



**Book of Abstracts  
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**Welcome to Warsaw, Poland**

# Welcome!

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## At the intersection of Emergency and Everyday: Child Protection in Lebanon - *Jana Abdel-Jawadova*

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**Introduction:** Social workers practice within local welfare systems, in humanitarian/ development interventions, and at their intersection. At this intersection lie Lebanon's social welfare and child protection sectors. They have been problematised around the outsourcing of services and around the dominance of emergency-driven welfare provisions influenced by constant crises and state weakness. As Lebanon continues to face protracted crises, the humanitarian system is grappling with dwindling funds, leading to a deprioritised and defunded child protection sector.

**Research Questions:** How do humanitarian relief and development programmes contribute to the shaping of the Lebanese child protection system? How do different actors contest or sustain the system?

**Methodological framework:** This paper draws on Post-structuralist Discourse Theory and the ontological framework of the 'Logics of Critical Explanation'. To capture the practices of practitioners, organisations, and the broader child protection sector, 24 in-depth interviews were conducted with staff members from state institutions and national and international Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs and INGOs).

**Results:** Focusing on how state institutions, NGOs, and INGOs practise within the child protection sector, three social logics have been identified. The logic of liminal governance focuses on the governance of the sector through formal authority and informal mechanisms. The direct implementation of child protection services is characterised by a logic of project fragmentation. This logic focuses on the basic unit for service provision: short-term, funding-dependent, and target-specific projects. The logic of everyday welfare describes the practices at the intersection of the humanitarian/ development sphere with everyday welfare. It captures how emergency-driven service delivery functions within and as the everyday component of child protection. As for the political logics, the logics of equivalence and difference are employed to understand the processes that contribute to maintaining the child protection system.

**Discussion:** This research critically examines the social realities faced by social workers and other professionals at the intersection of everyday and humanitarian child protection in Lebanon. This is not exceptional as it applies to other 'emergencised' contexts. By examining the actors' discourses for maintaining the sector at such a moment of dislocation, this research interrogates humanitarian narratives on the structures contributing to inequalities for beneficiaries, practitioners, organisations, the local sector, and across the global humanitarian community. And importantly, it examines the processes that maintain it. Therefore, the findings open discussions to imagine alternative, local forms of child protection that move beyond emergency-driven approaches.

## **Arab young adults' voices on intersecting risks and identity formation in Israel: Toward context-informed social work practice - Ruba Aburass Mograbe**

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This study centers the voices of Arab youth at risk in Israel (ages 18–25), who experience intersecting marginalities related to gender, age, socioeconomic status, and ethnic-national identity. Through dialogue, the study explores how youth perceive and navigate socio-political, cultural, and interpersonal risks. As a national minority facing opportunity gaps, governmental neglect, and heightened tensions - particularly amid war - these youth exemplify the urgent need to conduct research with and for marginalized communities, recognizing their agency and deepening understanding of the risk situations they face.

Guided by Emerging Adulthood theory and a Context-Informed Perspective, the study employs Grounded Theory methodology (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Twenty-five Arab young adults receiving welfare services participated in semi-structured interviews on intersecting risks. I conducted interviews in Arabic, my native language and that of the participants. Data were transcribed, thematically coded, and analyzed using the constant comparative method, supporting the development of categories and theoretical linkages directly from participants' narratives.

Findings revealed complex patterns of identity negotiation and risk perception. Participants navigated conflicting ethnic-national, local, and religious identities, with these challenges intersecting across three risk dimensions: interpersonal (family violence, neglect, isolation, anxiety, and loss of meaning), socio-cultural (gender restrictions, educational barriers, limited opportunities, weak support systems), and sociopolitical (community violence, institutional discrimination, limited trust in authorities, and language-based exclusion).

Listening to these voices builds context-based knowledge and highlights the urgency of designing social work interventions sensitive to both identity and structure. The findings demonstrate that identity and risk are closely linked, shaping ongoing cycles of vulnerability among Arab youth in Israel. These young people confront the dual challenge of personal growth amid a fraught political landscape. This research calls for social work practice and policy that integrate cultural context, promote equality, and foster practical interventions to strengthen resilience, especially during times of crisis.

# **Tinder's language and how users learn it to increase their opportunities in the relationship market - Jagoda Apanasewicz-Burcon**

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This presentation is based on a doctoral dissertation, "The 'Swipe Generation': Pedagogical Aspects of Using the Tinder Dating App." The Tinder app is examined through the lens of Wenger's concept of social learning. This approach assumes learning occurs through participation, practice, action, and the negotiation of meaning. The researcher's premise is that users' identities are shaped through their use of Tinder, which creates the conditions for a community of practice. As part of using the app, users acquire its specific language (e.g., effective ways to initiate conversations; describing themselves and their expectations regarding relationships in their profiles). Mastering the app's communication style can lead to greater engagement and a more favourable impression among other users. Conversely, failure to do so can result in marginalisation and limited opportunities within the app's relationship market. The researcher will present preliminary findings from individual in-depth interviews conducted in 2026.

# Towards Multispecies Social Work: Theoretical and Methodological Reflections - *Giorgia Aschero*

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This contribution outlines the conceptual and methodological design of an ongoing PhD project focused on post-anthropocentric social work and the inclusion of more-than-human-animals within the “social”. The project offers a critical and innovative perspective that questions anthropocentric and speciesist logics in social services. The project is guided by research questions addressing three interconnected populations: social workers, service users and more-than-human-animals. It investigates how antispeciesist and post-anthropocentric perspectives can be integrated into social work through a multispecies approach, by exploring social workers’ professional identities and practices, service users’ multispecies relationships, and the recognition of animals’ interests within social interventions. The study adopts an explanatory sequential mixed-method design. The first phase involves the collection of quantitative data through a national survey of social workers in Italy, focusing on the inclusion of more-than-human-animals into practices. The second phase consists of qualitative material using visual and creative methods, suitable for stimulating participants’ imagination and opening new areas of reflection. In addition, the project includes a multispecies ethnography aimed to avoiding the marginalization of more-than-human-animals within research process and recognizing their exclusion as a source of human-centered assumptions.

Given the early stage of the project, no results are available yet, but several possible directions can be outlined. For social workers, research examines how awareness of multispecies relationships is articulated, how different professional profiles towards more-than-human-animals emerge, and how professional identity may change through their inclusion in practices. For service users, it explores how the lack of recognition of multispecies kinship by social services can be problematic and how care, everyday practices and affection with animal companions are articulated. For more-than-human-animals, the research investigates possibilities for recognizing their agency and standpoint within social work contexts, both through indirect narratives from social workers and service users and through multispecies ethnographic attention.

In conclusion, this proposal aims to contribute to the debates on trans-species social justice in social work, as well as stimulating an openness not only towards domestic animals, but also to reflections on power, privilege and oppression that do not focus only on certain species carefully selected as to be loved, so as to broaden the gaze towards all animals.

Questions:

1. Does the proposed mixed-methods design adequately capture the complexity of human–animal relations in social work, or should alternative methodological approaches be considered?
2. What are the main challenges in analyzing creative and visual materials?

## Participation through the Lens of Social Network Research: Linking Institutional and Private Social Networks in Early Intervention - Julia Baring

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This work-in-progress examines participation through the lens of social network research, using the example of publicly coordinated family support systems (“Networks for Early Intervention” aka NZFH) in Germany. NZFH comprises preventive assistance for families in challenging situations and is increasingly organized through local institutional networks linking child welfare, healthcare, and social services. Despite this networking, empirical findings (Küster et al. 2023; Lütters 2022; Roth 2017) show that connections between these formal structures and families’ private social support networks often remain weak. As a result, discontinuities arise between professional support systems and everyday relationship structures, potentially limiting the sustainable effectiveness of preventive interventions. In NZFH research, participation is mostly conceptualized as formal involvement or individual engagement, while relational conditions enabling mutual relevance between families and professionals receive little attention. This reveals a research gap: an empirically grounded understanding of participation as an outcome of successful interconnection between institutional and private networks.

Research Question: “How are linkages between institutional networks and families’ private support networks established within NZFH, and under which structural and relational conditions can these linkages be reconstructed as participation in terms of mutual relevance?”

This is specified on three levels: (1) Structural: Which network characteristics are associated with linkages to families’ private networks? (2) Processual: How are these linkages practically shaped and used by professionals and families? (3) Theoretical-analytical: Under which conditions can linkages be interpreted as participation?

Theoretical Framework: Participation is conceptualized as a network quality. A combined framework integrates structural network theories (Granovetter 1973; Coleman 1988; Burt 1992), which analyze enabling or constraining cooperation patterns, with relational sociology (Bourdieu 1983; Emirbayer 1997).

Empirical Design: An explanatory sequential mixed-methods design is applied. Quantitative social network analysis identifies structural features of local NZFH. Qualitative interviews with professionals and families reconstruct ego-centered networks. Integration is achieved through comparative typology formation.

Objective: The thesis aims to refine the theoretical understanding of participation in NZFH as a relational network quality and to reconstruct it empirically through combined analysis of institutional structures and interpersonal processes.

Discussion: Are the research questions sufficiently focused and manageable within a dissertation timeframe (3 years)? Do the three levels align logically, or is there a risk of fragmentation?

