Haugh .....	14
The importance of educational qualification for social work practice: From the perspective of social work managers by Jana Havlíková .....	15
Capabilities as Inclusion: About the Boundaries of a current reform debate in Child and Youth Welfare Services by Benedikt Hopmann.....	16
Residency and (Non-)Citizenship: Social Work within and against the Nation State by Lisa Janotta .....	17
Professional education for participatory social work by Ewa Kantowicz.....	18
Expectations of victims/survivors of childhood sexual abuse towards “Aufarbeitung” and recognition by Barbara Kavemann , Daniel Doll and Bianca Nagel.....	19

When refugees return. How Social Work can interlink pre-departure counselling with post-arrival conditions by Joris Kennis.....	20
Educational Pathways in the context of asylum-migration by Juri Kilian .....	21
Planning of social services in local level: New opportunities and challenges for social workers in Albania by Eliona Kulluri Bimbashi .....	22
Host families for minor unaccompanied refugees – an alternative? by Gesa Langhoop.....	23
Alcoholics` motivation to become sober and maintain their sobriety within Alcoholics Anonymous support groups by Adriana Lavinia Bulumac .....	24
Recognizing young masculinities vulnerability in the context of welfare practice by Harry Lunabba .....	25
Methodic principles as starting point of social work methods by Judith Metz.....	26
Bridges over troubled waters? Social work as an attempt of building bridges in an area of conflict by Daniela Molnar , Matthias Kempf , Lisa Jacobi and Martin F. Reichstein .....	27
The art of making public: the politics of participation in participatory art practices by Siebren Nachtergaele , Griet Verschelden and Tine Vanthuyne.....	30
Social Justice - Boundaries and Bridges between Social Work and Philosophy for an Ethical practice in Social Work by Inês Pereira and Maria Inês Amaro.....	31
Promoting quality of life for people at the end-of-life stage: an ethical challenge in the professional acting of the Social Worker by Berta Pereira Jacinto and Helena Neves Almeida .....	32
Positioning Social Justice: Reclaiming Social Work's Organizing Value in Divisive Times by Dassi Postan-Aizik , Corey Shdaimah and Roni Strier.....	33
Institutionalization and De-Institutionalization – Doing Boundary Work in Social Work Talk by Martina Richter .....	34
Charity, rights and the new charity economy: challenging binaries of the Un/Deserving poor by Griet Roets , Fabian Kessl , Nicolas Jacquet and Heidi Degerickx.....	35
Othering as barrier to changes in child protection by Maria Roth .....	38
Community sport, social cohesion and structural work by Shana Sabbe , Lieve Bradt and Rudi Roose .....	39
Unconditional Youth Welfare – Challenging the Boundaries between the “Good” and “Normal” and the “Bad” and “Defective” Parents by Mark Schroedter , Pascal Bastian , Jana Posmek , Katharina Freres , Vinzenz Thalheim and Megan Benoit .....	40
Social work on the move: Challenging and crossing borders and boundaries by Mieke Schrooten.....	42
Promoting South Epistemologies to support informed political action by Paula Sousa and Jose Luis Almeida .....	43

Social workers at the crossroads of the deinstitutionalization process in Serbia: advocating for community care for people with intellectual disabilities and mental disorders or institutions? by Dragana Stöckel .....	44
Policy alienation in the front line social work by Mia Tammelin and Maija Mänttari-van der Kuip.....	45
From Lion to Termite? The Penetration of Neoliberal Rationality in Social Work Education and Practice by Bart Van Bouchaute , Hans Grymonprez and Raf Debaene.....	46
Safe spaces for ‘radical ideas’? A bottom-up approach towards politisation in youth work by Tim Vanhove , Reyhan Görgöz and Bart Van Bouchaute.....	48

**What a paradox on the actor can tell us about care and co-creation: why a social worker is not a whore by Simon Allemeersch**

*simon\_allemeersch@hotmail.com*

---

The immediate motivation for this article is an interview with a participant in different projects organized by the author. In this interview the participant describes the compassion of social organizations as fake, comparing the contact with a social worker as 'visiting a whore', because the social worker expresses compassion and warmth for which he or she is paid. This gave the participant the idea that through these contacts her life felt 'as being fake' (Interview 'I' did no longer feel like 'me'). Drawing on a similar reproach about the presumably immoral and corrupting grounds of the theatre (Rousseau, 1758; Mamet 1994, Sennett, 1977) and using Diderot's analysis of the work of the theatrical actor (*Le paradoxe sur le comédien*, 1830) as the clarification of a common misunderstanding about the emotional work of the actor - this article focuses on the place an informal relation takes in professional care and social work, questioning the notions of compassion and authenticity in social work. It investigates the idea of a paradox of care, where the social worker is willing to help, although these good compassionate intentions are not a guarantee this is the best way to actually organize care. Let alone that these feelings will be welcomed spontaneously by the public a social worker deals with. Perhaps this work often feels like wanting to shout 'don't be nervous' to someone who is nervous. But should the social worker then act as a cold technician of care? This article is not proposing a final solution to this paradox. On the contrary, this text is not even trying to resolve it, stating that this paradox is human - and could be regarded as a plea for passionate professional social work, rather than compassion. Social work could be looking for an intelligent way to work its way around this paradox, hinging on a better understanding of authenticity, and looking

for the possibility of 'new' forms of authenticities (plural). These forms need new metaphors for care, that are based on an equal relation between participants and social work. Social work should hold a rights-based perspective, and could creatively use the knowledge of formal and informal order (Scott, 1998) - rather than charitable systems (Kessl, Oechler & Schroeder, 2019), handing out to the deserving. The popular ideas of co-creation and arts-based techniques could be useful in this sense, but should be evaluated critically through this 'radical lens'. The author uses qualitative research data from his own background as a professional theatre maker and researcher, based on the experience with several projects within places of care, specifically a child psychiatry and social housing. These projects were based on a system of co-creation with participants who often have a life long relation with care and psychiatry.

**Pedagogics in the Era of Social Entrepreneurship: the Status of Logics of Care and the Market by Toon Benoot and Rudi Roose**

*toon.benoot@Ugent.be*

---

As in many other welfare states, a recent policy-shift in Flanders, called 'Perspective 2020', paved the way towards personalised care as a realisation of the right to social care for people with disabilities. This policy document has reframed care institutions for people with disabilities as 'social Entrepreneurs'. The Flemish government specifies that: "The aim is to serve more people with the same resources, through a high degree of flexibility and diversification of services and through the use of both social support (community care) and regular services". The main presumptions of this personalised care policy are: higher quality driven by competition in a market-environment; enhancing demand-driven care; resulting in more creative and flexible answers; whereby personal choice and control over care are central; and institutions are accountable for the use of scarce resources. At the same time, several scholars point to the possible tensions between a care logic and a market-logic. The main critiques concern questions on how to reconcile the right to social care and the social just aspect of care in a shift towards financial driven incentives and profit-oriented practices. The latter assumes creative and flexible answers that are demand-driven and steered by care-market-forces. From these well-known critiques on 'the marketisation of the social', we might frame the transition towards 'social entrepreneurship' as endangering the pedagogics within care institutions for people with disabilities, putting the economic and market logic at first. In this presentation we discuss 'The Status of Pedagogics in Care Institutions' based on interviews with a group of directors of care institutions for people with disabilities which are gathered in a group called 'Kwaito'. This group focusses on 'Qualitative, Innovative Entrepreneurship'. It wants to give

meaning to concepts affiliated to this transition in the Flemish care landscape from a perspective of solidarity and inclusive citizenship. And above all, they want to shift the paradigm from 'person centred' towards 'person and its environment centred'. This means a shift from an individual rational towards a relational concept of autonomy and citizenship. By conducting in depth-interviews with the 15 directors of the care institutions gathered in this organisation, we shed a light on their decision-making process in the implementation of these policies in practice. And specifically, how these decisions are related to pedagogics and what this entails. This will provide insight in how institutions try to actively reconcile a care and a market logic and give shape to the newly introduced 'Social Entrepreneurship'.

**A reflexive model for challenging boundaries in the slipstream of non take-up by Liese Berkvens, Hans Grymonprez and Britt Dehertogh**

*hans.grymonprez@ugent.be*

---

First deployed from economical reasoning and further developed in social policy-oriented research non take-up seems a well-established concept. According to the European Commission, non-take-up (NTU) is an indicator for all kind of discrepancies between services and benefits offered and the usage of these offers and benefits. However, NTU entails also possible reductions towards activating individuals: the individual is responsible for claiming its rights. Hence, non take-up might end up as just another way of constructing the problematic 'other' which is reflected in client-constructions such as 'hard to reach' or 'care-avoiders'. In the Belgian context social rights are inscribed in the constitution, where the law on public social welfare obliges the state to secure everyone a dignified existence. In a rapidly transforming society - particularly shifting policy contexts - guaranteeing fundamental rights is under pressure. As elsewhere in Europe welfare rights are increasingly conditionalized while access to services is often a path full of obstacles. In a recent social work conference in Brussels, the importance of guaranteeing fundamental social rights was extensively debated and acknowledged as a core task of social work. Nevertheless, also social work plays a role in those processes in which individuals refuse or refrain from claiming or access. It is argued that predictability is crucial to tackle non take up which is exemplified in strategies of automatization and reduction of complexity (Van Mechelen & Van der Heyden, 2017). Though, in the case of social work, Roose (2008) argued social problems are hard to manage and demand space for unpredictability. This is where our model makes an effort to fill in the blanks. Based on work in our research group, we developed a reflexive model to deal with non-take up. Our model challenges different boundaries between individuals

and public resources and the processes of negotiation in between. As such, our aim is to bridge the socially constructed divisions the phenomenon of NTU seems to provoke. Our reflective model is constructed from a range of 'good practices' in Flanders which deliberately deal with this issue; often through challenging boundaries. This model raises awareness on the role, responsibilities and possibilities to contribute to guarantee fundamental rights, and contributes to develop a more nuanced view on individuals and the 'them' and 'us'- construction.



**Migrant Communities & Informal Refugee Support in Germany by Hannah Blome Heyenn and Kamila Schöll-Mazurek**

*hannah.heyenn@uni-kassel.de*

---

The article discusses the effects of exchanges between settled migrants from different ethnic backgrounds and refugees within the framework of selected refugee support programmes in Berlin. According to Germany's Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, well-functioning migrant organisations are beneficial for integration as they can play a role in transmitting the values of the receiving country. Studies from other European countries have shown migrant populations to prefer informal over formal social work interventions (Hugman et al. 2010) and refugees to exhibit particularly high levels of distrust in institutions (Ni Raghallaigh 2014). Facing integration challenges with high numbers of refugees since 2015, the need to overcome these barriers to social work with refugees is strong. In the aftermath of the 2015 refugee influx, diadic informal interventions called „Patenschaften“ (Sponsorships) or Tandems became a popular way to involve the civil society into refugee integration, while also influencing the attitudes towards refugees in society. Evaluating and comparing such diadic programmes run by Turkish and Polish migrant organisations with counterparts run by non-migrant organisations, the study aims to produce insights by answering the following research questions: In which way are migrants and migrant organisation advantaged or disadvantaged to extend informal support to refugees? Which challenges and potentials do migrant organisations face in the design and execution of social work activities for refugees? Our findings are based on semi-structured narrative interviews with Turkish and Polish migrant as well as non-migrant sponsors and refugees, who have taken part in the programme. Single interviews and diade interviews were conducted to evaluate informal integration

dynamics of the programme. Coordinators from two migrant organisations and one non-migrant organisations were interviewed to gain insights into challenges and potentials of organisations as well as attitudes towards refugees in participating communities. The contribution shows the advantages and challenges of refugee integration programmes run by migrant organisations. Main advantages of migrant sponsors were based in their background as a former newcomer to the receiving society. Cultural misunderstandings with Germans or administrative issues were often part of the experience of settled migrant sponsors. Migrant-Refugee-Diades were in tendency less hierarchical, than their Non-migrant-Refugee counterparts. Migrant organisations as coordinators of Sponsorships made use of external institutional support for administration or expert seminars more often than the non-migrant organisation in the study. Settled migrants in refugee support diades combine their affinity for informal exchanges with personal knowledge of the institutions and societal frameworks involved in integration in the receiving country. Through similar experiences migrant supporters bridge refugees mistrust more easily than non-migrants. Thus the full advantage of informal interventions is in force in migrant run refugee support. Coordinating organisations of non-migrant background, however, were advantaged structurally and by formal experience of coordinators to the migrant counterparts. In summary migrant communities can increase the integration potential of the host society by utilizing their lived experience of integration in the host society. Such programmes benefit the structure and skills in migrant communities and may be a policy answer to the challenges of integration in a post-migration society.