## Documentation and documentation processes in Social Work - Anja Bischeltsrieder

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**Background and purpose:** Documentation connects everyday client work with organisational accountability, inter-organisational coordination and legal regulation, yet it is often treated as a purely technical or administrative task. This doctoral thesis starts from the assumption that documentation practices are also sites where professional values, power relations and understandings of clients and practice are constructed and negotiated. Focusing on one collaborative social work team in which a governmental agency and a non-governmental organisation jointly provide services, the study asks how documentation is actually done in practice, and what meanings and professional positions are produced through these processes.

**Guiding question:** The guiding question for this part of the study will be “How is documentation carried out in this department / organisation?” with a strong focus on the individual and collective processes involved in writing about clients.

**Methodological approach:** Using a constructivist Grounded Theory approach, the study combines simultaneous data collection and analysis, constant comparison, theoretical sampling and memo-writing. Data is being generated through, for example, semi-structured interviews with social workers, group discussions, participant observations (of documentation-related activities), and analysis of selected documents. The research design follows principles of participatory organisational research. Practitioners are involved in refining the focus of the study, discussing preliminary interpretations and co-developing categories that speak to both their practice concerns and wider theoretical debates.

For my presentation, I will outline the emerging design and first analytical insights from individual interviews and the first rounds of reflection with the team. I will particularly focus on the methodological challenges of conducting participatory research in an institutional context that also expects documentation to serve managerial aims.

I invite discussion on how documentation can be theorized as a key aspect of the foundations of social work practice, and how qualitative, co-productive and participatory research can contribute to more reflexive and socially just documentation practices.

# **Adaptation to Independent Living among Youth Leaving the Child Protection System: A Qualitative Analysis and Implications for Social Work Practice - Angelica Bordei Costea**

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Young people leaving the child protection system constitute a highly vulnerable social group, facing complex challenges in their transition to adulthood and independent living. Leaving care frequently entails the abrupt withdrawal of institutional support, limited access to stable housing and employment, and fragile informal support networks. In Romania, despite substantial reforms in child protection, persistent gaps in aftercare services continue to undermine the social inclusion and long-term autonomy of care leavers.

This study investigates the process of adaptation to independent living among young people exiting the Romanian child protection system, focusing on the structural and personal factors that shape their transition to adulthood. The research examines how institutional arrangements, socio-economic constraints, and individual resources interact in influencing autonomy and social integration after leaving care.

Adopting a qualitative case study approach, the study draws on in-depth qualitative data from selected cases to provide a contextualized understanding of the adaptation process. Thematic analysis was conducted to identify recurring patterns related to vulnerability, coping strategies, and support mechanisms.

The findings reveal that adaptation to independent living is significantly affected by insufficient preparation for adult responsibilities, financial insecurity, limited access to stable housing, and fragmented institutional support. At the same time, key facilitating factors include supportive professional relationships, access to education and vocational training, psychological support, and individual resilience.

The study highlights the pivotal role of social work practice in strengthening transition planning and developing coherent aftercare services in Romania. By addressing both structural vulnerability and personal empowerment, the research offers evidence-informed insights aimed at enhancing social work interventions and promoting sustainable independence among care leavers, contributing to broader social change.

## **Beyond Reflexive Impotence in Social Work Education: From Critical Reflection to Critical Praxis - Oliver Brockmann**

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The purpose of critical social work education (SWE) is to facilitate the development of critically conscious social workers capable of comprehending and perceiving the root causes of structural injustice, oppression and inequality and taking critical action for social transformation, social justice and the liberation of people. Paulo Freire argues that critical consciousness constitutes both reflection and action, where critical reflection and understanding is thought to lead to critical action and intervention in the world. However, contemporary empirical evidence both within and beyond social work shows us that the movement from reflection to action is not unmediated. Mark Fisher's concept of reflexive impotence captures such a situation where seemingly politically conscious (i.e. reflexive) individuals and groups fail to engage in politically transformative action (i.e. impotence). Given this paradoxical situation where critical reflection does not deterministically ensure critical action, it becomes necessary to act on both sides of the critical consciousness equation. Yet, much of the literature in critical social work education remains focused on critical reflection, mostly neglecting the issue of critical action. In this paper, drawing on the Theory of Practice Architectures, I will present preliminary findings from my PhD study relating to how critically-orientated social work educators in one German university move from facilitating critical reflection to promoting critical action and the key cultural-discursive and material-economic arrangements that might constrain this endeavour. The preliminary findings presented here constitute a small part of the larger PhD research which uses a critical-interpretive ethnographic methodological approach to explore the enactment of critical social work education by critically-orientated social work educators in university classrooms across two university institutions located respectively in Ireland and Germany.

## From Discourse to Power? How Roma Inclusion Is Governed in Social Policy - *Martin Daňhel*

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Despite official commitments to inclusion and participation, Roma communities in the Czech Republic remain systematically excluded from decision-making on the provision and design of social services. While participation is presented in policy documents as a key principle of just and inclusive social policy, in practice it is often institutionalised as a procedural mechanism without any meaningful transfer of power. Rather than enabling emancipation, participation frequently operates as an instrument of governance, control and the legitimisation of existing inequalities.

This paper presents findings from a qualitative study based on expert interviews with actors directly involved in the formulation of Roma and social policy at national and regional levels. The research sample includes members of governmental advisory bodies, in particular the Government Council for Roma Minority Affairs, experts in social inclusion and Roma policy, authors of national and regional strategies, officials of regional authorities responsible for social services planning, and representatives of municipalities. The study therefore examines policy-making across multiple levels of public administration, where social policy is effectively shaped and implemented.

The research builds on a previous critical discourse analysis of regional social services plans, which demonstrated that the language of participation in social policy is largely declarative and conceals persistent power asymmetries. The aim of the paper is to analyse how Roma participation is constructed at the very core of decision-making structures, what meanings expert actors at state, regional and municipal levels attribute to participation, and which institutional mechanisms they consider to be legitimate forms of Roma inclusion.

The theoretical framework brings together critical approaches to participation (Arnstein), hegemony (Gramsci), discourse and power (Foucault), and social justice based on recognition and redistribution (Fraser). Particular attention is paid to the role of ethnicity as a social construct that fundamentally shapes the relationship between Roma communities and public institutions and structures their opportunities to enter political decision-making arenas.

The findings show that Roma participation is predominantly institutionalised as a form of symbolic involvement that reproduces hegemonic norms of social policy and maintains Roma communities in the position of objects of governance rather than subjects of decision-making. Participation thus becomes part of a broader apparatus of governance through inclusion, which depoliticises inequality and transforms social justice into a technocratic procedure.

In conclusion, the paper discusses the role that macro social work practice and the professionalisation of the profession can play in disrupting these hegemonic mechanisms and in creating conditions for genuinely emancipatory forms of participation and social change.

## On the regular and the accidental. Or the place of the singular in the automaton of mental health care networks - Tom De Bois

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In mental health care networks for children and adolescents, the watchwords are ‘continuity of care’ and ‘intensification’. They form the core of a de-institutionalisation programme for sectors in crisis, with the proverbial hot potato being passed back and forth between youth care, child and adolescent psychiatry and the justice system. Mental health policy is based on the fantasy that, if the right information and the right people are brought together at the right time, child and adolescent psychiatry will be able to observe better, solve the puzzle of diagnosis more quickly, and provide more effective and shorter treatment. This logic reaches its limits when the viability of such trajectories is called into question, and with it the viability of care environments for these trajectories.

The experience of healthcare workers in such trajectories also shows that there is quite a lot of noise surrounding this continuity reflex. We have set up a series of case circles around critical trajectories with healthcare transmission professionals from the six East Flemish child and adolescent psychiatric services and the mobile mental healthcare network. Using concrete material from real interventions and what these interventions bring about, we are investigating how staff understand both continuity of care and their professionalism within this complexity. In this way, we are constructing a reflective and responsive dimension as opposed to a purely technical-rational interpretation of professionalism.

Theoretically, we start from a radical incommensurability amongst the speaking beings (“êtres parlants” – Milner, 2011) and a de-automation of the processes of “grammatisation” (Stiegler, 2008) that underpin a one-sided technical-rational interpretation of professionalism. With Stiegler, we can also trace these two poles in professionalisation back to a private (socialising) and a public (critical) use of reason in Kant’s sense. It seems that our de-institutionalisation programmes, embedded in governance structures and an ideology of evaluation, target precisely that public use of reason, ergo the possibility of any criticism itself.

On the one hand, we present some preliminary results from the series of case circles, within our theoretical window; and on the other hand, we look for opportunities for further empirical substantiation.

## Recognizing experiential knowledge in social work: epistemic justice, subjectivity and agency - *Els De Waele*

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Recently, experiential knowledge on conditions of social exclusion is gaining recognition in social work practice. Increasingly an appeal is made to people who 'possess' this type of knowledge as a way to inform and transform social work practice. This is considered valuable for diverse reasons, yet at the very basis seems to lie the assumption that adopting experiential knowledge as a resource in practice contributes to 'epistemic justice'. There is assumed to be 'epistemic privilege' in the position of the socially excluded, as this position provides specific epistemic access to the social world, which more closely aligns with the 'true' character of social relations. Hence, integrating experiential knowledge into the knowledge base of social work practice through the direct involvement of those in possession of this knowledge is considered to be a 'corrective epistemic measure' towards epistemic justice.