**Challenges and Perspectives of the  
German Welfare State System -  
Introduction in the National Day by Karin  
Böllert**

*kaboe@uni-muenster.de*

---

The lecture gives an impression of the perspectives and reform efforts of the German welfare state system in the face of the central challenges of demographic change, changes in the labour market and the duplication of normative models.

**The caged bird sings: young generations versus older generations in social work by Steven Brandt, Rudi Roose and Griet Verschelden**

*steven.brandt@hogent.be*

---

Based on literature, three depoliticization tendencies seem to characterise newest generation of social workers: first, the diminution of interest on the structural level of social problems. Second, the newest generation social workers is supposed to incline the idea of welfare conditionality. And third, different authors describe an evolution towards an increasingly shallow technical, ticking-boxes professional. The new generation of social workers seems to conform with the policy climate in which social justice is increasingly under pressure. It is our contention that this debate is one-sided. It disregards contextual and institutional aspects and is exclusively focused on the newest generation. As they do not take part in this debate, we aim to give them a voice by examining their professional perspectives. This paper reports the analysis of interviews of social workers in a public welfare centre in Flanders (Belgium). Drawing on the three layers of Mannheim's (1928) generational theory, we demark generations of social workers on a temporal, socio-cultural and unifying layer. Generational differences between these generations are identified by similarities and discontinuities in the professional perspectives of early career experiences of social workers. Although it is indisputable that societal shifts fuel the depoliticization of the newest generation, we observe that this does not affect the whole generation in a similar manner. The newest generation consists of sub groups, generation-units that exhibit a variety of professional perspectives. While one generation unit goes along with stringent workfare policy, other members of this generation reluctantly bring in a contradistinctive rights perspective. Some of these so-called screenagers overtly cry out for analogue client contacts. However, in an institutional context of technicality

and digital load – installed by previous generations – the political strategies of newest generation of social workers are limited. For older organisations in social work, it might appear paradoxical that the youngest generation of social workers – although submersed in the context and times of workfare – seems to hold the key to revising institutional processes and guidelines. In respect of their positional objectivity, not being an expert in a highly organised organisation, they are able to signal procedural and institutional barriers that hinder the pursuit of their professional development. Therefore, older generations need to be cautious about new social workers who nod in agreement as they seem to be exceptionally vulnerable to institutional arrangements, hierarchy and policies.

**"When they kick at your front door" - On the current relationship between out-of-home care and the police in Germany by Zoë Clark and Fabian Fritz**

*f.fritz@haw-hamburg.de*

---

In May 2018, a police operation took place in Berlin-Lichtenhagen in a out-of-home care apartment inhabited by young refugees. According to media reports and the eyewitness accounts of the pedagogical assistants, two uninvolved young people were seriously injured. The incident was made visible to the general public above all through the positioning of the Berlin/Brandenburg Children and Youth Welfare Association (KJHV). The association criticized the police's actions as "disproportionate and illegal actions", which resulted in the "mistreatment of adolescents and young adults". The colleagues end their statement with the demand that in future "attacks within out-of-home care by police operations should be averted" (KJHV 2018). This incident and the resulting political demands should not remain uncommented by the scientific community. They indicate that - despite many years of debate on the relationship between social work and the police (cf. Pütter 2015, p.1) - there is a need for a renewed resumption of this dormant political and scientific discourse on how to deal with child and youth welfare and the police. The urgency of this debate becomes clear once again in the dialogue with specialists from home rearing at the Federal Congress on Social Work (BUKO), since, in addition to examples of police violence against addressees\* of home rearing, there is an everyday and extra-ordinary point of contact between out-of-home care and the police. The extent to which these points of contact are characterised by discriminatory and violent practices towards residents of institutions, and the different roles and functions police have in the provision of aid, has so far been empirically systematically underestimated. The results of the political discussions on the relationship between youth welfare services and the police are reported and

reflected on in this paper. The paper presents the results of a workshop with experts from all over Germany and the planning of a qualitative study on the relationship between out-of-home care and the police. Expert interviews with Hamburg and Berlin experts in out-of-home care are planned for the study. The contradictory relationship between the profession of social work and the police should be addressed. On the one hand, police interventions against addressees of out-of-home care are a source of disenfranchising and discriminatory practices, on the other hand, there is a dilution of the areas of responsibility of police and social work. Mutual instrumentalisations of police officers and pedagogical specialists run the risk of transforming pedagogical work into a regulatory dictum. We pursue the goal of showing the current stages of the theoretical discussion of social work with the topic of police and at the same time want to present the first results of our activities in this field. Subsequently, we would like to discuss our planned studies in this and related fields (e.g. police and media reports in relation to social work).

**Can gender quotas break community disengagement from local decision-making? A critical case test by Marsela Dauti**

*marsela.dauti@gmail.com*

---

The implementation of electoral gender quotas in more than 100 countries (Dahlerup, 2018) has led to significant numbers of women in politics, challenging traditional models of political representation. Gender quotas are expected to affect how citizens perceive their role in society and engage with their representatives. Theoretically, women politicians serve as role models, signaling to underrepresented groups that policymaking is more inclusive (Mansbridge, 1999; Phillips, 1995; Zetterberg, 2009). Despite the spread of gender quotas, little is known about the ways that they affect community engagement in local decision-making. Most studies focus on whether quotas affect political attitudes (e.g., political trust and knowledge) and behavior (e.g., participation in political campaigns and protests) rather than the engagement of community members in decisions that have a direct effect on their well-being, for instance the distribution of social welfare benefits or the implementation of local development projects. We test whether gender quotas affect the engagement of community members in the local councils of Albania. Albania (re)introduced gender quotas at the local level in 2015, a decision leading to a three-fold increase of women in local councils. Numerous studies conducted before the introduction of gender quotas reveal low levels of community participation in council meetings (Institute for Democracy and Mediation, 2014; Partners Albania, 2013). To examine the impact of gender quotas, we tracked the participation of community members in 11 councils across the country during August – December 2016 and 2018. We collected information on the characteristics of community members who participated in meetings (including gender, profession, and place of work) and

recorded their interactions with local representatives. We differentiated between attending meetings and taking the floor to make requests. Thematic analysis was conducted to examine the type of requests that community members addressed during council meetings. The number and characteristics of community members who participated in meetings were compared over time. Findings revealed only a slight increase in the number of community members who attended meetings. Among those who participated in meetings, there was an increase in the number of requests made for social welfare benefits. The study shows that in the short-run gender quotas do not break community disengagement from local decision-making but they affect the type of requests that community members address to their representatives. We discuss implications for social workers engaged in community practice, strengthening the relationship between community members and local representatives.

**“What is that sound? Who else is there?”  
Guidelines for video calling in health and  
social care by Sarah De Coninck**  
*sarah.deconinck@arteveldehs.be*

---

Background. Unfortunately, health and social care are not equally accessible to everyone. One way to lower this threshold is by using eHealth, or offering remote care by means of technological advances. eHealth provides the advantage of making social and health care more accessible for marginalized groups and provides the possibility to increase the frequency of contact with vulnerable clients. The use of video calling is one way to engage in eHealth. However, when using video calling, attention must be paid to unique characteristics of the medium. For example: How do you proceed when others are following the consult outside of the image frame? Aim. This project aims to provide methodological guidelines for video calling in health and social care. Methods and materials. Based on a review of the literature and good practices, initial guidelines for video calling in health and social care are developed. During developmental oriented co-creation sessions, these guidelines are presented to an innovation lab consisting of 38 Belgian ambulatory care organizations. This innovation lab consists of organizations within youth care, mental health care, and general health care, interested in exploring the implementation of video calls within their current practice. Participants within these innovation labs provide feedback on these guidelines and assess the need for further guidelines. As a result of this process, methodological guidelines for video calls within social and health care are continuously optimized. Findings and conclusions. Guidelines for video calling are arranged according to three dimensions. For each of these dimensions there can be some thresholds and complexities for both clients and caretakers that we need to be aware of. First, video calling is seen as a process throughout time. Steps that are undertaken during a video call are: prologue, opening, conversation,

rounding off and epilogue. Secondly, video calling is a process involving multiple parties. The caretaker is part of an organization which can influence the way he undertakes video calls. The client from his side, can make video calls from any location he chooses. This means that others can be present in the environment from which the client is making the video call. Finally, the unique modality of video calling influences several aspects of contacts (e.g. language, tempo, ...). Brief guidelines for each dimension will be presented.

**Epistemic injustice in/and social work by  
Luc De Droogh**

*Luc.dedroogh@hogent.be*

---

The theme of the 2019 TISSA Conference 'Challenging social work' can be read in two ways. It can be read with social work in the role of a challenger of boundaries. But it can also be interpreted as a task to challenge social work itself. We focus on this second interpretation questioning if social work is not reproducing the distinction between 'us' and 'them', specifically in the process of the production of knowledge. We start from the concept of epistemic injustice. Fricker (2007) makes a distinction between two types of epistemic injustice. The first, testimonial injustice, is about situations in which the speaker is not believed due to some form of prejudice by the hearer and thus is wronged specifically in her capacity as knower. In social work we usually classify certain groups of clients as victims of prejudice – people living in poverty, with a migrant background, mental health users ... But we almost never ask the question if and how does becoming a social work client in itself, contributes to the declassification in one's role as a knower? What kind of pattern(s) makes this kind of not (really or fully) believing social work clients happen? Fricker's second form of epistemic injustice is hermeneutical injustice – the injustice of having some area of one's social experiences obscured from collective understanding owing to a structural identity prejudice in the collective hermeneutical resource (Fricker, 2007). Based on old and new research on experts by experience for a number of social problems (poverty, youth work, mental health ...) in a diversity of institutional settings and contexts, we first want to illustrate how the use of experts by experience is introduced and used as a means to deal with both kinds of epistemic injustice. Secondly, we want to question if experts by experience really help to bridge the gap between social work and its clients or is actually contributing to widening the gap thus producing in the process of

knowledge construction the widening of the gap between social workers and clients. A conceptual analysis of the notions of 'experience' and 'expertise' are crucial steps to move forward. Based on this analysis, we conclude with some suggestions to take epistemic justice as a specific form of social justice as a virtue of social work institutions and not of social workers and/ or experts by experience.

**Discretion as a way to (re)politicise social work by Jolijn De Haene and Griet Verschelden**

*[griet.verschelden@hogent.be](mailto:griet.verschelden@hogent.be)*

---

In this paper we reflect on how discretion is and should be used in the context of (Flemish) social work, which is under pressure by many discourses that tend to reduce social work to service providing or executing other's decisions. With a focus on risk management, accountability and efficiency, policies attempt to limit the agency and independency of social work and civil society. Certain Flemish NGO's have recently been scourged by policy makers for their critical responses to policy choices. As a consequence social workers risk losing part of their agency and autonomy, which in turn could lead to a loss of quality and social impact of social work practices. This discussion and concern is not new, Lipsky already mentioned this 'battle' in 1980, where he discussed the struggle of 'street-level bureaucrats' to do good and qualitative social work in a context of new public management and scarce resources. More recently Bovens & Zouridis (2002), Ellis (2007), Evans (2010, 2011), Evans & Harris (2004), Roose (2011) and many others have elaborated and researched the issue. Currently, however, the pressure increases even more due to used discourses and strategies of policy makers and management teams. There seems to be no room for ambiguity, nuance and critical opinions. With the essentialist discourses on top social work has to struggle to be able (and allowed) to act for and with all clients, citizens, humans. In these developments, revisiting the possibilities and issues concerning discretion as a means for meaningful social work and social change is in order. Our reflections are based on two research projects. The first dates back to 2011, where professional discretion in early childcare was researched as the main focus of the project. The second project, finished in 2016, focused on solidarity in diversity, contained multiple case studies in the field of labour, education, leisure and housing,

and zoomed in on discretion as a way to create innovative forms of solidarity in superdiverse contexts. In both projects we noticed three different strategies of professional discretion : going underground, setting the agenda and building strategic networks. Based on these research projects we illustrate the potential of the use of discretion for broadening agency and for (re)politicising social work practices in general, and for enhancing and making visible practices of citizenship and solidarity more specific. We will discuss structural forms of discretion, the mind set of social workers (and managers) towards discretion, possible strategies of social workers and volunteers, and end up with some critical remarks about the use of discretion in social work practice and research.



**Social Impact Assessment: Borders and Bridges by Cristiana Dias de Almeida and Cristina Maria Pinto Albuquerque**

*diasalmeida@gmail.com*

---

Traditionally used in the economic field, borders have become bridges and the impact assessment has also been adopted by social sciences. Indeed, results and impacts can be seen as a growing concern in social sciences. Now it is becoming more and more important to measure the "utility"/value of a political, economic or social intervention and identify the indicators of change achieved by them, compared to its absence (UNEG, 2013; UNDP, 2009). The concept of social impact assessment has been discussed over the last decades. A significant number of authors (Bassi & Vincenti, 2015; Becker & Vanclay, 2003; Blasco & Casado, 2009; Castro, 2012; Flynn & Flynn, 1982; Gertler, Martinez, Premand, Rawlings, & Vermeersch, 2016; House, 2018; Khandker, B. Koolwal, & Samad, 2009; Rogers, 2014; Santos, Veiga, Cruz, Lopes, & Ferreira, 2015; Teixeira & Monteiro, 2015; Vanclay, 2002, 2003) dedicated their scientific research to this issue. As a result, it is possible to find a multiplicity of national and international works on the definition of social impact assessment (Burdge, 2003; Esteves, Franks, & Vanclay, 2012; Lockie, 2001; Vanclay, 2002, 2003), the design and implementation of the impact assessment methodology (Burdge, 2002, 2003; Gertler et al., 2016; Silva, 2012; Vanclay, 2002, 2003), as well as the thematic specificities (Fernández, Cunha, Ferreira, Araújo, & Gómez, 2015; Flynn & Flynn, 1982; Halstead, Leistritz, & Johnson, 1991; Kemp & Vanclay, 2013; Meuleman, 2015; Morrison-Saunders, Bond, Pope, & Retief, 2015; Ravetz, 1998; Rowan, 2009) and critical reflections (Benson, 2003; Bice, 2015; Burdge, 2002; Laedre, Haavaldsen, Böhne, Kallaos, & Lohne, 2015; Leistritz, Murdock, & Chase, 1982). Simultaneously, the impact assessment of social policies, specific programs and projects has increased (Andrade, 2017; Barroso, Marques, Monteiro, Andrade, & Vieira, 2014; Cases,

2013; Franco & Apolónio, 2008; Mira, 2015). In Portugal, there has also been a paradigm change in the implementation of social policies, which are progressively adopting a logic of governance and territorialization. In this context, the Local Social Intervention Network (RLIS in Portuguese) has emerged as an organizational model that emphasizes integrated action and therefore the involvement and accountability of different local actors (public and private entities and civil society). Meuleman (2015, p. 5) analyses the relation between Social Impact Assessment and Governance using the "metaphor of the owl and the beehive". In his article, the author argued that "on the meta-level of symbolism, the owl's knowledge, wisdom and 'intelligence' (IA) and the beehive's organisation qualities, sense of order, industry, cooperation and hard work (governance) can form a winning team. The issue is how to connect these qualities in a productive way" (Meuleman, 2015, p. 5). Social impact assessment and governance are cross-cutting themes, that have been adopted at global, European, national, regional and local levels in multiple sectors. However, the question arises if social impact assessment can be considered as a universal concept? Can it be used undifferentiated by all scientific areas? Where are the borders? Are they clearly identified? The conclusions of studies and results of scientific research highlight borders and bridges that will be critically discussed in the present communication.

**Strategies to prevent harmful alcohol consumption by Nistor Gheorghita**

*nistorgheorghita@gmail.com*

---

At international level, there is a continuing concern to combat harmful alcohol consumption, its effects on health, and to monitor the phenomenon and implement social consumption control policies, especially on adolescents and young people. In Romania, it is envisaged the implementation of such strategies to reduce alcohol abuse at the level of social policies in the field of health, education. Purpose: The purpose of this research is to capture the views of specialists on social policies that should be developed in this direction. Methodology: The sociological survey based on a questionnaire applied to 101 professionals working in the field of social assistance (200 questionnaires were submitted, 137 were returned, 36 incomplete). Discussion and Conclusions: The results of sociological research have shown that specialists do not know the initiatives of the various institutions involved in combating this phenomenon and propose a series of legislative changes at the social and health level. Keywords: addictions, alcohol, medical and social support services, social policies

**An exploration of the experiences of young people in residential care settings in Ireland and Germany by Joseph Haugh**

*joseph.haugh@lit.ie*

---

The research was designed in order to identify differences and similarities in the experiences of young people in residential care setting in Ireland and Germany. Two sets of semi structured interviews were carried out in Ireland and Germany (n=6:6). The KJHV (Jugend- und Soziale Hilfen) in Germany and EPIC (Empowering People in Care) in Ireland were used to source research participants. The participants were aged between 18 – 23 and have lived in a youth residential care setting for a minimum of 3 months prior to their eighteenth birthday. Research has highlighted that comparative analysis of data can improve outcomes for service users (Asthana and Halliday, 2006). International comparison of policy and practice can challenge assumptions and bring contrasting perspectives to similar social problems and solutions (Francis, et al. 2004; Peters 2008). Data collection was commenced in February 2018 and completed by March 2018. Results: The results will inform policy and practice in youth residential care settings and stimulate public debate surrounding youth residential care settings. Preliminary findings from the research highlight the importance of supportive, nurturing relationships and environments for young people in residential care settings. The majority of young people identified a clear preference for a 'High Nurture - Low Control' model of care. Implications: Research can help to inform policy makers and youth residential care providers. Listening to the voice of the child has been internationally accepted as good practice. The findings and recommendations can be used to modify policies in order to obtain better outcomes for young people in residential care settings.

**The importance of educational qualification for social work practice: From the perspective of social work managers by Jana Havlíková**

*jana.havlikova@vupsv.cz*

---

Educational qualification and subsequent lifelong learning are usually considered as one of the key conditions for professionalization of social work. Since 2007, there is a tertiary education in Social Work or other related branches required as the necessary qualification for social work in the Czech Republic. Before this period, social workers were considered as clerks and upper secondary education was sufficient for them, or as philanthropists for which was important the "heart" not the education. This view shared not only by public but also by professionals has been losing its power overtime; however not completely as there are still debates wheatear tertiary education is for social work profession vital or not. Our aim was to investigate the view on importance of education for social work performance shared by managers of social workers, i.e. by the people who choose suitable candidates for the positions of "municipal social worker", who check the work of these workers as well as (co-) shape their working conditions, and therefore significantly affect the performance of social work in practice. Based on results of a representative survey among managers of social workers employed within social services and the direct superiors of social workers employed by municipalities, first we compare the view of these types of managers on the importance of educational qualification for social work in their organizations, and then discuss implications of the findings presented for tertiary education in social work and for the contemporary form of legislation ruling the qualification required for social work in the Czech Republic. The findings suggest that managers of social services perceive qualification of social workers as more important than managers of municipal social workers; however, only 1/3 of them, regardless the organization/facility they

are employed at, see educational qualification really essential for quality of social work performance. Finally, the results point out to the different quality level of professional preparation across the tertiary educational facilities perceived by the managers.

**Capabilities as Inclusion: About the Boundaries of a current reform debate in Child and Youth Welfare Services by Benedikt Hopmann**

*benedikt.hopmann@uni-bielefeld.de*

---

In Germany, the debate about the so-called 'inclusive solution' is a crucial aspect within the current reform process of child and youth welfare services (see Hopmann 2019). In the wake of the current reform of Child and Youth welfare legislation in Germany, the main implementation strategy of inclusion is to bring together the previously separate services and thus to provide access to needs-based assistance, which is in question due to the separated legal domain (SGB VIII and SGB XII). In particular, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) is increasingly adapted as a significant point of reference for inclusion. The CRPD does not only codify inclusion according to (inter-)national law, but also generates implicit or explicit powerful yardsticks for professional assumptions (Hopmann 2017). While on the one hand, the current reform focusses on the promotion of access of children and youth with disabilities (and/or their parents) to welfare services, it ignores the widespread precarious socio-economic circumstances of the addressees in child and youth welfare services on the other. Therefore, inclusion is largely negotiated as a disability-specific issue and can be characterized as an administrative-juridical debate on the amalgamation of legal circles. Against this background, obviously not all open questions about the "point of inclusion" (Ziegler & Clark 2016, 585) are sufficiently clarified. This contribution will focus on the analysis of common inclusion and exclusion discourses. After that, the underdetermined target perspective of inclusion within the reform debate of child and youth services in Germany will be pointed out. As a theoretical perspective and a common "informational basis" (Sen 2000, 56) for inclusion, a capabilities-based approach of inclusion will be formulated using Nussbaum's capabilities approach

(Nussbaum 2007). This capabilities-based focuses on substance (functionings) and process aspects (capabilities) of inclusion. Furthermore, this perspective is based on human dignity and gives a decisive place to the self-determination and autonomy of the addressees. With this perspective, it seems possible to treat all constraints of ways of life (limitations of capabilities) as an inclusion task in the sense of the capabilities approach, and thus to link the previously separate theoretical discourses of inclusion and social exclusion. Finally, the contribution of a capabilities-based perspective of inclusion for child and youth welfare services without such boundaries is pointed out.

**Residency and (Non-)Citizenship: Social Work within and against the Nation State** by Lisa Janotta

*[lisa.janotta@tu-dresden.de](mailto:lisa.janotta@tu-dresden.de)*

---

The role of Social Work in society can be discussed between the poles of “institution” and “profession”. As an institution, Social Work is part of the welfare state and the nation state. As a profession, Social Work defines its own values and objectives. Following this definition, Social Work for Non-Citizens and persons in precarious residency situations has to deal with the borders and boundaries of the nation state. On the one hand, the client’s residency status restricts their scope, and so it restricts the scope of the social worker: The access to welfare goods and the right to abode is bound to the residency status of Non-Citizens. On the other hand, professionals may try to enact the universal values like the Human Rights, e.g. But Social Work for Non-Citizens will always take place in relation to the decisions of Immigration Officers. So – how do Social Workers perceive the (Non-Citizen) clients, their scopes and their profession? What kind of border and boundary work do they perform? And being part of the nation state (“Social work as an institution”) – (how) does Social work take part in defining and deciding who has the chance to stay and who has to leave the country? My empirical PhD-study focuses the frame of the nation state as a frame that enables and restricts professional Social work practice. Based on a materialist theory of action, I presume that the nation state is not barely “there”, but it is enacted by countless state actors – border officers, immigration officers, welfare officers and social workers, too. They all define, what “the state” in situ is, whom may be granted access to the territory and who may participate at the goods of the welfare state. By interacting with Non-Citizens, they define “the border” in every single professional act. While state officers act as performers of “the law”, social workers are bound to the possibilities and restrictions by the law AND follow professional values

that may transcend to frame of the nation state. For my study I conducted interviews with border officers, immigration officers and social workers in Germany. In my presentation at the TiSSA-Conference, I want give an insight into my findings from the data analysis: How do the actors define the “state borders”, the “borders of entrance” and their “border work”? What does this tell us about the (German) “nation state”, the construction of “immigration and immigrants” and the production of “the (German) border”? The presentation will highlight the perspective of the social workers and will relate it to the perspective of the state officers. While the call for the TiSSA-conference invites to discuss boundaries as “class, gender, race and nationality” and the “distinctions between ‘us’ and ‘them’”, my presentation connects to the problem of “nationality” and deepens the topic by giving an insight into implicit knowledge of professionals who have to work with and against the boundaries of citizenship and nationality.

**Professional education for participatory social work by Ewa Kantowicz**

*ewakan@uwm.edu.pl*

---

A contemporary social work is defined as a scientific branch and a professional activity, which employs the achievements of various social and humanistic approaches to construct concepts of researching and acting in the complexity of professional practice. Answering the challenges related to the appeared social boundaries such as political or social and economic difference, gender, race and nationality, and growing up distinction between "us" and "them" - social work can become a bridge in building a new social consciousness. One of the key issues in this field is a professional education of social workers, offering new concepts and approaches to the changing social work practice. Analyzing the content of a professional education programs offered to social workers by some Polish universities, it can be noticed the promotion of participating methods in the process of professional education. In this context, preparing professionals to be active in the area of social participation seems to be the issue which cannot be objected. Participatory concepts in social work may be found in theories and in the undertaken practices that describe and reflect specific processes and situations of exclusion, social diversity and social borders. These concepts of social work stress the value of the individual and the group as an active entity in the process of the protection of the rights and social support. The aim of the presentation is to discuss the role of academic education for participatory social work that can become a bridge in building a new social consciousness.