However, research shows that these underlying assumptions are not easily realized in practice. The loss of the redistributive and transformative potential of integrating experiential knowledge as a corrective epistemic measure is predominantly ascribed to the act of 'not taking seriously' experiential knowledge and its contributors in social work practice. References are made to mostly organizational and implementational deficits. What remains understudied, however, is what is at play at the side of those contributing their experiential knowledge. Here, questions surrounding the tacit dynamics shaping the subjectivity and agency of those contributing their experiential knowledge come to the foreground, as well as questions concerning the 'being' of the experiential knowledge getting mediated within these dynamics. How do these aspects unfold themselves in practices where subjects with experiential knowledge on conditions of social exclusion contribute this knowledge? And what implications does this have with regard to the concept of 'epistemic justice'?

The PhD research focuses on three aspects of practices of integrating experiential knowledge as a corrective epistemic measure:

- The subjectivation of the 'experiential knower': Through which technologies of subjectivity and technologies of the self is the experiential knower constituted as a subject? And what is the nature of the subjectivity that emerges?
- The experiential knower as 'epistemic agent': How does the agency of the experiential knower come about? And how does this interact with processes of subjectivation?
- The 'being' of the experiential knowledge: How is the 'being' of experiential knowledge constituted in practice? And conversely: how does the constitution of the 'being' of the experiential knowledge shape the subjectivity and agency of the experiential knower?

The research is conducted within an organization for community building, using an interpretive research design. The research is currently in an early phase.

## Professionalization of educational practitioners in networks of international youth work: Qualitative analysis with documentary method - Maximilian Deinlein

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International youth work in Germany constitutes a highly heterogeneous field, particularly with regard to the pedagogical practitioners involved and their professional backgrounds. For a professional and sustainably high-quality practice in this domain, the adequate qualification and preparation of all pedagogical actors is essential. At the same time, it is striking that comparatively few opportunities exist for the professionalization of practice in international youth work, and that this field receives scant attention in the training of social professions.

Following a systematic literature review based on predefined keywords, educational research on professionalization identifies networks as a promising field. Networks are recognized as a central context for learning, exchange, reflection, and innovation as well as for professionalization. Therein international youth work is understood not only as a pedagogical field but also as a social practice in which professionals navigate, reproduce, and challenge institutionalized norms and hierarchies. At the same time, empirical studies examining the role of networks in the professionalization of pedagogical practitioners in international youth work remain scarce. Within this field, networks primarily consist of individuals representing institutions from non-profit and municipal bodies, associations, federations, and academic institutions, operating across local, regional, national, European, and international levels.

In light of the described research gap, the following research questions are central:

- (1) How do pedagogical practitioners out of networks in international youth work perceive these networks as a context for professionalization in international youth work?
- (2) How do pedagogical practitioners utilize networks in international youth work for professionalization in this field?

To address these research questions, group discussions and the documentary method are applied, identified as suitable through an in-depth literature review. This reconstructive approach has proven effective in educational research on professionalization.

Within this dissertation, networks of international youth work are understood as a context in which individuals, seen as a professionalized milieu, develop and reproduce collective orientations of pedagogical practice within a "conjunctive space of experience". In this sense, professionalization is not the outcome of individual intentional learning processes, but rather an expression of altered habitual logic of action that can be documented and reconstructed through discourse. This concerns not theoretical but "atheoretical" knowledge (Mannheim 1980), or what Polanyi (1966) calls "tacit knowledge." Such implicit knowledge underlies the professional *modus operandi* and becomes visible in interactions and shared interpretive patterns.

Preliminary results from the pilot study will be presented and discussed in the conference presentation.

## Relationship changes impacting couples following breast cancer diagnosis-a cross-cultural study - Yimeng Du

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Breast cancer represents a significant global health challenge, profoundly impacting not only physical health but also acting as a major biographical disruption. Additionally, breast cancer is understood not merely as an individual illness but as a “we-disease”, a dyadic stressor affecting both the patient and her intimate partner. The prolonged treatment and survivorship processes transform breast cancer into a chronic condition, requiring long-term management and adaptation within the couple. This process frequently reshapes daily interactions, communication, caregiving roles, and power dynamics, forcing partners to renegotiate their relationship within the new “field” created by the illness. However, existing research into the impact of breast cancer on couples remains some limitations. Firstly, it often focuses on individual experiences or caregiver burden, overlooking the relational processes through which couples navigate the illness together. Secondly, there is a distinct lack of cross-cultural comparison. Cultural norms, values, and healthcare systems fundamentally shape how illness is perceived, emotions are expressed, and roles within relationships are defined, yet this contextual influence is frequently overlooked. A deeper understanding of the interactive processes, challenges, and emergent power dynamics within couples is needed to inform effective support.

This study is adopts a qualitative design, guided by an integrated theoretical framework combining Bourdieu’s theory of practice with feminist perspectives. Bourdieu’s concepts of “field”, “capital”, and “habitus” provide tools to analyse how a diagnosis creates a new social space with its own rules and power distributions. Feminist theory complements this by highlighting how patriarchal structures and gender norms influence intimacy, body image, and caregiving. Semi-structured, in-depth interviews will be conducted separately with breast cancer patients and their partners in both China and Ireland. This method captures rich, narrative data on how couples experience relational changes across different illness stages, revealing challenges, adaptive strategies, and subtle role renegotiations.

This study seeks to describe and compare the complex changes in intimacy experienced by couples in China and Ireland following a breast cancer diagnosis, examining how the structure of the breast cancer field, the valuation of different capitals, and the hysteresis of gendered habitus shape couples’ experiences. It investigates the gendered power dynamics that emerge in areas such as body image, caregiving and decision-making. And in a practical level, the study intends to generate insights that can inform the development of more culturally sensitive and contextually appropriate social work interventions, support services, and policies for couples affected by breast cancer.

## **Regeneration in Higher Education: Academic Teachers Towards the Evolution of the Idea of Sustainable Development - Ewa Duda-Maciejewska**

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Higher education institutions operate within a challenging context characterized by complexity, uncertainty, and the climate crisis (IPCC, 2023). While the concept of sustainable development has been present since 2015, when the United Nations signed the agreement on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the “SDG Progress Report” shows that countries are off track on many goals (OECD, 2022). Therefore, the evolution of sustainable development is called for to motivate the reimagining of not only life-sustaining but regenerative futures (Armon, 2021; Camrass, 2022; Reed, 2007). The concept of regeneration has been developed over the past 50 years in many fields. The regenerative paradigm has been present in the fields of agriculture (Gordon et al, 2022), architecture (Camrass, 2022), regenerative design (Lyle, 1996), economy (Fullerton, 2015), management and leadership (Sanford, 2017; Wamsler et al 2023), sociology (Buckton et al, 2023), philosophy and culture (Tasdelen, 2014; Wahl, 2016), or pedagogy and social work (Damus, 2024; Mendel, 2022). Previous studies have focused on sustainable development in education, but detailed analyses concerning the regenerative shift are lacking. Such studies are present in English-language literature but are almost absent in the Polish context. Maria Mendel is amongst not many scholars who have located a regenerative paradigm within the context of social work and the pedagogy of space (2022, 2025). The main objective of presented doctoral research is to recognize and characterize the scope of manifestation of the concept of regeneration in the reflections, experiences, and practices of academic teachers. It also aims to discover the meanings attributed to regeneration in the context of higher education. The central question addresses how and in what ways the idea of regenerative sustainable development manifests itself in the reflections and actions of academic teachers. It also explores the importance assigned by academic teachers in the context of higher education. Additional research questions include definitions and regenerative experiences, the presence of its elements in educational practices, obstacles and benefits of its implementation, and the respondents’ perception of the concept of regeneration. The research uses qualitative methods. The participants are selected purposefully amongst the Polish experts in the field of regenerative sustainable development and academic teachers coming from public universities. The research plan consists of the three stages: (1) individual in-depth interviews with experts, (2) multiple case studies (including individual interviews, document analysis, and participant observation), and (3) the validation of collected results with the participants.

The presentation will cover the author’s motivation, the research theoretical framework, methods and the update on the research plan. It will also give opportunity to share the questions related to the challenges of walking the talk of regenerative principles during the field work.

## **“Giving away your own child is the worst thing you can do”: Processes of re-constructing ‘failure’ as (one) unintended consequence of residential child care from the perspective of parents - Anja Eichhorn**

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Social services are legitimized by the intended effects they have on service users or people they address. Out-of-home care as one form of upbringing support under social law aims to promote the development of children and adolescents. In most cases, it comes into terms when a child's upbringing and development in their birth family is temporarily or permanently not guaranteed or not in the best interest of the child. According to German Social Law (and on a more general level), child and youth welfare services are also intended to contribute to improving the conditions for children's development, participation and upbringing in their birth families by counselling and supporting their parents.

Over the past 30 years, there has been a growing body of research on the impact of residential childcare in Germany. These studies focus primarily on the biographical developments of children and adolescents. Co-operation with parents is identified as a key factor for successful outcomes of upbringing services. The effects of out-of-home-care on the parents themselves, however, remain empirically underrepresented. To raise attention to this matter is of particular interest with regard to unintended consequences of out-of-home care within the youth welfare system. After all, the legal entitlement to upbringing support as a youth welfare service presupposes a deficit in parental competence, insofar as such support is only provided and can only be claimed according to German social law if upbringing and education appropriate to the child's welfare are “not guaranteed and the support is suitable and necessary for their development”.

Drawing on this context, the presentation which is based on an advanced PhD project, examines (re-)constructions of failure as (one) major unintended consequence of out-of-home-care from the perspective of affected parents. Using narrative interviews with fathers and mothers whose children were placed in a youth welfare facility at the time of the interviews, the presentation illustrates the extent to which such parents not only passively suffer experiences and attributions of failure, but also actively de- and reconstruct failure in order to position and re-legitimize themselves as “good (enough)” parents.