**Expectations of victims/survivors of childhood sexual abuse towards “Aufarbeitung” and recognition by Barbara Kavemann, Daniel Doll and Bianca Nagel**

*bianca.nagel@eh-freiburg.de*

---

Working through the past of child sexual abuse (“Aufarbeitung”) is not only a challenge for survivors but for society at large and therefore for social work. Survivors of child sexual abuse often experience stigmatization as a result of disclosure or seeking help and subsequently can already anticipate negative responses, which can prevent disclosure and lead to social exclusion. In view of its global definition, social work must focus on promoting social change, social development and social cohesion. One challenge is to support and to give recognition to survivors, and to build bridges between survivors, support systems and society as a whole. In 2016 the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse in Germany was appointed to investigate all forms of child sexual abuse in Germany, to raise public awareness and to promote a better communal understanding of child protection. For that, private sessions are conducted, where survivors can tell their stories, as well as public hearings to examine different key issues (like sexual abuse in families, the church or the GRD). Additionally, various research projects are conducted in the framework of the commission. One study (2016 to 2019, conducted by SoFFI F. Freiburg/Berlin) focusses on the expectations of survivors of childhood sexual abuse of “Aufarbeitung”: What do they expect for their personal coping on an individual level? What are their expectations towards the Independent Inquiry and towards society? We identified where interviewees see requirements for changes within politics and society as well as how and by whom they think these changes can be made. For this we collected data using qualitative and quantitative research methods. In two online-questionnaires 316 and 103 survivors were

asked (amongst other questions) about their assessment of the aims and the work of the Inquiry. To discuss selected topics, for example “stigmatization of victims”, “societal dealing with perpetrators” or “powerlessness and empowerment”, we conducted seven group discussions. To gain a deeper understanding we also conducted 51 qualitative interviews with 44 women and nine men between 26 and 59 years old. In these, we focused on different subjective views and theories: we asked about definitions of abstract concepts like “recognition of suffering and injustice”. The answers showed a broad spectrum of expectations, amongst others aimed at specific individuals (like family members or perpetrators) or organizations (like the church or the school where the abuse happened), the legal system or politics. Others were aimed at society to recognize the injustice but also the impact that the abuse can have on the life of survivors or to enable disclosure without stigmatization. To provide recognition avoid stigmatization and prevent social exclusion are essential elements of practices of social work. It is important that survivors feel as full members of society, get support tailored to their needs and get access to working life despite psychological trauma. To find the balance between help, support and control can be a critical issue, especially in the perception of those on the receiving end. For that, specific knowledge and education are important.



**When refugees return. How Social Work can interlink pre-departure counselling with post-arrival conditions by Joris Kennis**

*Joris.kennis@Fedasil.be*

---

Context: Most European governments are tending to prefer a 'voluntariness approach' for the return of undocumented migrants above other more coercive measures. This choice is strongly emphasized by the outsourcing of return counselling to social workers. However, the institutional focus - managing migration - leads to an easy use by policy-makers of otherwise multilayered concepts like 'returning home' and 'sustainability'. This language might not cover the same content and meaning for returning migrants, implicating a risk of creating boundaries and processes of othering. Problem statement: For counselors, having correct information and insight in the post-arrival conditions in the countries of origin, is essential to support prospective returning refugees. The occasional follow-up of returnees that already takes place, reveals the need of a more systematic feedback. If designed properly, valuable monitoring tools can be developed, providing relevant and meaningful information to migrants prior to their decision making to return. The aim hereby is to support social workers in the accompaniment towards sustainable return. The complexity of this exercise is contrasting with the aforementioned migration policies for a swift and simple departure. Research Questions: How can we understand feedback-practices about returning migrants with the bridging capacities of social work in mind? What first experiences do we already have by interlinking pre-departure counselling to post-arrival monitoring? Method: This paper explores the experiences of returning migrants after their arrival in relation to two concepts: 'home' and 'sustainability'. First, we discuss how post-arrival information, which comes to us in different forms from the countries of origin, can be used by social workers in the process of

guidance and decision making before departure. Second, we report on a pilot-project of online return monitoring by asking the active role of returnees in reporting to us on their individual situation in the countries of origin. We present the format of the questionnaire and the results of the answers delivered. We focus on the value of 'returning home' and 'sustainability'. To what extent do these concepts as expected pre-departure, reflect the reality post-arrival? Conclusions: The linking capacity of Social Work to involve returnees' experiences does not only strengthens individual migrants, but it also encompasses organizational learning. As application: the preliminary monitoring tool demonstrates added value, motivating the elaboration of a more comprehensive case handling tool. Originality: We build on concepts of social work to preserve the effectiveness and values of return counselling with migrants. Joris Kennis, 2019 MSc Health Care Management and Policy

**Educational Pathways in the context of  
asylum-migration by Juri Kilian**

*juri\_kilian@yahoo.de*

---

Germany has faced large migration numbers of asylum seekers in the last years. One major challenge of the society is their educational and labor market integration. The presentation will introduce a case study research which is an ongoing qualitative project focusing the perspectives and experiences of young people. The thematic perspectives and research questions are circulating around the challenges and struggles that those young people are facing in their day-to-day life navigating themselves through different structures of a German middle-sized urban environment and its educational spaces. The research concept, methodological challenges, questions of research ethics as well as preliminary results and findings will be presented to and discussed with the audience.

**Planning of social services in local level:  
New opportunities and challenges for  
social workers in Albania by Eliona  
Kulluri Bimbashi**

*elionakulluri@gmail.com*

---

Planning is a way of achieving the desired goals, including "an accurate knowledge of a community's history, a systematic environmental analysis, a rigorous assessment of realistic conditions, and a clear vision of where we need to achieve and a planning process presenting ways of achieving these goals. (Bateman, T. S., & Snell, S. A., 2009) Specifically, social planning include mapping the needs of the population through data collection and aggregation, having the right tools for financial and integrated planning in order to target funding to the areas or sectors of highest need, monitoring and evaluation phases, and the involvement of multiple stakeholders. Workers of social service at local government units have a direct knowledge and experience of the situation and the problems faced by users of their services. They are uniquely positioned to work in partnership with citizens at local level to create services that effectively address the real needs of the community. Local-level planning shifted the focus of attention from individual services to collaborative services to create a local service delivery network, linking services to each other, while identifying the existing gaps. Local-level planning focuses on available resources, mainly local and / or government sources, but also private, so that they are best used to improve the quality and quantity of service delivery. With the new territorial reform in Albania the structure of social services in local government units (including municipalities and administrative units) covers a multiplied geographic area, but has remained the same structural organization in terms of quantity and responsibilities of staff. These means more opportunities for social workers to perform their skills and professional capacities but also lots of challenges. This paper aims to present and overview of the existing legal

and institutional mechanisms for social planning at local level, but also provide an assessment of human resources capacities to face the above mentioned issues. The methodology used is qualitative, including semi structured interviews and focus groups with stakeholders. The analysis of the legal an institutional framework shows that progress is made in the last five years with the administrative reform and different legislation improvements in social protection and social service field. These changes have created better opportunities for social workers to be actively engaged in needs assessment, mapping of vulnerabilities and social planning at local level, providing of broader range of community based social services, etc. Some of the main results identified also several challenges and gaps related with lack of human resources such as experienced social workers or other specialists, lack of qualifications, standardized guidelines and instruments, multitasking positions and overload at work, which has affected their professional performance in general, also lack of financial and logistic resources to apply needs assessment based social planning. Key words: social planning, social services, mapping of needs, local government units.

**Host families for minor unaccompanied refugees – an alternative? by Gesa Langhoop**

*gesa.langhoop@posteo.de*

---

The following empirical research was conducted during my bachelor's thesis at the Osnabrück University of Applied Sciences with the title "Host families for minor unaccompanied refugees – an alternative?" and deals with the form of giving accommodation to minor unaccompanied refugees in (host-) families. Legal equality regulations determine that unaccompanied minor refugees should get the possibility (like other minors get) of living in foster or host families in Germany. This could be an alternative to the placement in residential youth institutions, but in social work practice it is often not considered - or if so without a concept and under constraint of shortage of place in residential youth institutions. Reducing boundaries in social work practice are less a motivation of doing so, what the sudden approach of some social work institutions shows. Therefore, examining the suitability of this alternative form of giving accommodation and shelter to young refugees, in regard to equal rights, is the object of this research. The findings of this qualitative research are going to be used to reduce boundaries between young people, who are affected by social work. So, the aim of this research was to establish equality especially in this new and yet mostly unlighted practice fields. As a base for the research, the actual situation and legal grounds of minor unaccompanied refugees, of foster and host families and of Social Work are explained. To conduct the research, a qualitative method was applied. Therefore, guided interviews were developed to figure out the situation of potential host families, that provide an insight into their thoughts and doubts. Moreover, questionnaires of the applicants (host families) were analyzed for further information. Interviews with young refugees could not be hold due to ethic research considerations. The interviews were analyzed afterwards with help of the

qualitative content analysis according to Mayring. In this research I found out that the practice of placing minor unaccompanied refugees in host families could and should be an alternative to residential youth institutions (especially due to equality), if certain aspects are going to be considered. Therefore, demands for the Social Work were developed and presented. A special outcome of my research is the development of a legal sentence to extend the Social Insurance Code VIII (Sozialgesetzbuch - Achtes Buch - Kinder- und Jugendhilfe). Moreover, further questions and controversies arose during the research relating to the equal treatment of children and youth with and without experience of flight. At this point a discussion is needed about the tension field that comes out between special treatments with the aim of reducing boundaries.

**Alcoholics` motivation to become sober and maintain their sobriety within Alcoholics Anonymous support groups by Adriana Lavinia Bulumac**

*lavinia.bulumac@sas.unibuc.ro*

---

Background and purpose: While addiction is a significant social problem in Romania, there has been little research into support groups as an intervention in Romania, despite the growing number of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) support groups found there in urban areas. Alcoholism is usually treated in Romania as a moral weakness, a vice, while alcoholics are usually stigmatized, discriminated, marginalized and socially excluded and labeled as drunks. Although Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) has been found to be effective in other countries, unfortunately in Romania it is barely known of its existence even among physicians. The purpose of this exploratory study, which is the first known study of twelve step programs in Romania, was to explore Alcoholics' motivation to become sober and maintain their sobriety among those who are participants of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) support groups in Romania. The study specifically explores both the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation of AA attendees, as well as other factors, such as relationships, professional status and economic status. Methods: This study used qualitative methods to explore the motivations of alcoholics to become sober and maintain their sobriety. The research participants included 11 people (9 men and 2 women) who participated in three Alcoholics Anonymous groups in Bucharest, Romania. A 20 question open-ended interview guide was used for conducting 45-60 minute in-depth interviews with participants in April and May of 2018. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. Findings: Themes related to intrinsic motivations to become sober emerged as a much stronger theme among alcoholics who desired and maintained their sobriety than extrinsic factors. The most common intrinsic motivations were low self-esteem

(alcoholics with low self-esteem where those who had lost almost everything and didn't want to lose anything else – they were the ones who had a strong desire to change and were willing to practice the 12 step programme, while Alcoholics with high self-esteem were the ones who relapsed), dissatisfaction with alcohol consumption and self and an internal desire to change. Extrinsic motivations, while not as preponderant as intrinsic motivations, included family pressure on the individual to change and the recommendations of physicians. It is interesting that extrinsic motivation turned into intrinsic motivation as alcoholics sobriety grew. All subjects of the research group have a personal motivation to maintain their sobriety. In the case of 4 alcoholics the internal motivation is reinforced by extrinsic motivation, which takes the form of appreciation, achievements and improvement of family relations. The commitment theory could explain this shift in alcoholics' motivation since AA provides a solution to problems that they experience. Alcoholics get involved in AA, invest time and energy in AA activities, sacrifice their old identities in favour of new ones. They become committed to AA and to recovery. Conclusions and implications: The findings suggest that those working in the area of substance abuse should pay more attention to the intrinsic motivations to change for alcoholics, as these appear to play an important role in becoming and maintaining sobriety.

**Recognizing young masculinities vulnerability in the context of welfare practice by Harry Lunabba**

*harry.lunabba@helsinki.fi*

---

In an ongoing research project, Masculine vulnerability in the making, I examine boys and young men's experiences of welfare and youth work and analyze how young masculinities' vulnerability is recognized in professional welfare work. There is still relatively modestly research on masculinity in the field of social work. While welfare statistics show that masculinities are often highly represented in marginalized groups, we still lack theory on masculinities vulnerability. Feminist scholars and social work researchers often view masculinities as a hegemonic social category in society. This perception is often accurate considering the existing gender inequalities within the labor market, how political power is divided between gender groups or how men and boy's often dominate in everyday life settings. However, scholars, particularly in the field of education research, have started to question the perception of masculine privilege when considering the context of education – as many boys are failing in school. The “boy crisis” in education is shown by Pisa results and in young men's lack of educational opportunities, particularly regarding higher education. Even though there are evident patriarchal structures in society, gender hierarchies are not uniform in all social contexts. In my presentation, I discuss results from the analysis on contemporary discourses of masculine vulnerability and present how boys and young men's vulnerability is manifested in welfare practice. The study draws upon ethnographic research conducted in two youth work settings: a rap-music workshop targeting ethnic minorities and in a welfare organisation offering targeted gender sensitive support for young people. The ethnographic data consist of participatory observations, interviews with workshop participants and service users (N = 25) as well as interviews with professionals working in the two

settings (N = 7). The discussion utilizes from three theoretical perspectives: a) masculine vulnerability in terms of a structural inequality, b) masculine vulnerability in terms of masculinity performances and c) masculine vulnerability in terms of isolated relationships. Each perspective derives from different discursive traditions in social sciences and feminist research. Structural inequality perspective highlights the intersectionality of masculinities; how the social category of men and boys also includes vulnerable individuals and groups such as individuals of ethnic and sexual minorities as well as boys and men from low-income groups. A performance perspective addresses how there are different ways of “doing” boyhood and manhood and how some performances are in conflict with normative expectations. The relationship perspective highlights how vulnerability is manifested as a lack of social bonds to significant others but it also highlights how perceptions on vulnerability is linked to emotions. The aim is to show how intersectional analysis as well as analysis on performances and relationships can highlight diversity and nuances within the category of masculinities. I argue that boys and young men's vulnerability is too often overlooked in the debate on masculinity and gender inequality.

**Methodic principles as starting point of social work methods by Judith Metz**

*j.w.metz@hva.nl*

---

Background: This paper reflects on a search for possibilities of developing social work methods which can be substantiated by research and relates to the diversities existing in social work practices. The background forms the discussion about the body of knowledge (BOK) of social work. Current models such as Evidence Based Practice, Practice Based Evidence and Common Factors are not suitable for developing a method substantiated by research. The limitation of Evidence Based Practice to a causal series of acts does not do justice to the complexity and dynamics of open approach methods. Practice Based Evidence does offer sufficient scope for this but lacks guidance for how the diversity of working methods, target groups, goals and contexts can be captured under one denominator and how this can be substantiated with empirical research. The Common Factors model is interesting as an example of how exactly those factors can be identified as communal within various working methods, target groups, goals and contexts and can be substantiated with research. The problem with this model is that the identified factors such as the working relation or the method are too general for describing and substantiating the way in which social work methods specifically functions. Question is: how to grasp the methodic actions of social workers in such a way that it contributes to the development of a knowledge base of social work which can be substantiated with research and does relate to the diversities in social work practices. Main point of presentation: Programme Evaluation (PE) offers a possible perspective. In evaluating programmes of social character it focusses on finding a workable balance between contradictory interests through a pragmatic orientation on the underlying needs of those parties directly concerned. As productive route for both doing justice to the complexity, dynamics and specificity of the practices as

well for developing robust knowledge PE suggests methodic principles (MP's). MP's are the guiding principles which are the basis of methodic actions of social workers in interaction with the target groups and the contexts. It is characteristic of MP's that they exist alongside each other and are utilized dependent on the situation, goal, person and resources available and has the potential for solidifying, substantiating and transferring. Applying the concept of MP's on method development in professional youth work, effect research shows that MP's make it possible to prove how young people perceive the actions of their youth workers and to what extent it contributes to the aimed development of young people. Conclusion: This paper demonstrates that greater attention is urgently needed for the development of a knowledge basis for social work methods which do relate to the diversities in social work practices and can be substantiated by research. Also it makes visible that MP's might be a possible fruitful starting point for social work methods because it has the potential for solidifying, substantiating and transferring knowledge and relate to the diversities in target groups, goals and contexts of social work practice.

**Bridges over troubled waters? Social work as an attempt of building bridges in an area of conflict by Daniela Molnar, Matthias Kempf, Lisa Jacobi and Martin F. Reichstein**

*daniela.molnar@uni-kassel.de*

---

The position of social work can be described as a general “in-betweenness” within opposing polarities, e.g. normalization and exclusion on the one hand and the right to be and participate in the community just as you are (as it is partially laid down in the German Constitution, especially in articles 1 and 3) on the other. Thus, social workers are acting between individuals and “the community” (which is fragmented in itself), trying to build bridges in this area of conflict in their “quest for social justice”, which includes justice for the individual as well as for the community. In effect, social work can be understood as boundary work and contains the role - one among others - of frontier-guard (Keupp 1987; Molnar 2019). Social exclusion often hits those, who are referred to as being “not normal” in some way (Rohrmann 2011). Being presumed as “not normal” often is attributed to a person as a mark of his or her being, it is naturalized and essentialized and to a certain extent presumed to be unchangeable (Maurer 2008; Thieme 2011). Therefore it sets the frame of possibilities for a person’s life: “special” individuals are often included, which also means encased, in “special services” which meet their “special needs” (Rohrmann 2006). This is in stark contrast to the understanding of inclusion as equal and self-determined participation in all parts of community for everyone (Alicke 2013). Despite of the understanding of disabilities as a result of “the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others” (preamble of the Convention of the United Nations on the rights of persons with disabilities (UN-CRPD)), inclusion as a (political) goal often focusses

on (individual) persons with impairments and “their” dis-/ capabilities instead of aiming at questioning and changing social conditions. This can be said for several topics relevant in the discussion of inclusion, such as accessibility, mobility, education, work and so on. In effect, there are boundaries of thinking and imagination and borders of participation, which construct the particular area of conflict in which social work and social workers are acting to establish social justice and humanity, aiming to reduce social inequality and establish equal (social) conditions for their addressees (Sünker 2012; Thiersch et al. 2012; Molnar 2019; see also § 1 Abs. 1 SGB I). The human rights perspective can be seen as a normative point of reference for the profession of social work (e.g.: Staub-Bernasconi 2012). The challenges of borders, boundaries and bridges in the area of conflict concerning the topic of in-/ exclusion in regard to persons with disabilities will be addressed from three different points of view, concerning 1. the local level (Kempf/ Jacobi), 2. complex support needs (Reichstein) and 3. the distance between different professions in the field of services for children and youths with and without disabilities (Molnar/ Goldsweer).

*Building bridges?! Political participation on a local level Possibilities and challenges for persons with disabilities by Matthias Kempf & Lisa Jacobi*

A key principle of the UN-CRPD is to guarantee the right of persons with disabilities to participate on an equal basis in all political rights (Hirschberg 2010). Persons with disabilities have been fighting for that right for decades (Bösl 2010). In Germany, there is legal basis on the national and state level that supports the right to participate in the organization of public affairs. This acquired legal basis can be seen as a bridge between the interests of persons with and without impairments. Meanwhile, on the local level especially “the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers” (Preamble e) UN-



CRPD) is likely to lead to actual disabilities, as it is understood in disabilities studies. Therefore, structures that support self-advocacy locally are of great importance. Two three-year-long research projects focused on the participation of persons with disabilities on the level of local politics. The first project (2012-2016 LAG SELBSTHILFE NRW) showed that the aforementioned "bridges" had not been established yet in most of the municipalities of North Rhine-Westphalia. The second project (2016-2019), this presentation will be focused on, developed and conducted educational workshops in communities. In these workshops local politicians, the local administration and persons with disabilities developed goals and measures to make political participation more mandatory in their community. These workshops were scientifically evaluated and accompanied by online surveys. The results showed, that the gap between these three groups can sustainably be bridged by measures such as these workshops. However, a number of great challenges still need to be addressed: - needed assistance and support is often neither organized nor financed; - attitudinal barriers by local authorities and politicians; - lack of awareness of the right to participate and the benefit of using the expertise of persons with disabilities.

*The Reflection of Complex Support Needs in the German Disability Support System by Martin Reichstein*

The UN-CRPD points out that concepts regarding impairment and disability change over time (e.g. Schmuhl 2010). For the German-speaking area, it can be shown that institutions and services for people with disabilities are in particular involved in defining both concepts and terminology. In this context, Hänsel (2005), referring to the example of special schools, sees a mutual relationship in terms of legitimation. Services for people with intellectual disabilities can be understood as social systems aiming for both self-preservation and reduction of environmental complexity in the sense of

Luhmann (1987). It is further assumed that these systems can also be described as organisational fields in the sense of neoinstitutionalist theory (Schädler 2003). Organizations in organizational fields are in a mutual legitimation relationship with each other and search for a legitimation of their activities (ibidem). This being said, a loss of legitimacy can be interpreted as an inducement of complexity in the sense of systems theory. The service system and its subsystems would react to the increased environmental complexity with an increasing differentiation. Assuming that they play an important role in the categorization of impairment and disability, this can also mean proposing and establishing new categorizations. On the basis of these considerations, new (specialized) services for people with disabilities would be developed in the context of a system that searches for legitimacy and which is increasingly differentiating itself. This would lead to subsystems that, at a certain degree of differentiation, could no longer address the needs of clients, especially those with complex needs (Schädler/ Wittchen/ Reichstein 2019). The presentation illustrates its theoretical assumptions referring to the reflection of so-called "challenging behavior" in German disability services (Schädler/ Reichstein 2018). In this context, reference is made to own empirical research.

*The "logics" of dis-/ability: how to bridge the distance between different professions in services to support children and youths with and without disabilities by Daniela Molnar*

The presumption of the existence of a dividing line between children and youths with and without disabilities creates two groups: the "normal" ones without disabilities and the "others" with disabilities (Rohrmann 2006, 2011; Maurer 2008). This presumed distinction (which ignores graduation, intersectionality and so on) is mimicked at the professional side: social services are generally separated in services for children and youths without and those with disabilities. Therefore, in

Germany, social pedagogy addresses everyone, and special needs education aims especially and exclusively at persons with disabilities. These different pedagogies feature specific basic assumptions, orientations, understandings and so on (in short: logics) (Molnar/Renker 2019; Moser 2000), thus building borders and boundaries between professions, professionals and social service systems. These are challenged, when we are aiming for social justice for children and youths with disabilities, which means to establish inclusion as equal rights, possibilities and the freedom of choice with regard to participation (with reference to Aliche 2013 and UN-CRPD). To render possible inclusion for children and youths with and without disabilities, we need mutual understanding between the different professions and systems (Thieme/ Silkenbeumer 2019). The different logics of dis-/ ability and their part in building borders and boundaries, which hinder inclusion, will be discussed recurring to two empirical research projects: "Categorization work in services for children and youths" (KatGo, DFG) focusses on the separation of children and youths with and without disabilities in the German youth welfare system, whereas "Interprofessional case construction and cooperation in settings of inclusive education" (FallKo, BMBF) analyses the multiprofessional co-work in schools. These different points of view enable us to go one step further in the challenge to build bridges between the different "logics of dis-/ ability".

**The art of making public: the politics of participation in participatory art practices by Siebren Nachtergaele, Griet Verschelden and Tine Vanthuyne**

*siebren.nachtergaele@hogent.be*

---

In recent years, many social work and art practices have developed at the intersection between the 'cultural turn in social work' and the 'social turn in the arts', with participation as a central constitutive element of the art practice (Bishop, 2012; De Bisschop, 2008; Jans, 2016). Participatory arts are quite often seen as a radical democratic practice (Kester, 2011), or as an answer to social and economic alienation (Gruber, 2013) and polarization in the society, with a clear social agenda (Bishop, 2012). But are participatory art practices really democratic and pluralistic, or are they instrumentalised as part of an economic policy agenda, towards privatized public space (Courage, 2017:24), gentrification and consensual politics (Bishop, 2012)? Discussions about inclusion and exclusion (Bell, 2014), cultural democratization versus democratization of culture, and between the individual and the collective or the private versus the public are central in these practices (Bishop, 2012; Deceur et al., 2016). In our presentation we will explore how we can describe, make visible and (if necessary) enhance the societal impact of participatory art practices in Flanders (Belgium). This should be understood as describing the individual and collective meaning making processes and accountability of the practice instead of measuring assessments in terms of social effectivity (in quantifiable data). On the one hand we focus on the social and cultural processes which are developed by cultural workers with participants, and on the other hand we map the impact on the social and cultural fabric of the community and the broader society. In this research project, a multiple case study is set up, by using ethnographic research methods. In this presentation we will present the provisional findings of the first part of the research, namely the results of the literature study and the first six depth-

interviews with key informants in the field, as the lever to start the multiple case study research. Central discussions in this research stage are about connecting individual and collective meaning making processes, making public domain in artistic practice and shifting roles of cultural and artistic workers.