In line with the conference theme, this contribution can be understood as a stimulus for a discussion on normative perceptions of “good” parents/parenting in society and social work, as well as for further examination of the requirements, opportunities and limitations of working with parents as service users and participants in the youth welfare system.

## **The role of emotional intelligence in the success or failure of the socio-professional integration of young people who have left the child protection system - Elizabeth Farcas**

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The context is the socio-professional integration of young people who have left the child protection system. The objectives of this paper are the following: Investigating existing studies on emotional intelligence and identifying the relationships between emotional intelligence and the efficiency of a person's integration into the socio-professional framework; How the development of a young person in the child protection system is influenced or determined by the environment and lifestyle in which they grow up; The benefits brought by social services to the development of young people in the child protection system; Exploring the perceptions and experiences of some former beneficiaries of the child protection system regarding socio-professional integration.

The research questions are: What is the relationship between socio-professional integration and emotional intelligence?; What is emotional intelligence and how does it influence our socio-professional life?; How does the living environment influence the personality formation of young people in the child protection system and their general development?; What are the benefits of social services to young people in the child protection system?; How do former beneficiaries of the child protection system perceive the impact of emotional intelligence on their socio-professional integration?; What is the role of emotional intelligence in the success or failure of the socio-professional integration of young people who have left the child protection system?

The methods used will be both qualitative and quantitative (questionnaire, semi-structured interview, tests for measuring emotional intelligence, file analysis, focus group with specialists). One of the hypotheses is that young people who have benefited from certain services that helped them develop their emotional intelligence have a much higher socio-professional integration rate than those who have not developed emotional intelligence.

The expected results are that young people with better developed emotional intelligence will be able to integrate socio-professionally after leaving the protection system, compared to those who have not developed this intelligence. They will respond positively to the questions in the semi-structured interview regarding: forming a trusting relationship with someone during the time spent under protection; self-awareness and confidence in decision-making; a positive and confident attitude towards the future; understanding trauma/abuse and the healing process; recognizing and managing emotions in relationships with others; the boundaries necessary for a healthy social life.

The conclusion is that the child protection system needs services that include the development of the emotional intelligence of the beneficiaries, subsequently leading to them having more success in socio-professional integration after leaving the protection system.

## Possibilities and Limits of Social Work in Supporting Single Mothers in Energy Poverty - *Nikola Francáková*

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Energy poverty has in recent years become the subject of intensive research both in the Czech and international contexts, with studies highlighting its increasing prevalence and structural character. It represents a multidimensional phenomenon that affects a wide range of households across social and age groups. Analyses of the incidence and consequences to energy poverty identify single-parent households (particularly single mothers), older adults, and low-income households as the most vulnerable groups. International research points to the potential of social work as an effective instrument for supporting vulnerable groups at risk of energy poverty. Despite this, comprehensive research defining the role of social work in addressing the impacts of energy poverty is still lacking in the Czech Republic. The proposed research project focuses on the issue of energy poverty from the perspective of social work, particular emphasis on the situation of single mothers. In the Czech context, energy poverty is increasingly emerging as a serious social risk that disproportionately affects this target group. It therefore appears essential to examine the possibilities of targeted support through social services and social work.

The aim of the project is to deepen understanding of the possibilities and limitations of social work in supporting single mothers at risk of energy poverty and to contribute to the identification of key factors influencing the effectiveness of the support provided. The objective of the research is to explore and better understand the opportunities and constraints of social work in assisting single mothers threatened by energy poverty. The main research question is as follows: What possibilities and limitations of social work do social workers perceive when providing support to single mothers at risk of energy poverty?

The research is based on a qualitative research strategy. Using semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis, the study will explore the possibilities and limitations of social work as perceived by social workers when supporting single mothers at risk of energy poverty. In line with the chosen research strategy, a type of non-probability sampling was selected, specifically purposive sampling, in which informants are deliberately chosen based on their relevance to the topic under investigation. To achieve theoretical saturation, the snowball technique will also be employed. Informants will be recruited through outreach to labor offices, district authorities, and other services providing support to families with children.

The expected outcome of the project is the development of a theoretical model linking the understanding of energy poverty with social work interventions aimed at supporting single mothers. By identifying the key possibilities and limitations perceived by social workers, the study will provide insights into how social services can be more effectively tailored to the needs of this vulnerable group.

## Unsettling the Punitive Turn: Youth Crime, the “Educational Idea” (Erziehungsgedanke), and the Politics of Historical Narratives - Hatto Frydryszek

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Germany's current debate on youth crime - triggered by rising violence statistics and high-profile cases - has reignited calls for lowering the age of criminal responsibility and toughening juvenile sanctions. The Justice Minister's rejection, insisting that "criminal law is no panacea," echoes a century-old tension revealing how dominant narratives about youth, crime, and state response remain contested - and how research interrogating these narratives can function as critical intervention.

This contribution revisits Germany's 1923 Juvenile Justice Act (JGG) through a history-of-ideas perspective inspired by Quentin Skinner, asking not only what was said about "education" (Erziehung) in penal reform debates, but what actors were doing by saying it. Legal scholarship typically frames the "educational idea" as either a synonym for decriminalization or a compromise between retributive and rehabilitative paradigms. This paper challenges such readings by examining the social-pedagogical dimensions obscured by juridical framings.

Drawing on Skinner's critique of the "mythology of doctrines", the analysis demonstrates how "education" functioned as an "essentially contested concept" - its semantic openness enabling coalition-building across incompatible normative commitments ("education instead of punishment" vs. "education through punishment"). Restricting historical inquiry to legal discourse reproduces a juridified understanding of social problems. Incorporating socio-pedagogical sources - debates on industrialization, urbanization, and shifting family structures - reveals that "education" carried meanings irreducible to penal policy, articulating broader visions of state responsibility, childhood development, and collective futurity.

This methodological intervention speaks directly to contemporary demands that researchers demonstrate "impact" while resisting managerial definitions of relevance. When politicians invoke toughness as self-evident response to youth crime, they mobilize historical narratives that naturalize punishment and marginalize alternatives. Critical historical research disrupts this naturalization, revealing how categories like "criminal responsibility" emerged from power struggles and remain politically malleable. Showing that the "educational idea" was never settled opens conceptual space for questioning current reform proposals.

As researchers positioned as "agents of change", our task extends beyond producing evidence for predetermined policy debates. It involves excavating suppressed possibilities, interrogating whose voices shaped dominant accounts, and creating analytical tools for imagining alternatives. This contribution models such engagement by unsettling the historical narratives that constrain contemporary imagination, thereby reclaiming research as public intellectual practice aligned with justice and collective empowerment rather than compliance with punitive orthodoxies.

## Development and validation of a questionnaire for measurement of minority stress in neurodiverse individuals - *Jan Gierzyński*

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Minority Stress is a specific, chronic type of stress experienced by people belonging to minority groups because of their minority identity and belonging to these groups (Meyer, 2003). Until recently, research on minority stress has mainly focused on people from sexual minorities (Meyer, 2003) and gender minorities (Hendricks & Testa, 2012; Testa et al., 2015). Only recently has the minority stress theory included the population of individuals on the autism spectrum, treating them as a specific minority group (Botha & Frost, 2020). However, this population remains relatively under-researched in terms of their minority stress experiences. Furthermore, people with other neurodiverse conditions, such as ADHD, have not been considered a minority population at all thus far, even though they may be perceived by society as different due to their characteristics and behavior. With improved diagnostics and growing public awareness of neurodiversity, it is important to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the experiences of neurodiverse individuals, which in turn will help to develop better and more adequate methods of support and assistance. The aim of the research project is to gain a deeper understanding of the minority stress among neurodiverse people and to develop a novel questionnaire to quantitatively measure it. Importantly, neurodiverse individuals are also involved in the project as consultants so that the final tool can accurately reflect their experiences and how they perceive them. The project also includes the validation of the questionnaire on a sample of neurodiverse adults - with autism and/or ADHD diagnosis or self-identifying as those.

## Service-Learning in University-Level Social Work Education: Insights after the Participatory Action Research - Monika Gruslyte

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University-level social work (SW) education as one of the fields to apply service-learning (S-L) as a teaching method and pursuit a positive social change refers to a broad and multifaceted phenomenon and practice. The present contexts for SW studies at university urge designing a scholarly research that would scientifically investigate and substantiate the proposed new educational models for the cultivation of critical SW as part of university curricula for pre-service or early-career social workers. On the other hand, both academic and practical fields are open to the elaboration of new practices that inform emerging new theoretical insights in the field. The research question focuses on how S-L enhances university-level SW education.

Participatory action research (PAR) aimed at bridging theory and practice and engaging one Lithuanian university students in critical reflection on the SW subject. One study subject in the autumn semester of academic year 2021/2022 was arranged for two groups of undergraduate and graduate SW students to go deeper into the subject, plan and implement their projects based on S-L activities, reflect on their and others' practice. The PAR spiral included three planning, acting and observing, reflecting phases while embedding S-L components in SW. Qualitative content analysis encompassed: students' written answers to open-ended questionnaires, periodical journal entries, video-recorded interactive seminars, a finalising conference.

The conducted PAR proves that service-learning in SW education in university develops undergraduate and graduate students' subject-related competencies and critical thinking bridging theory and practice as well as potentially contributes to the overall positive social change. The research question is answered through displaying the dynamics in the development of SW knowledge and skills as well as attitudes: identification of and suggested solutions for social situations, assumed social worker's agency, self-reflection, development of critical SW literacy as an emerging concept of learning outcomes.