**Social Justice - Boundaries and Bridges  
between Social Work and Philosophy for  
an Ethical practice in Social Work by Inês  
Pereira and Maria Inês Amaro**

*inesabp@gmail.com*

---

This paper comes in the context of the ongoing PhD research about “Ethical Dimensions of Social Work: foundations of a code of ethics for the profession”, of the recent first code of ethics for Social Workers in Portugal, approved on the 25th October 2018 at the General Assembly of the National Professional Association of Social Workers, and of the celebration of the 70 years of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a milestone document also for Social Work. The goal of this presentation is to understand the boundaries and complementarities between Social Work and Philosophy concerning to the definition and operationalization of social justice. Based on a review of the concept and understanding of social justice over the years by Social Work and the main philosophical currents, we seek to understand how the different understandings of justice and social justice intersect in these two areas of knowledge and how it contributes to an ethical intervention in Social Work, in order to promote true social justice. We believe that this analysis of the fundamentals of social justice in Social Work practice can address not only a deeper understanding about social justice in itself, but can also contribute to the discussion of how an inter and transdisciplinary understanding and perspective on social justice can bring new elements to social intervention, while at the same time allows Social Work to participate and to engage in the deepening and updating of fundamental concepts and values for the construction of more fair societies in the actual context of Europe.

**Promoting quality of life for people at the end-of-life stage: an ethical challenge in the professional acting of the Social Worker by Berta Pereira Jacinto and Helena Neves Almeida**

*bertajacinto@iol.pt*

---

The quest for meaning for Quality of Life (QOL) seems to be as old as civilization. Since antiquity, even before the Christian Era, attempts have already been made to define QOL. In his writing *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle (384-322 BC) mentioned that distinct persons conceived "good life" or well-being as synonyms of happiness (Vido et al, 2007 in Jacinto 2010). In 1995, the World Health Organization (WHO) proposed a definition of QOL: "as individual's perception of their position in life, in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns". This definition is a broad-ranging concept going beyond the physical symptomatology and taking into account the importance of systems of cultural significance, values and personal preferences; thus we have a subjective view on QOL (WHO, 1997:1). This concept of QOL as directed to the individual evaluation of each one's life, why do we apply it in such a sensitive and usually so painful context as the end-of-life? We know in contemporary society death is faced with feelings of loss and withdrawal and the representation we have of it is of horror, useless and painful suffering, where will the QOL of a person at a terminally ill situation be? Is it not a paradox to associate death and QOL? Which extent can the Social Worker be useful in promoting QOL in the life of the terminally ill person and his/her family? Promoting QOL to the person in the end-of-life is also giving time to be heard. The Active Listening allows the professional to give back to the person at the end-of-life stage one basic right - the one of autonomy, a fundamental ethical principle of the Code of Ethics for Social Workers in Portugal (2018). Through a critical and reflexive review of the literature, this proposal aims to deepen the

professional ethical project of Social Work, integrating the promotion of QOL in the process of monitoring the terminally ill patient and his family.

**Positioning Social Justice: Reclaiming Social Work's Organizing Value in Divisive Times** by Dassi Postan-Aizik , Corey Shdaimah and Roni Strier

*dassi.pa@gmail.com*

---

The study examines social justice as a core value for social work in the context of diversity and divisiveness. While social justice is an organizing value for the profession, formulation of practice principles that link social justice goals with daily realities presents significant challenges for social workers and educators. Interpretations of social justice are deeply affected by different perspectives, contested positions, and unequal power dynamics. Openness to diverse perspectives, including diverse understandings of social justice, can create challenges. We explore two research questions: Is social justice still a foundational value for social work? How do we manage diverse conceptions of social justice in multi-cultural practice and educational settings? Description of methods Study participants were students enrolled in the binational-interprofessional seminar "Social Justice in Divided Cities" during 2014–2017. The seminar was a partnership between the schools of social work, law and nursing in the University of Haifa (Israel) and the University of Maryland (U.S.A). Students from both countries were immigrants and non-immigrants of racially, ethnically, and religiously diverse backgrounds. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with 16 American and 15 Israeli participants. We used thematic analysis to develop a unified coding scheme that we applied to all study data. The data were analysed using NVivo 12 software to identify commonalities and divergences, as well as descriptive analysis of participant's evolving understanding of justice. We analysed the data with an interpretive, phenomenological lens that privileged participants' perspectives. Results The findings reveal three main themes: 1) Social justice emerged as a solid organizing framework through which participants

made their identities, beliefs, and experiences explicit. 2) Social justice also emerged as a disorganizing concept, which arose as participants engaged with others with different identities, beliefs, and experiences. This theme conveys how dialogue elicits different, often contradicting, ideas and perspectives. 3) Social justice was a reorganizing concept through which positions were renegotiated while participants worked together and related to each other in a wider social context. Discussion and implications Social justice continues to play an important role in social work. Nonetheless it is both an organizing and disorganizing value as its interpretation and implementation is deeply affected by context and perspective. This is particularly significant in multicultural settings in which individuals and groups pose conflicting demands. We suggest the use of positionality to address the challenges in implementing social justice-aware practice and education. Positionality describes both an individual's worldview and their stance vis-a-vis a specific task, while emphasizing the situated nature of identity and power relations in the production of knowledge and (inter)actions. The use of positionality in practice and education does not create a universal perspective but enables critical dialogue around social justice. Social workers cannot fully prepare for all possibilities in an uncertain reality of conflict and insecurity. However, this study demonstrates that positionality may serve as a starting point for shared action toward achieving social justice goals, even when differences may not be fully reconcilable.

**Institutionalization and De-  
Institutionalization - Doing Boundary  
Work in Social Work Talk by Martina  
Richter**

*[martina.richter@uni-due.de](mailto:martina.richter@uni-due.de)*

---

Social work talk characterises professional interaction substantially. Professionals and social service users establish relationships and negotiate problem definitions by talking. In their talk both sides have to deal with institutional demands. Of special interest in this regard is the communicative process of transforming people into 'clients'. The presentation is about how institutionalization but also deinstitutionalization become practical in social work talk while doing boundary work.

**Charity, rights and the new charity economy: challenging binaries of the Un/Deserving poor by Griet Roets, Fabian Kessl, Nicolas Jacquet and Heidi Degerickx**

*Griet.Roets@ugent.be*

---

Charity, rights and the new charity economy: challenging binaries of the Un/Deserving poor

During the last few decades, the dependency of citizens on the social welfare system is regarded as a vital social risk in many European welfare states. Welfare state systems have gradually shifted their emphasis on social protection and social security and reconfigured into a system of social insecurity. In social policy rhetoric, poverty has been scrutinized under the social and political microscope as a problem of people living at the bottom of the social and economic scale while dynamics of inequality and wealth are largely ignored. Critical social work scholars have argued that social policy and social work have increasingly focused on welfare recipients' merit rather than securing their citizenship and rights, resulting in a focal concern in the behaviour of the poor and echoing a binary and pre-welfare state distinction between deserving and undeserving citizens. In that vein, we see a recently emerging and alarming critique on social work being involved in the production of so-called charity economies in the shadow of the welfare state and expressions of neo-philanthropy in frontline social work practice. The objective of this symposium is to tease out historical roots as well as contemporary manifestations of this recent shift in the normative value orientation of social policy and social work.

*"New charity economy" – Transformation(s) of the Welfare State and Social Services by Fabian Kessl*

As part of current transformations of welfare states a "new charity economy" has been established in the majority of the OECD-countries. The "new charity economy" describes a distribution system

in which basic goods – often goods considered to be surplus – are distributed or sold at discount prices to "the poor" or "the needy" through voluntary helpers. This system is based on the provision of everyday consumer goods that result from one of three sources: directly from industrial overproduction; they can no longer be offered for sale due to statutory standardisation specifications or marketing objectives; or are no longer needed by private households.

The new charity economy targets groups of people who do not have sufficient resources at their disposal to enable them to participate in the primary capitalist system of goods distribution in a manner that secures their livelihood. While material supply gaps based on legal claims are primarily buffered through cash benefits in the social security system of the welfare state, the establishment of the "new charity economy" places non-monetary benefits alongside statutory social insurance, supply or welfare structures as a subsidy for the needy, or replaces these. Surprisingly, the "new charity economy" turns out to be a system of poverty relief, which is on the organisational side deeply connected with the institutionalised welfare services. Also, the new charity economy demonstrates an inconsistency with respect to its economic perspective. It marks a specific new segment that is linked to the predominant market economy while featuring an area which goes beyond the logic of the predominant capitalist commodity economy, because it is also arranged in accordance with the logics of alms and gift economics.

On that background the question of the "new charity economy" as a symbol of the fundamental shift of welfare states and social services has to be raised.

*The emergence of neo-philanthropy in relation to the historical metamorphosis of the social question by Nicolas Jacquet*

Over the past forty years, poverty and the struggle against poverty have emerged in the political system by penetrating into the heart of public policy mechanisms. Poverty



has gradually become a field on its own in the political system, made up of countless institutions, organizations and actors in the public and private sectors at both the national and international levels. A socio-historical analysis of the evolution of this field illustrates the gradual transition from one public action framework to another. We propose to distinguish two frameworks that appeared since the birth of the Belgian social state at the end of the Second World War, the "welfare state" framework and then the "welfare-to-work" framework from the point of view of cognitive sociology and Yves Surel's work. Each framework is built around four dimensions: metaphysical principles, specific principles, modes of action and instruments.

The struggle against poverty as a mode of action illustrates the profound differences between these public action frameworks. The welfare state envisages the fight against poverty according to the metaphysical principle of "social peace", one of whose specific principles is the "redistribution of wealth and work" and from which "full employment" emanates as an instrument of public action. On the other hand, the fight against poverty is envisaged in the welfare-to-work framework around the metaphysical principle of the "democratisation of precarity" which is translated into a specific principle of "conditionalisation of the granting and maintenance of social allowances" with instruments such as the "Individual Social Integration Plan" imposed on all rightful claimant to "living wage allowance".

*Poverty, Food and the Un/Deserving Poor: the erosion of the social justice value orientation of social work* by Griet Roets, Didier Reynaert, Annick Verstraete & Caroline Vandekinderen  
During the last decades, a new form of philanthropy has emerged on the back of a neoliberal market economy, increasing social inequalities, and the erosion of social protection and social security principles across Europe (Morvaridi, 2016). The political and ideological underpinning of these new manifestations of neo-

philanthropy hinges on the view that the (re)distribution of resources to pursue social justice by securing social protection in addressing poverty either is undesirable and/or fails (see Dean, 2015). In their recent work, Kessl, Oechler and Schröder (2019) stress that this transformation in the political struggle against poverty also entails a striking and changing configuration and orientation of social work. Poverty reduction seems to refer no longer to the explicit public mandate of institutionalised and professionalised welfare state services yet seems to also require the involvement of non-state actors such as civil society, volunteer and citizen action groups as agents of social justice (see also Villadsen, 2007).

In our paper presentation, we focus more specifically on the contested position of social work being entangled in the increasingly popular redistribution of food to tackle food insecurity, being considered a relevant anti-poverty strategy. In that sense, Kessl et al. (2019) introduce the concept of a 'new charity economy', that is at stake in the provision and redistribution of food for the poor. In our presentation, we shed light on two examples in Flanders (the Dutch speaking part of Belgium), and argue that it is detrimental to the social justice and rights-oriented value orientation of social work to pursue the so-called right to food when it replaces the pursuit of the right to human flourishing. We introduce a conceptual frame of reference that enables us to identify charity-based and rights-oriented principles in social work and to tackle the ways in which the new charity economy produces a binary dichotomy between the deserving and undeserving poor.

*"Proud to be Poor?" A critical reflection on self-advocacy rhetoric and identity politics produced in the photobook Courage (1998) by Heidi Degerickx*

At the beginning of the 1990s, several European welfare states embraced the idea that the voice and life knowledge of people in poverty should be recognised in policy making. In that regard, Beresford and Croft

(1995) even proclaimed a paradigm shift from advocacy, which implies that non-poor allies advocate 'for' the poor, to self-advocacy, emphasising the agency of people in poverty to speak for themselves. In Belgium, organisations adopted this self-advocacy paradigm in the aftermath of the production of the white paper the General Report on Poverty (GRP, 1994), and were called "organisations where people in poverty take the floor" (see Boone, Roets and Roose, 2018).

Emblematic in these developments was the photobook "Courage" (1998). The photobook was produced by one of the self-advocacy organizations, BMLIK (Movement for People with a Low Income and Children), in an attempt to develop a visual rhetoric on (people in) poverty, their violation of human rights and their citizenship (see Degerickx, Roets and Van Gorp, 2017). In this book, people in poverty, as self-advocates, were not only 'given voice' through anonymized testimonies, but took front row by 'giving face' to the poverty problem, being portrayed up close within the intimacy of their homes and neighborhoods.

In this study we address the ambiguity concerning an "identity politics" in relation to people in poverty. The photobook reflects how people in poverty are expected to handle the label of 'being poor' with pride and courage which contrasts in paradoxical ways with the stigma, shame and pejorative stereotyping that is attached to poverty. Poverty is not an identity to celebrate, but a social problem that should be eradicated (Dean, 2015). We therefore tackle the issue of 'othering', that is the separation between "us" and "them, as the self-advocacy paradigm might unintentionally feed into this process instead of overcoming it.

**Othering as barrier to changes in child protection by Maria Roth**

*roth.mari@ymail.com*

---

This research discusses the topic of boundaries impeding reforms in Romanian child protection. It is based on reflections following the SASCA Project ("Support to adult survivors of child abuse and neglect", [www.sasca.eu](http://www.sasca.eu)), which gave the opportunity to listen to 48 young people (19-35 of age) who spent their childhood in child protection care-settings in Romania and to collect data from 145 professionals working directly or indirectly with children in institutional settings. Data come from stories about traumatic childhood experiences, chaotic institutional environments, lack of emotional and social support, and various forms of abuse perpetrated by other children, by family members, educators or other professionals. The existence of violence in today's child care settings was backed up by 60% of the professionals answering to an online survey, who admitted to be aware of such incidents. Based on the stories of the respondents, the barriers to reform institutional care are interpreted at the intersection between Goffman's total institutions and the theory of othering. Based on the testimonials of those growing up in institutions, the presentation looks at how these young people's identity has been influenced by being othered, opposed to those growing up with their parents. The concept of othering will be discussed in correlation with that of "total institution" (Goffman) and the "disciplinary institution" (Foucault). Romanian child protection settings often still match the characteristics of total institutions in cases when staff project on children in care the despised features of parents who gave up on their children, giving place to a conceptualization of problematic institutionalized children, undisciplined, eventually physically or mentally ill, or disabled, with limited capacity of understanding their own needs and expressing feelings. As a result, such care settings foster obedience to the authority by

developing a privilege system that restrict access to desired activities or goods, and promote dependency. Individuals might struggle against the rules and display a rebellious behavior, aggressive to others and/or self. In order to avoid violence of inmates, the "disciplinarian" institution, with no capacity to manage rebellion, and to avoid physical punishment, uses psychiatric medication or psychological abuse. Minor residents are barred from escaping the pressures of institutions, so tensions grow, as they feel the need to acknowledge their capabilities and boundaries. This contributes to the barriers between the mainstream and the children raised in institutions, further disempowering the latter of their rights, and impeding on the normalization of the child protection system.

**Community sport, social cohesion and structural work by Shana Sabbe, Lieve Bradt and Rudi Roose**

*Shana.Sabbe@UGent.be*

---

The International Federation of Social Workers determines the establishment of social cohesion as one of the core mandates of social work. However, in post-welfare times, where social cohesion is conditioned by values such as individual responsibility and personal obligation, this objective has become constrained. Social cohesion seems to be particularly liable to become detached from questions of justice and equality when it becomes enacted through functionalised and narrowed down forms of social control. Therefore, social cohesion lies at the heart of the secular discussion whether social work should redirect individuals or rather transform unjust structures. A practice wherein this individual-structural discussion becomes particularly tangible is that of community sport. Community sport deploys social work approaches such as community development strategies (in the form of low-threshold sport activities) in order to establish social cohesion and to tackle social inequality with socially vulnerable young people. Whereas research has drawn attention to the transformative or structural potential of this practice, it is still unknown how structural objectives are translated into the daily practice of community sport. On the basis of a case study in Flanders (the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium), we identify and illustrate two major structural work strategies: 'outside-in' and 'inside-out'. Two major findings come to the forefront. First, the findings display the dominant use of outside-in approaches (such as signalling to external actors) and the need for developing collectively constructed inside-out strategies (such as collective reflection upon power imbalances within the community sport organisation). Second, our research displays a power imbalance within participant-practitioner relationships (through the exclusion of participants) as well as practitioner-organisation relationships (through the

system of social employment). As such, the complexity of structural work in the context of community sport became very tangible, for example through the ways in which power imbalances on these different levels exacerbated each other. Based on these findings we argue for the development of a holistic structural approach wherein outside-in and inside-out strategies are combined and wherein the effects of strategies are considered for the different actors involved. Lastly, our research raises the question which kind of social work professional is best suited to realise structural objectives as well as how we can create the necessary conditions for practitioners to do so.

**Unconditional Youth Welfare – Challenging the Boundaries between the “Good” and “Normal” and the “Bad” and “Defective” Parents by Mark Schroedter, Pascal Bastian, Jana Posmek, Katharina Freres, Vinzenz Thalheim and Megan Benoit**

*vthalheim@uni-kassel.de*

---

Youth welfare is unconditional if all families are entitled to access their services without means testing (Schrödter/Freres 2019). Within the German youth welfare system children and families have many legally enforceable rights to access services. While some rights are almost unconditional, like the right to access the kindergarten or the right to access parental counselling, some rights are bound to particular conditions established by means testing. Thus, some services like residential child care or family therapy can only be accessed under the condition that parenting is not sufficient and poses a risk to the child. Based on empirical findings of an ethnographical study on home visits by social service agencies Katharina Freres' presentation shows that this condition has the effect of social workers degrading and stigmatizing parents. In turn, means testing makes parents denying their children. In particular, help-seekers who ask for social services find themselves in a situation where they have to mark their educational skills as deficient and to represent themselves as cooperative towards the social service agency at the same time. Parents who are dependent on youth welfare often seem to feel like having to submit themselves to a deficit perspective in order to receive help. This subjugation can be described as degrading and unjust, because social workers draw a boundary between “good” and “normal” parents on the one hand and “bad” and “defective” parents on the other hand, only in order to grant services. Without that “boundary work”, these services cannot be granted. This injustice and degradation has its origin in the modern German Child and Youth Welfare Act of 1990, as Mark Schroedter points out in his presentation.

The original aim of this legal reform was the "replacement of the interventionist and punitive instruments of the current law by a modern, preventive law of service-orientation" (German Bundestag 1989). It was meant to "help parents in their parental mission and to support young people in growing into society" (ibid.). This prevention orientation raises the question, whether it supports parents in their autonomous and reflexive parenting or whether it rather labels them in a moralizing way as a source of risk. Within this modernization process there are voices that have been criticizing this preventive focus on deficits and called for its abolition. Early on the German Federal Government has recognized: "Social workers constantly demand to completely dispense with the negative concept of means testing, since this requires families to acknowledge their own inadequacy in the parenting of children" (German Bundestag 1989). But the Federal Government strongly defended means testing by pointing out two aspects: on the one hand, "the state should not generally assume that the family is in need of assistance in carrying out its parental tasks" (ibid.). On the other hand, the abandonment of means testing would "promote excessive claims in society and lead to a loss of personal responsibility and commitment" (ibid.). This illustrates how critically the Child and Youth Welfare Act was discussed from the beginning, and recent debates on neoliberal accountability in the welfare state show how contested it still is. Youth welfare is considered as a social actor that supports and enables the institution of the family, but also may demolish and replace it. On the one hand, youth welfare functions as a social infrastructure that relieves families of their responsibilities by caring for their children. On the other hand, however, there is always the possibility that youth welfare will become an alternative socialization environment and thus will replace the common construct of the family. Since the first draft of the Child and Youth Welfare Act in the 1980s, this last possibility has been accompanied by the youth welfare

discussion – as a utopia on the part of the radical feminist and children's liberation movement and as a terrifying vision on the conservative side. Taking up this tension, the symposium will discuss to what extent the youth welfare system contributes to drawing not only boundaries between different conceptions of parenthood but also between conceptions of the public and the private sphere for the upbringing of children in modern societies. It shall be discussed, whether a system of unconditional youth welfare services by abolishing means testing would enable the private sphere of the family to benefit from public support without being degraded as defective. Following that line of reasoning, Vinzenz Thalheim asks in his lecture to what extent an unconditional youth welfare service would strengthen parenting without degrading parents. He takes a look at the most intensive form of youth welfare intervention: residential child care, which is often regarded as an "ultima ratio intervention". It is discussed, to what extent nonparental care in residential institutions could be perceived by the parents as a positive alternative to their own parenting. How would residential care look like to be considered as a positive social-pedagogical alternative to growing up in the family of origin? It will be discussed whether unconditional youth welfare services, which offer alternative care arrangements, can provide parents with low economic resources with comparable educational and caring opportunities that wealthy parents already enjoy, by privately paying for education and care services (family therapy, coaching, boarding school, etc.). Wealthy parents buy services supporting their parenting without being labelled as "defective". Unconditional youth welfare services can be considered a demanding social-pedagogical and social-political program. It seems just as utopian and unrealizable – or just as coherent and necessary – as the idea of an unconditional basic income. Speaking in terms of inclusion Pascal Bastian and Jana Posmek show in an outlook that the idea of

unconditional youth welfare in current international debates on inclusion is already implicitly contained. Although the debate on inclusion is often on challenging the drawing of boundaries between the "disabled" and the "abled", the broader concept of inclusion emphasizes the fundamental recognition of human diversity and difference in all areas of society as well as the participation of all people in the relevant social systems. This means, participation or support should not be achieved by allocating and selecting people by individual characteristics, but by changing and adapting institutions and structures to the needs of people. In contrast to the idea of inclusion in the current system families are means-tested in order to get youth welfare services. This procedure excludes them twice: they are stigmatized by the deficit-diagnosis and handed over to the welfare system as a separate group. At the same time, families who have not been diagnosed with defective parenting are excluded from the right to youth welfare services. In the symposium it will be discussed to what extent the idea of inclusion could be fully realized in a system of unconditional youth welfare that supports parents regardless of the diagnosis of a deficit and thus refrains from drawing a boundary between the "good" and "normal" and the "bad" and "defective" parents. The symposium will ensure, that colleagues from different national welfare state backgrounds can participate in a general discussion to put the idea of an unconditional youth welfare system into international perspective. It is an important discussion in order to overcome boundaries of social injustice. References Schrödter, M./Freres, K. 2019 (accepted). Bedingungslose Jugendhilfe [Unconditional Youth Welfare]. In: Neue Praxis. Zeitschrift für Sozialarbeit, Sozialpädagogik und Sozialpolitik, Bd. 49, Nr. 3.

**Social work on the move: Challenging and crossing borders and boundaries by Mieke Schrooten**

*mieke.schrooten@odisee.be*

---

Interest in transnational and border-crossing issues has expanded considerably within several academical disciplines over the last few decades. In the educational, theoretical and practical field of social work, this 'transnational turn' is also noticeable. This is not surprising, as present-day social work is highly influenced by transnational processes and global trends. Many of the current concerns of the profession of social work – such as social inequality, ecology or human mobility – go beyond the particularity of nation-states and have an explicit transnational dimension. Moreover, a growing number of people lead 'transnational lives', i.e. lives that transcend national boundaries. These developments create fundamental challenges for social work as they affect the everyday life worlds of community members, service users and professionals, as well as social work organisations and political frameworks. Even though transnationality has become a key topic for social work, social work is just at its beginnings in systematically reflecting and analysing the significance of border-crossing developments. Highly significant in this matter is the 'methodological nationalism' at work in the field, meaning that the nation-state remains firmly embedded in social work concepts, policies and practices as an unquestioned frame of reference. In this paper, I argue that nation-state borders are not the only borders at stake in social work. Besides these physical borders, a variety of more symbolic boundaries – geographic, racial, linguistic, cultural, juridical, institutional and familial, among others – are also of importance for clients as well as social professionals, institutions and the society in general. This metaphorical and conceptual approach of boundaries as sites of real and intense 'crossings' links them to a much broader intellectual agenda. It is in

this regard that I argue that border-crossing social work requires a move away from a strict focus on conventional social work practices to include several border-crossing social work practices, within existing social work settings, but also within informal initiatives and approaches. Informal settings are of specific relevance when discussing border-crossing social work practices, as literature reveals a growing importance of many civil society and grass roots organisations in addressing various social needs. Although these organisations often thrive under the conceptual and empirical radar of conventional social work research, policy and practice, they reach people that often are not reached by the latter as they are more willing to accept people who are for many different possible reasons excluded from formal assistance or are suspicious towards official services. What's more, many of these networks have an explicit focus on challenging and crossing physical borders as well as socio-spatially constructed boundaries.