Discussion: S-L is gradually evolving across various SW and SW education traditions, approaches and practices, thus contributing to a broader set of shared and updated knowledge and experiences at micro-, meso- and macro-levels. Some scholars argue that S-L needs to be continuously backed by funding. However, the present research suggests SW education community to consider S-L as a more significant component of university-level studies of social work.

Question to the panel: In co-teaching, the academic interaction of the researcher with the main teaching professor of the subjects involved in the doctoral research based on service-learning in social work education is binding and restricting the implementation of the doctoral research project and in some cases contradicting with the doctoral researcher's scholarly views. How to balance clashing academic viewpoints and approaches to teaching?

## Sustainability factors in social entrepreneurship - *Dilyana Gyurova*

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Social entrepreneurship is still a relatively young field in Bulgaria, as is social work itself. Within the European Union, however, it is viewed as a key instrument for regional cohesion and for overcoming problems such as poverty and social exclusion. Therefore, it is both important and promising to study precisely this intersection between business initiatives and supporting vulnerable groups, in order to achieve added value for society.

We approach the topic from the perspective of practical experience and in search of a scientific and empirical foundation for the factors that contribute to development and sustainability in the sphere of social entrepreneurship, with a narrower focus on enterprises linked to social work organizations. The research will build upon the main paradigms that examine social entrepreneurship as a phenomenon, its goals, and its contribution to societal development and the achievement of social justice. We will also explore the forms of social entrepreneurship, the main characteristics of social enterprises, and the benefits that their establishment brings. In addition, we will examine the regulatory framework at the level of the European Union, and in particular in Bulgaria, with a possible comparison to one or two other member states with well-established good practices.

On this basis, we will seek a theoretical model that outlines the factors influencing sustainability in the field of social entrepreneurship. The significance of this topic in the current socio-economic situation in Europe is demonstrated by the presence and growth of social enterprises, as well as by numerous supranational forums - for instance, the European Forum of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises, where the achievements of (including social) entrepreneurs with an innovative spirit, market knowledge, and successful implementation are recognized.

The main objective of the empirical part of the study will be to examine the good practices of existing social enterprises through the reflections of those who manage them, in order to identify what makes them sustainable and what supports their development. We will review the available documents of these enterprises, and we will construct, test, and apply tools for in-depth interviews with their leaders, as well as focus groups with employees, who can provide a valuable perspective.

The results of this empirical research, conducted on at least these two levels, will be used to complement the theoretical conceptual model and to shape it into a finalized framework that identifies sustainability factors and offers recommendations based on the analysis of theory, good practices, and practitioners' reflections. In this way, we aim to support both their work and the establishment of social entrepreneurship and its role in socio-economic life not only in Bulgaria.

## **“I don't want to save the world? Well, yes, in a way, but not save it.” - On the ambiguous relationship of critical social workers perception on 'helping' - Latifa Hahn**

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My doctoral project, “Practice in Contradictions. On the Processes of a Critical Professional Understanding Among Social Workers“, examines how social workers develop a critical professional understanding, to what extent they come into conflict with their own political commitments, and what consequences arise from this. A further question is what role societal conditions in times of multiple crises play in navigating professional contradictions.

Theoretically, the project is grounded in a poststructuralist informed historical materialism (cf. Fries, 2016) and a reflexive Historiography (cf. Maurer, 2009). This combination makes it possible to simultaneously examine biographical processes, economic conditions, and the historical development of social work as a profession. The research thereby addresses a previously underexplored gap: the relationship between practitioners' biographies, their activism and their concrete practice within wage labor relations.

The empirical material consists of six biographical-partial narrative interviews with politically active or critically positioned social workers, which I conducted, transcribed, and analyzed using Grounded Theory methodology. These are supplemented by autoethnographic memos from my own practice as a social worker, as well as additional data encountered throughout the research process. These include contemporary discourses, such as social media posts and biographical texts by social work scholars. Historical material is drawn upon, in the spirit of Grounded Theory, as data to confront the selective founding narrative of social work in Germany with a class-analytical perspective. As an activist researcher, I bring my own embeddedness in social movements into the research in a methodologically reflective way.

At this year's TiSSA Conference, I want to present current findings from the ongoing research process. Since the conference in Porto in 2025, I have identified different phenomena and extended the coding paradigm according to Strauss and Corbin (cf. 1996) with additional categories. Central to my talk is one of my findings that stood out particularly during my latest analysis: across several interviews, a rejection of 'helping' as a professional self-understanding became visible, a phenomenon that is framed as contradictory both from the outside and by the interviewees themselves, given that 'help' is widely considered a constitutive concept of social work (cf. Hollstein, 2024, p. 21). Drawing on Rancière's concept of political subjectivation (Rancière, 1992), I want to discuss whether the disidentification of critical social workers from the tradition of 'helping work' can be read as an act of de-subjugation and thus as a form of political practice within a profession defined by contradiction. My aim is to discuss which theoretical and historical perspectives can productively be used to understand this phenomenon.

# Teenagers' Understandings of Privacy and Participation in Digital Healthcare - Maria Hjälms Ellnemyr

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The rapid digitalization of Swedish healthcare has expanded opportunities for teenagers to access information, communicate with healthcare providers and manage and participate in their health online. At the same time, these developments raise important questions about how young people experience and negotiate privacy, integrity and participation in digital healthcare environments. This first study aims to explore how teenagers aged 15–17 understand, experience and act upon their rights related to privacy and involvement in digital healthcare encounters. Guided by social constructionism, co-creation of care and Nissenbaum's framework of "privacy as contextual integrity", the study examines how teenagers' interpretations of privacy are constructed and what they are based on. Using a mixed method design, the study combines survey data with in depth individual interviews to identify situations in which teenagers perceive a heightened need for privacy, the types of information they are reluctant to share digitally and the emotional and practical factors that influence these decisions. Extra focus is given to how teenagers perceive their rights, how well they feel these rights are upheld in digital formats and how digital communication affects their sense of autonomy and participation in their own care. By capturing teenagers' own perspectives, the study seeks to generate new insights into how digital healthcare services can better support young people's integrity, self-determination and participation. These findings will form a foundational basis for the subsequent studies in the dissertation, which further examine adults' perspectives and the co-creation of tools aimed at improving teenagers' experiences in digital healthcare.

## The role of social welfare and the expertise of social work in Finnish substance abuse work - *Irina Kaarnakari*

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The dissertation consists of three research articles and a summary article. The aim of the study is to examine the role of social welfare services and the nature of social work expertise in the context of Finnish substance abuse and addiction services following recent legislative reforms.

In the first research article we asked How are the role of social welfare system and expertise of social work in substance abuse and addiction services represented in the context of the legislative reform in Finland? Theoretical framework is the triple mandate of social work (client mandate, state mandate and the professional mandate) by Silvia Staub-Bernasconi (2012). The findings are structured around three perspectives:

1. the reconfigured role of social welfare system,
2. the client's position and rights, and
3. the tense relationship between social and health care.

First, the state mandate narrows the scope of action available to social work. The reform expanded the role assigned to health care. This is perceived as a threat both to the structures of social welfare and to the professional expertise of social work in substance abuse work.

Secondly, the perspective of the client mandate of social work shows that transferring responsibility for substance abuse work to health care is a significant risk to clients' rights. Legally mandated social welfare procedures are seen securing client's rights in contrast to health care.

Lastly, a key challenge arises in social work professional mandate when social work is required to safeguard client's best interest in situations where decision making power rests with health care. Social work professional mandate becomes particularly significant when resolving the tensions that arise between the client mandate and the state mandate.

To further research how the social work expertise is realizing in the current substance abuse work in Finland the second and third study aim to define social work expertise in the Finnish substance abuse work through multi-perspective approach. In the second study social work expertise is framed through the perspectives of social work professionals in substance abuse work. The third study views social work expertise from the perspective of health care professionals. Results show how social work expertise is constituted in a multidisciplinary setting.

Critical realism enables an analysis of social welfare structures and social work expertise through the idea of a stratified reality. The phenomenon is shaped by context, setting, situated activity, and the self, with history intersecting all levels. The first study focused on context and setting, while the second and third focus on situational activity and self, following Derek Layder's (1993) research map. A broader understanding of the role of social welfare and social work expertise in the context of substance abuse services emerges through an examination of the interplay between different levels.

## Happy senior age as a contemporary challenge of social pedagogy - Martyna Karwińska

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As we all know the world is going to age. The World Health Organization says that pace of population ageing is faster than in the past. In 2020, the population of people aged 60 and above surpassed the number of children under the age of five. From 2015 to 2050, the share of the global population over 60 is expected to almost double, rising from 12% to 22%. Statistics show that in 2060 people aged 60 and over will constitute 12 million of Polish society, which is 38.3% of the total Polish population. Additionally, life expectancy is increasing. In Poland, it is estimated that women who turn 60 in 2023 will live 25 years longer, and men 20 years longer. This means that people will spend 30% of their entire lives in the elderly. Therefore, the topic of the quality of life of older people is very important in the context of our future and cooperation in society.

In the presentation, the author will share her meta-analysis, which explores definitions of happiness that have emerged over the years. She will also present methods for researching and measuring happiness, taking into account the specific age of older people.

The doctoral thesis will explore factors of happiness in older adults, taking into account their specific age, based on six levels of preparation to old age and in old age: biological, psychological, intellectual, spiritual, economic, and social. The author aims to uncover the social implications of theoretical and empirical analyses of senior happiness, including the possibility of formulating recommendations to improve the quality of life of older adults and support the development of appropriate strategies in social policy and institutional activities.

## Connecting Care & Campus – German University Students as Informal Caregivers - Marc André Kellert

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Informal caregiving is a crucial component of many European care systems, including that of Germany, and some caregivers are university students. Recent results from the Student Survey in Germany (SSG) indicate that at least ten percent of university students in Germany are involved in providing care to relatives or friends. Despite this, little is known about this group and how they cope with reconciling academic studies and caregiving responsibilities. In particular, there is a research gap concerning the institutional context, namely the university environment.

To address this gap, we use data from the SSG and apply regression techniques to examine (I) at which universities the share of caregiving students is higher and (II) at which universities the burden associated with caregiving is larger. The results show that caregiving students are more likely to be enrolled at universities of applied sciences and to study in Western Germany. They are also more likely to be enrolled in part-time study programs. Caregiving students who study part-time and are enrolled in certain fields of study appear better able to reconcile academic demands and caregiving responsibilities than their peers.

In addition, we use a qualitative approach to (III) identify the needs of caregiving students regarding frameworks of administration and educational access. Six interviews with caregiving students were conducted to identify potential improvements to support structures. Key results show that caregiving students report a need for greater flexibility with respect to alternative exam formats, early course planning, and priority access to mandatory courses, as well as a desire to engage in peer-support groups. Regarding teaching settings, students request less strict attendance requirements and the possibility of asynchronous learning.

This research therefore not only addresses an under-researched group, but also provides valuable insights for social policymakers, stakeholders in the care system, and university staff to better support students with caregiving obligations in a needs-oriented manner.

# Ethics, Power, and Professional Boundaries: The Role of Social Workers in Multidisciplinary Transgender Care - Kath Khangpiboon

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This paper presents a theoretically grounded analysis of the roles social workers occupy within multidisciplinary teams that provide care for transgender clients. Situated at the intersection of clinical coordination, advocacy, and structural critique, social workers hold a distinctive and frequently under-theorised position in gender-affirming healthcare. The central question guiding this analysis is: In what ways can social work theory clarify, strengthen, and legitimise the professional role of social workers in multidisciplinary transgender care?

Drawing on interdisciplinary collaboration theory, empowerment theory, bioethics, queer theory, and critical social work theory, this paper articulates a framework that positions social workers not simply as supportive adjuncts to medical treatment but as central actors in upholding ethical integrity, client autonomy, and systemic accountability. Within multidisciplinary teams, which typically include physicians, psychologists, nurses, and allied health professionals, social workers facilitate communication, assess psychosocial contexts, safeguard informed consent processes, and address structural determinants such as discrimination, family rejection, economic precarity, and legal marginalisation.

The analysis argues that role ambiguity within healthcare teams can marginalise social work contributions reducing practice to case management rather than recognising its structural and relational expertise. By applying role clarity theory the paper proposes that clearly articulated social work competencies particularly in advocacy ethical deliberation and empowerment enhance team effectiveness and client outcomes. Empowerment theory positions transgender clients as active decision-makers while bioethical frameworks guide social workers in navigating dilemmas related to capacity risk and gatekeeping practices. Queer and critical social work theories further expand the role beyond clinical settings challenging cisnormative assumptions embedded in institutional protocols and advocating for systemic change.

The proposed model conceptualises social workers as integrative agents who connect micro-level psychosocial care with macro-level advocacy efforts. Their contribution strengthens interdisciplinary collaboration by centring on relational practice cultural humility and structural analysis within medicalised environments.

# Attitudes of Workers Assisting Migrant Populations Toward Large Language Models in the Context of the Professionalization of Social Work - Lukáš Kytka

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This presentation introduces findings from a Constructivist Grounded Theory study examining how workers in organizations assisting migrants in the Czech Republic and Slovakia perceive large language models (LLMs) and how these attitudes intersect with ongoing processes of professionalization in Social Work. As frontline professionals performing linguistically demanding tasks, these workers represent an early-adopter group whose experiences offer insight into the practical and structural conditions shaping AI uptake. The study addresses the central RQ: What theoretical concepts can be identified in the attitudes of workers in organizations providing assistance to migrants toward large language models?

The resulting theory demonstrates that practitioners' attitudes are shaped by a constellation of interrelated concepts. Participants describe technical barriers such as weak infrastructure, slow hardware, and unequal access to paid versions of LLMs. They also identify significant knowledge gaps and limited organizational training, which generate uncertainty around appropriate and safe use. Ethical concerns emerge strongly: workers express caution about entering service-user-related data, highlight risks for vulnerable migrant populations, and recognize the need for clearer internal rules and accountability frameworks. Beyond these practical challenges, participants articulate more structural and socially critical concerns. They highlight the concentration of AI development within powerful global corporations, whose control over data, model behavior, and access conditions is perceived as a threat to democratic oversight, worker autonomy, and equal technological participation. These anxieties are reinforced by everyday experiences with incorrect answers, bias, and non-transparent model behavior. Workers link these risks directly to the core values of SW.

This underscores that meaningful integration of LLMs into SW requires an explicit critical orientation capable of recognizing corporate influence, data-related vulnerabilities, and potential threats to professional practice.

Methodological design—including sampling, iterative coding, memo-writing, category construction, and ethical safeguards—will be discussed alongside reflections on how GTM enabled the generation of a practically relevant theory while drawing on the most pertinent insights from the interdisciplinary field of Human–Computer Interaction. The incorporation of this qualitative component into a wider mixed-methods study will also be addressed. The presentation concludes by outlining questions for the supervisory panel: How can SW as a profession collectively influence the development and regulation of LLMs? What forms of organizational and ethical infrastructure are needed to ensure equitable, safe, and value-consistent LLM use? And how can findings from this study inform future training, policy, and interdisciplinary collaboration?

## Who has the capability to know? – Categories of epistemic agents producing knowledge in relations between children, parents, and social workers in child protection - *Joni Lähde*

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Child protection is a field known for its complexity, filled with situations and problems in which social workers, parents, and children operate under a myriad of emotions and perceptions. A child can easily be overlooked by the social worker as parents draw attention away. However, parents may feel that they are not being understood, while social workers are under unreasonable pressure. In the worst cases, false assumptions can contribute to a child's death when family members conceal the true situation from professionals. Therefore, it is essential to examine how children, parents, and social workers produce knowledge in child protection services. Although new research has emerged regarding knowledge production in child protection, there remains a lack of multi-voiced research that integrates the perspectives of children, parents, and social workers.

I approach knowledge production through the concept of epistemic agency, which refers to an agent's capability to acquire, produce, and share knowledge. In this presentation, I examine what categories of epistemic agents possess capability or incapability to produce knowledge in relations between children, parents, and social workers in child protection. I focus on the agents' hermeneutical capability to understand situations, share their own perspectives, and/or facilitate others in sharing theirs. This analysis is based on an article currently in progress, which is part of my doctoral research.

The research data were gathered through interviews with children, parents, and their social workers involved in child protection at a specific service point in a city in Finland. A total of 59 interviews were conducted, most of which were individual interviews with children, parents, and social workers from the service point, while the remainder consisted of group interviews with teams from the same and different child protection service points. Through category analysis, I have identified identity and attribute categories related to hermeneutical capability that emerge in relations between children, parents, and social workers.

Based on this examination, hermeneutically strong, weak and contradictory categories of epistemic agents emerge in child protection. Strong epistemic agents include children, parents, and social workers who are willing to reflect on their own perceptions and engage in open and even pleasant interactions. However, demanding or so-called difficult parents may also possess a good capability to obtain information from social workers. Hermeneutically weak agents include individuals who are, for example, avoidant, closed off, and stuck in their own perceptions. Contradictory hermeneutic agents include reactive parents, bureaucratic social workers and children in general; depending on the situation, they exhibit varying capabilities to produce knowledge. Therefore, there are different capabilities to know in child protection, which impacts questions of epistemic justice and injustice.

## **Between Inclusion and Exclusion: The Participation and Involvement of Children and Young People in the Context of Child and Youth Welfare Services - Stephanie Langer**

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Recent amendments to the German Child and Youth Welfare Act (SGB VIII) demonstrate a growing emphasis on the rights to participation and self-organization. However, the impact of these legislative changes on the institutional and practical design of inclusive and participatory processes has received little empirical attention to date. Addressing this gap, my presentation outlines the theoretical framework and prospective orientation of my cumulative dissertation project in the field of child and youth welfare.

My research pursues two distinct empirical threads that differ in both methodological approach and thematic focus.

The first thread employs an ethnographic approach within a specific field of practice: early childhood education and care. It explores how certain social norms regarding bodies and abilities become institutionally and professionally inscribed, entrenched, and negotiated through the logics and legitimations of pedagogical practice. Furthermore, I investigate how these markers of difference impact the participation of the children (and their families). The identified barriers to participation and mechanisms of exclusion can be traced back to structural arrangements that implicitly generate marginalization.

The second thematic thread focuses on self-advocacy within the context of the SGB VIII reform. A core element of this statutory transformation -particularly within the new Child and Youth Strengthening Act- is the reinforcement of self-advocacy and self-organization rights. Using qualitative interview data gathered from representatives of self-advocacy organizations in child and youth welfare, this thread reconstructs the specific access barriers and exclusionary practices that persist within these organizations at the same time.