**Promoting South Epistemologies to support informed political action by Paula Sousa and Jose Luis Almeida**

*paulasousa@utad.pt*

---

**Background and purpose** Today Europe stands at a crossroads, requiring it to deconstruct a past that was built on the myth of progress and to emerge with the opportunity to formulate new possibilities for social justice and emancipation. The financial crisis that has plagued Southern Europe since 2010 has led to harsh austerity policies, which fall mainly on social policies, leading to a decline in the welfare states. The purpose of this presentation is to argue that the preservation of the welfare state requires a political action as a way forward for social work in its quest for social justice. - **A summary of the main points of the presentation** This possibility could be realized on the basis of the epistemologies of the South or, in other words, a set of initiatives for the production and validation of knowledge and understanding based on the experience of oppression and alienation of a large population of Southern Europe, caused by financial crisis and austerity. Social work can use this experience, that plagues the countries of Southern Europe, as a source of further knowledge and researches, as to promote awareness of "new" forms of oppression and alienation (as manifest in the personal lives and impacts society, awareness of people, social movements, conflict, violence, distrust in political solutions and the current system). Only with a better understanding of the new ways of oppression and alienation it is possible an informed political action and therefore to renew social work practices. - **Conclusions from and implications** The South Epistemologies can not only give visibility to the phenomena of oppression and alienation as well as produce knowledge and innovative approaches to the practical level, supporting the development of practice at the policymaking level. It is believed that South Epistemologies could contribute to restore and reinvent social emancipation in

social work practices, an approach that has fallen into disrepair.



**Social workers at the crossroads of the deinstitutionalization process in Serbia: advocating for community care for people with intellectual disabilities and mental disorders or institutions? by Dragana Stöckel**

*dragana.stoeckel@fpn.bg.ac.rs*

---

The beginning of the ongoing reform process in the social protection system in Serbia dates back to the democratic changes in the year 2000, towards greater decentralization, activation of beneficiaries and deinstitutionalization of people with (primarily intellectual and mental) disabilities, in accordance with international standards. On the other hand, the EU assists with the reform process by providing grants through EU's Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA). The Western Balkan latecomers in respect to EU integration are also latecomers when it comes to the deinstitutionalization of people with disabilities. Although the significant shift is achieved regarding the alignment of national legislation with international standards (outcome), the implementation of defined and adopted policies lacks visible improvement of quality of life of this category of social services users and domestic funding and sustainability. In order to improve their position and strengthen the state's institutional capacities and human capital, social and health sector were beneficiaries of EU grants for projects implementation in this area. The reform/project efforts were twofold – shifting people with intellectual disability and mental health disorders from institutional to community based care and continuing trainings for professionals with the aim to change inherited approaches to disability from medical toward social and model based on human rights. After years of reform attempts, two general questions are raised: 1) how much has quality of life of people with intellectual disability and mental health disorders been changed; and 2) what are the attitudes of professionals in the field toward deinstitutionalization process in Serbia? For the purpose of this article, the focus will be on the second

question. The empirical research involved 185 professionals, including 55 key workers (majority social workers by profession), working directly with intellectually disabled and people with mental disorders in all 10 residential institutions in Serbia. The analyze of the data was performed in SPSS, using two-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA), one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and Pearson correlation coefficient. The results showed general recognition of rights of their clients on life in the community but also resistance toward their potentials for independent life in the community and decision making process. Statistically significant difference is registered between professionals regarding profession ( $\lambda=.82$ ,  $F(4, 360)=9.24$ ,  $p<.001$ ), level of education ( $\lambda=.79$ ,  $F(8, 352)=5.63$ ,  $p<.001$ ) and institution ( $\lambda=.75$ ,  $F(18, 354)=3.03$ ,  $p<.001$ ), as well as the age and continued training. The study also confirmed that the medical approach to disability, paternalism and prejudices are still present at a number of professionals. Therefore, the results suggest that life and inclusion in the community for people with this type of disabilities have been not really implemented in daily life. On the other hand, social workers are also still partially institutionalized due to expressed paternalism, prejudices, inadequate assessment of clients, lack of user-centered-approach and still partially maintained the medical model. Besides that, they are standing between the EU, government and institutions' interests and policies on the one hand, and advocating for the interests of their clients as equal citizens.

**Policy alienation in the front line social work by Mia Tammelin and Maija Mänttari-van der Kuip**

*maija.manttari@jyu.fi*

---

The work performed in the public sector has been undergoing a fiercely debated transformation in Finland. Despite representing the Nordic Welfare model, the policy and ideology governing the social and health care services has been transforming and the Finnish public sector has witnessed a shift towards a market and managerial ideology combined with an atmosphere of permanent austerity. Particularly social and health care services have been changing in terms of how services are arranged and produced. Overall, these changes affect organizations and the context of the frontline work. Social workers execute social policies in their daily work. Yet they might feel unease about implementing and executing certain policies. Thus, for individual workers these changes can be a source of policy alienation. They might feel that they lose their participation, which might be detrimental for organization's performance and the wellbeing of the workers. In this study, we explore the usefulness of policy alienation framework (Tummers 2012) in analyzing the changing context of work and the experiences of the social workers in the frontline. Using interview data of 17 social workers, collected in 2017 in various parts of Finland and analyzed with problem driven content analysis, we test empirically policy alienation framework in the context of restructuring of social and health services. The initial findings suggest that the framework captures social workers' experiences in executing policies and identifies their coping strategies. The policy alienation is widespread among the workers and the experiences of strategic powerlessness in particular, seem common.

**From Lion to Termite? The Penetration of Neoliberal Rationality in Social Work Education and Practice by Bart Van Bouchaute, Hans Grymonprez and Raf Debaene**

*raf.debaene@skynet.be*

---

Usually neoliberalism is understood as an economic doctrine threatening social work from the outside, based on a pure free-market logic. Against this neoliberal doctrine, social work would then affirm a discourse and practice of human rights and solidarity to fight to get the neoliberal lion back in the cage. Yet, these neoliberal evolutions take place within a shifting discourse manifesting a new normative rationality ('economism'), no longer restricted to the social-economic field, but penetrating all domains of life and making the boundary between social work and neoliberalism unsure. More than a simple 'external threat', neoliberalism is a rationality that infiltrates and determines our opinions, feelings and behaviour in a subtle way. In this symposium we first try to explain what is new in this neoliberal rationality and how it informs people's subjectification, way of life, thinking and feeling about society and politics. Then we investigate how it influences practices of social work and is also at work in social work education.

*Neoliberal Subjectification by Raf Debaene*

Classical liberalism was in the first place a political theory striving for the freedom and political and civil rights of the individual. According to its rather naïve idea of economy as a quasi-natural process, it recommended a free market economy, with limited intervention of the state. In *Undoing the Demos*, Wendy Brown argues, drawing on Foucault's analysis in *Naissance de la biopolitique*, that neoliberalism is our new form of rationality. It still promotes free market economy, but now understands it as the necessary and sufficient basis for freedom. But at the same time, it grasped that there is no naturally given form of economy, nor

a natural homo economicus. Instead the homo economicus has to be artificially created and the state has to take responsibility therefor. People have to be educated to become economically thinking, feeling and behaving subjects. Politics of education, social policy, labour legislation don't aim at the creation of a free and responsible subject nor at social justice, but must be used as instruments to learn people to compete, to be entrepreneurial and to invest their own emotional, intellectual and cultural capital. As a result all moral and political significant values still exist but are interpreted anew and get an economical meaning. The plea for small government interference only means a withdrawal of the state from the market, but hides its impact on and involvement with our subjectivity.

*Neoliberal Rationality, Social Work Practice and Social Work Education by Bart Van Bouchaute, lecturer political science Artevelde University College Ghent*

Inspired by the work of Wendy Brown on neoliberal rationality - based on Foucault's Collège de France lectures of 1978-1979 on neoliberal governmentality - our research explores whether, in which specific discourse and with which specific tactics this neoliberal rationality has found solid ground in both social work organisations and social work education in Flanders. In a University College for social work, we analysed educational material, programs and methods, and we conducted semi-structured interviews with 10 social work lecturers. We also conducted and analysed 24 in-depth interviews with field workers (9) and their managers (3) from 3 varying fields of social work practise. The research reveals that social work education and practice are not completely immune to this neoliberal rationality. The results show the insidious impact of neoliberal rationality on the self-image, the practice and the positioning of social work organisations (and their workers) and social work education (and their lecturers) and call for more and systematic in-depth research on the 'termite-like' threat of neoliberal

rationality to the core mission of social work.

*From Perpetuation to Suspension of Symbolic Boundaries by Hans Grymonprez, Researcher ISOS - AP University of Applied Sciences; Researcher Department of Social Work and Social Pedagogy - Ghent University*

Inspired by the concept of boundaries as core-theme of our annual meeting, in this presentation we focus on how social workers - in a context of neo-liberal inspired public policy - might challenge the boundaries between homeless people and a range of public resources. Theoretically differentiating between social and symbolic boundaries (Lamont & Molnar, 2002), we particularly draw attention to those processes in which symbolic boundaries are produced and reproduced in the context of outreach work practices towards marginalized homeless. We show how the penetration of neo-liberal inspired models and how access (to a range of public goods) is managed, perpetuates a range of symbolic boundaries or even installs new boundaries (e.g. the homeless individual with complex needs). On the other hand, we argue – illustrated with results from empirical research - that social workers also develop critical reflexivity and develop practices in which symbolic boundaries between homeless and a range of services are temporarily suspended. Whilst this not ended homelessness, at least it provoked more sensitivity towards the sovereignty of homeless individuals and more debate about the meaning of services and how they define and address social problems.

**Safe spaces for 'radical ideas'? A bottom-up approach towards politisation in youth work by Tim Vanhove, Reyhan Görgöz and Bart Van Bouchaute**

*tim.vanhove@arteveldehs.be*

---

The departure of young Flemish fighters to Syria and the attacks in France made 'radicalisation' an important topic in Flanders (Belgium). New Flemish policies on the prevention of radicalisation were developed with an emphasis on the enhancement of positive identity development of young people at risk in youth care. The explicitly claim to avoid blaming religion as a determinant of violence. At the same time, these policies mainly target vulnerable youth in Muslim communities, and ask considerable involvement of local authorities and social work organizations. What is the impact of the concepts of (de)radicalisation on youth work in Flanders? Do the deradicalisation policies and practises work? And, if not, what would work better? This paper is based on case-studies in youth work organisations in Flanders and Brussels. By means of observations of activities, interviews with youth workers and team leaders, the effects of the policies are charted. Through an action research with youth work organisations, alternative approaches are constructed within the Interreg 2SEAS Orpheus project. Youth work organisations show an ambiguous reaction to (de)radicalisation: it is rejected explicitly because of their stigmatising effect on the Muslim youth and the effect on the bond between youth workers and youngsters. However, the workers also focus on identity development as a part of their general pedagogical approach. The proclaimed focus on societal root causes as explanations for political violence are, however, not incorporated in their approach. The day-to-day pedagogical approach trumps out more structural work on discrimination and inequality, and ends up matching the dominant deradicalisation approach of the government. This problem is acknowledged by the youth workers and their representatives. Their proposed

solution is said to lie in a more structural approach that is not limited to merely advocacy by the management, but is widened to politicization. The youngsters have to be taken seriously and strengthened to speak for themselves as equal citizens and express their grievances in a public and legitimate way. To realize this, youth work needs to provide vulnerable youngsters 'places and spaces' in which they can experiment freely, have discussions with each other on sensitive and controversial topics and are supported by youth workers to raise their voice in public. In order to actively involve vulnerable youngsters as political subjects. The question is: in what way are these 'safe spaces' also an opportunity to politicize youngsters with a migrant background? Even more so in a societal context of polarized safety debates in the media and a negative political discourse on expressed grievances for Muslims. We provide a first draft of an international framework for 'safe spaces' and 'politization' as an alternative to the dominant deradicalisation approach in youth work. This framework combines the pedagogical fundamentals with politisation and bottom-up participation in the day-to-day work of youth workers.