Drawing on preliminary findings from both threads, this presentation aims to refine the theoretical framing of the dissertation. The empirical results oscillate between the need for a transformative, inclusion-oriented understanding of participation that fulfills the statutory mandate, and a critical analysis of underlying power relations. This critical perspective scrutinizes the dynamics between service users and professionals, particularly against the backdrop of specific age- and ability-related power disparities.

Ultimately, structural and legal changes require epistemic shifts. Integrating materialist theories, Disability Studies, and New Childhood Studies -alongside other power-critical and inequality-theoretical approaches- proves highly productive for this endeavor. The presentation will conclude with a discussion exploring how additional theoretical frameworks can be integrated to critically interrogate the multi-level implementation of inclusive participatory structures in child and youth welfare.

## Parenting-as-Resistance: Reframing Parenting in Poverty as a Relational and Agentic Practice - *Liliana Lakatosova*

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In Flanders and Brussels, approximately 12.1% and 22.5% of young children grow up in poverty. Their families face significant challenges across multiple domains, including income, education, housing, health, and institutional recognition, leading to both material and relational disadvantages that deeply shape their daily lives. Research into the effects of poverty on children and families has long identified parenting as a central area of interest. Much of this research on parenting in poverty focuses on the assessment of parenting behavior, or parenting as a key mediator between poverty and its impact on child developmental outcomes. While necessary and important, the dominant focus on parenting behaviors, risks, and deficits risks to individualize poverty by translating structural precarity into parental dysfunction. This emphasis on normative parenting and child outcomes obscures how poverty operates as a social relation that organizes, constrains, and is reproduced through everyday family relationships. As a result, existing research offers limited insight into parents' lived experiences and leaves little room to conceptualize parenting in poverty as a relational and agentic practice rather than a deviation from ideals of normative conceptions of "good parenting". In this context, our project seeks to challenge the contemporary individual-oriented, normative and deficit-based discourse on parenting in poverty, by proposing a shift towards a relational, agency centered understanding of parenting in poverty. We introduce the concept of "parenting-as-resistance", which frames parenting as a meaningful response to the social and economic disadvantages that families in poverty face, rather than non-normative or "bad" parenting practices. Drawing from sociological theories of poverty, pedagogical parenting theory, and empirical research, we aim to explore if the sociological notion of "resistance" can serve as a meaningful relational and agency centered lens to understand and describe parenting in the context of poverty.

In this presentation, we outline the study's qualitative research design, while also sharing initial reflections from the preparatory phase of data collection. These reflections include early experiences with field engagement and the recruitment of families. The research design comprises four interconnected phases. In phase 1, we conduct a conceptual reinterpretation of the existing literature on the lived experiences of parents in poverty through the lens of resistance. In phase 2, we collect empirical data through in-depth interviews and intensive family observations (n=5), analyzed using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) to map the depth and complexity of how parents living in poverty experience, interpret and enact resistance in their daily lives. In phase 3, we build on the previous findings and apply grounded theory (GT) to iteratively identify key themes and patterns, laying the foundation for a theoretical conceptualization of 'parenting-as-resistance', integrating insights from the literature review, IPA findings and additional interview data (n=approx. 35). In phase 4, we employ ideal type analysis to identify prototypical forms of parenting-as-resistance across the data, further refining our conceptualization of parenting through the development of 'typologies of resistance'. Throughout all phases of the project, the research is developed in close collaboration with a diverse group of stakeholders, including parents with lived experience of poverty, as well as social workers, youth care professionals, and policy makers engaged in family poverty

## Social Work in Child Protection: Decision-Making Processes and Everyday Practice - *Dominik Mácha*

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This project focuses on the decision-making processes and everyday professional practice of social workers operating within the system of social and legal protection of children in the Moravian-Silesian Region of the Czech Republic. Attention is paid to how social workers choose particular approaches when working with at-risk children and their families in specific situations, and how they balance a child-oriented perspective, systemic work with families, parent-focused interventions, or combinations of these approaches in practice.

Social work in the field of child protection is characterised by a high degree of uncertainty, time pressure, and institutional constraints. Social workers are confronted with simultaneous and often conflicting demands related to child protection, family support, and compliance with legislative and organisational regulations. Decision-making in this context represents a key process that significantly shapes both the form and impact of social work in everyday practice. The project therefore focuses on the factors that shape these decision-making choices, as well as on the ways in which social workers justify and legitimise their professional practices.

The research is conducted using a qualitative methodology, drawing on semi-structured interviews with social workers employed by child social and legal protection authorities. The aim is to identify recurring decision-making dilemmas, strategies of client work, and the influence of organisational and institutional contexts on the performance of social work. Particular attention is paid to how social workers negotiate, in their everyday practice, between child protection, the support of family relationships, and systemic requirements.

In line with the conference theme, the project demonstrates that the impact of social work in the field of child protection cannot be assessed solely through formal and quantitative indicators. Understanding the everyday decision-making processes of social workers contributes to a critical reflection on professional autonomy, ethical dilemmas, and the possibilities for social change in child protection. The project thus highlights the importance of qualitative research for capturing forms of practice that often remain hidden between institutional expectations and managerial demands.

## What is Finnish social work education for in the age of polycrisis? Alternative responses to modern-colonial habit-of-being - Linda Majander

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The presentation is based on an article manuscript in which we have elaborated social work and teacher education policy documents in Finland to analyze the problem representations and solutions in these education programs. In line with global education politics, higher education programs in Finland are made more accountable for the economic growth of the society. Neoliberal and managerialist ideals guide professions to demonstrate measurable impact both in professional work and in research. Also, educational objectives are increasingly built around work life-oriented competence-based models such as 21st century skills that have started to define the purposes of education also in teacher and social work education. In these models, the knowledge interest informing educational theory and acts is instrumental.

At the same time, global polycrises poses an existential threat to the survival of humans, other species, and our planet. Socio-ecological conditions and values are changing in unpredictable ways, having myriad consequences to students, teachers, social workers and service users, and posing challenges to education. In education policy, the global challenges are approached more as behavioral or knowledge-related problems that can be fixed with better competences or more knowledge. Thus, critical engagement with global crises is missing from education which is conducive to maintaining the status quo. Such approaches ignore the ontological level, our way of existing on the planet. Such a way of existing is based on dualism, instrumental reason, exploitation and violence. Seeing how we have got there requires deeper theoretical and historical knowledge and understanding about the systemic nature of polycrises. Only then can we interrogate dominant narratives, not just describe social realities and search for solutions inside the same system which has produced the crisis.

In the presentation, I will first introduce what is meant by modern-colonial habit-of-being. Then I introduce two metaphors by Vanessa Andreotti and her colleagues, 1) Tree Metaphor that illustrates how methodological, epistemological, and ontological problematization and responses to global crises differ from each other, and 2) House of Modernity that provides a systemic approach to the origins of the global problems, the processes sustaining them and to the responses trying to overcome them. We have elaborated recent social work and teacher education policies through discourse analytical reading using Bacchi's model 'what is the problem represented to be'. We examine how Andreotti's aspects resonate with the discussions and critique concerning social work and teacher education development in Finland. The result is that instead of compliance to dominating policy, social work should take a more active role in politics relating to global social and ecological justice.

## Neurodiversity in STEAM Education: Tailoring Microcontroller Projects for Students with ASD - Andrzej Manujło

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Neurodiversity is an important consideration in modern educational practices, especially within STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) education, where engagement with complex and hands-on learning activities plays a crucial role. This session explores how project-based learning (PBL) using microcontrollers, robotics, and game console programming can be effectively adapted for neurodiverse students, with a particular focus on those with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Neurodiverse students, including those with ASD, often face unique challenges in traditional educational environments, such as sensory processing differences, social communication difficulties, and challenges with executive functioning. These challenges can make it harder for them to engage fully in standard STEAM education models, which may rely heavily on group activities, verbal communication, and complex problem-solving. This session will begin by discussing the importance of PBL as a teaching method in STEAM education, especially for students who may benefit from a more hands-on, interactive learning approach. PBL encourages students to engage with real-world problems, think critically, and develop practical skills, all of which align well with the cognitive and sensory preferences of many neurodiverse students. However, to fully benefit from PBL, these students need an environment that recognizes their individual needs and provides appropriate support. For example, students with ASD may struggle with sensory overload in classroom settings or have difficulties in social interactions that affect their ability to collaborate on group projects. Addressing these challenges requires careful consideration of the tools, tasks, and strategies used in STEAM education.

The session will also explore how specific tools, such as microcontrollers and robotics kits, can be adapted to support neurodiverse learners. These tools offer tactile, visual, and kinesthetic learning opportunities that can be particularly beneficial for students with ASD, who may have a stronger affinity for hands-on or visual tasks rather than traditional lecture-based learning. Additionally, programming and robotics projects can provide structure, clear goals, and immediate feedback, which are all elements that neurodiverse students often thrive on. Game consoles programming can further extend these opportunities by allowing students to create and control their own games, offering a dynamic way to develop problem-solving skills while minimizing social pressure.

The session will highlight the challenges that arise when attempting to integrate neurodiverse students into STEAM activities, such as difficulty in group collaboration, frustration with open-ended tasks, and a lack of accessible resources tailored to their needs. Practical strategies for overcoming these challenges will be provided, including how to modify tasks to reduce sensory overload, how to create individualized support plans for social communication difficulties, and how to use assistive technologies to promote independent learning. Finally, the session will conclude with a discussion on the importance of fostering an inclusive classroom environment where all students, regardless of neurodiversity, feel valued and capable of contributing to and benefiting from STEAM education.

By providing a deeper understanding of these strategies and tools, the session aims to help educators design inclusive and effective STEAM programs that cater to the needs of neurodiverse students, empowering them to excel in technology and problem-solving.

# Vulnerability, Adulthood and Institutional Power: Reframing Participation in Residential Child Care - Franziska Lara Markelj

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In residential child care, protection is commonly framed as supervision, control, and risk prevention. Particularly for younger children, participation is often treated as secondary; desirable in principle, but suspendable when adults invoke safety, responsibility or institutional order. This paper argues that this hierarchy between protection and participation is not only pedagogically problematic but structurally reproduces inequality between generations (Liebel/Meade 2023; Rollo 2023; Pluto 2023). Drawing on childhood studies, vulnerability theory and adulthood critique, the paper conceptualizes vulnerability not as an inherent characteristic of children but as an outcome of social and institutional arrangements (Andresen 2018). What is defined as risk, danger or necessary protection is shaped by adult interpretations, professional routines and organizational norms. In residential care, children encounter a multiplicity of professionals whose assessments of safety, appropriateness and 'best interests' are not only situational but also biographically, culturally and institutionally informed. Participation is often limited not by children's capacities but by adultist assumptions embedded in institutional practice (Eberitzsch et al. 2023; Liebel/Meade 2023; Rollo 2023). Empirically, the paper draws on qualitative research conducted in German residential care settings, combining document analysis, interviews with professionals and participatory methods with children under the age of ten. The study is situated within a rights-based framework that understands participation as a legal entitlement rather than a pedagogical option (UNCRC 1989; SGB VIII). First findings indicate a persistent gap between formal participation rights and everyday practice. Professionals frequently describe participation as an established principle, yet children's influence is often restricted to low-conflict areas of daily life. In situations framed as risky or complex, adult decisions override children's perspectives, often without being recognized as a limitation of participation. Protection arguments operate as implicit veto powers that stabilize adult authority while remaining largely unquestioned. The paper suggests rethinking participation not as a pedagogical add-on but as a form of protection itself. Meaningful participation enables children to articulate discomfort, negotiate boundaries and make sense of institutional rules. It can function as an early warning system within care settings and strengthen institutional accountability. From this perspective, research on participation becomes inherently political: it questions dominant protection narratives, unsettles professional self-evidence and highlights children as social actors rather than passive recipients of care (Liebel/Meade 2023).

## From Evidence to Participation: Analysis of Critical Evaluation Strategies in the Context of Housing First - *Barbora Mendlová*

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This paper responds to the central theme of the conference by critically examining the "impact agenda" in the context of Czech social services, specifically those aimed at addressing homelessness. In current social work research, there is growing pressure to demonstrate the success of interventions through numerical indicators and evidence-based practice (EBP) principles. Although these metrics—such as housing retention rates—are essential for the political legitimisation of Housing First programs, they carry the risk of technocratic reductionism. This often marginalises the subjective experiences of service users and the professional intuition of frontline social workers.

The dissertation project presented in this paper is based on a critical reflection on the evaluation of the Rapid Re-Housing pilot project in Brno. Although this evaluation successfully used EBP to influence national policy, it raised urgent questions about whether such "standardised evidence" is sufficiently sensitive to the needs for change that would benefit people experiencing homelessness themselves. The presented research, therefore, seeks to transcend the role of a detached observer describing social reality; instead, it takes on the role of a partner in the process of change through the implementation of critical participatory evaluation (CPE).

At the meta-level, the research focuses on analysing how knowledge about "success" in social services is constructed and how dominant evaluation frameworks reproduce existing power asymmetries. The theoretical foundation of the work draws on critical social work, social constructionism, and critical realism. This framework allows us to view evaluation not as a neutral measurement tool, but as a political act that can either reinforce the status quo or serve to emancipate.

Methodologically, the project uses participatory action research (PAR) to disrupt traditional hierarchies between the "expert researcher" and the "research subject." By involving service users and social workers as co-creators of knowledge, the study aims to expose the structural inequalities and power dynamics that are often overlooked in standard evaluations. The paper challenges the dominant managerial narrative of "impact as compliance" and instead links the concept of impact to social justice and collective empowerment.

Finally, the paper addresses the methodological and ethical challenges associated with the transition from traditional EBP to more activist research practices. The project argues that the transformative potential of social work research lies in its ability to promote solidarity and emancipatory change. This ensures that impact is not measured solely by administrative success, but by the actual fulfilment of justice and the inclusion of silenced voices in public debate.

## **Social Work Practice with the Elderly and Caregivers: a national study on professional identity, assessment, and policy practice - Veruska Menghini**

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Italy is undergoing an unprecedented demographic transition, with over 24.7% of the population aged 65 and over. This scenario represents a social emergency that weighs heavily on family systems—historically the pillars of primary support, but today increasingly fragile and structurally less sustainable. Despite the magnitude of this phenomenon, institutional responses are often dominated by bio-medical approaches that tend to pathologize old age and prioritize bureaucratic-administrative efficiency. In this context, the social worker role risks being confined to that of a "technical-executor" or a resource gatekeeper, overshadowing the relational dimension and the professional mandate oriented toward the promotion of rights and human agency. Furthermore, in Italy, the organization of healthcare and socio-sanitary services varies by region, and there aren't national guidelines defining the professional profile and functions of social workers who work with the elderly. This research project aims to fill a significant gap in the Italian literature by exploring the professional identity and practices of social workers operating with older people. The main objectives are:

1. **Professional Mapping:** To identify who these professionals are, their work settings, and their specific functions at a local level
2. **Assessment Analysis:** To investigate assessment approaches and tools, focusing on strategies that foster the active participation of both the elderly and their caregivers
3. **Policy Practice:** To explore how the knowledge gained during assessment can be translated into policy practice, influencing the co-construction of local welfare policies.

The research is grounded in the Relational Social Work paradigm (Folgheraiter & Raineri, 2017), which views support as a joint action based on reciprocity and the enhancement of the experiential knowledge of the elderly and their families. It further integrates the Critical Social Work perspective (Taylor, 2012), aimed at challenging oppressive practices and systemic ageism, and the policy engagement model (Gewirtz-Meydan et al., 2016; Weiss – Gal et al., 2020), which recognizes the social worker as a strategic actor in decoding and representing collective needs within decision-making arenas.

A mixed-methods approach is adopted. The methodological process is divided into three phases:

- **Preliminary Phase:** a scoping review of the literature.
- **Second Phase:** administration of a structured questionnaire to the national population of social workers who work with older people to collect demographic data, operational contexts, and professional perceptions and function.
- **Third Phase:** online focus groups with selected professionals to delve into the nuances of the assessment process and policy practice experiences, facilitating an iterative reflection on the results emerged from the survey.

The results will be disseminated within the academic community and through professional associations.

# Structural Neglect in Elderly Care: A Comparative Analysis of Public and Private Home Care Social Services in Romania - Nicoleta Mereş (Cojocaru)

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**Introduction and research questions:** This paper investigates the critical disparities in the provision of home care social services for the elderly in Romania. The central research question is: To what extent does the geographical distribution of social care providers influence the vulnerability of the ageing population towards structural neglect and potential abuse? The study argues that the profound imbalance between the public and private sectors constitutes a form of systemic abandonment, where the state's withdrawal from direct provision creates significant protection gaps.

**Methodological framework:** The research utilizes a quantitative comparative methodology, correlating the licensed service capacity - defined as the total number of authorized beneficiary slots - of providers (state vs. private) with demographic data regarding the resident population over 65 years old across all 41 counties and the Municipality of Bucharest. By mapping these accredited service volumes against the actual needs of the elderly population, the study identifies specific "care voids" at the national level.

**Results:** The scientific findings reveal a significant territorial and social inequity in Romania. While in certain regions, such as Harghita county, the private sector has expanded to fill the void left by the state—reaching a capacity ratio of over 110:1 compared to public provision—vast areas in southern and eastern Romania remain "social deserts." In these regions, the ratio of total service capacity to the 65+ resident population is nearly zero, leaving vulnerable individuals in need with no professional social care alternatives.

**Discussion:** This configuration of the welfare system is interpreted as a form of structural violence. By limiting the elderly's right to choose and forcing them to remain in unsupervised or informal care settings, the system significantly heightens the risk of abuse. This analysis serves as the foundational stage of a broader doctoral thesis Conducted at the University of Bucharest, Romania. The goal is to bridge these macro-structural findings with the micro-level lived experiences of the beneficiaries.

Questions for supervisory panel:

1. How can "structural neglect" be better integrated into the legal definitions of elderly abuse within the European social work framework?
2. What are the most effective strategies for stimulating public service provision in "social deserts" where the private sector finds no commercial incentive to operate?
3. What are the most rigorous methodological approaches for complementing this quantitative mapping with qualitative insights to capture the lived experience of "structural neglect" and the elderly's perceptions of abuse within home-care settings?

## **Abolish social work, or abolitionist social work?: From Soft Policing to Mutual Aid - Jaroslav Michl**

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This contribution addresses the fundamental paradox of social work as a profession that declares a commitment to social justice while frequently functioning as a mechanism of state control and surveillance. Through a desk research approach, the paper explores the intensifying debate between two contemporary radical currents: Abolitionist Social Work, which aims to transform the profession from within to refuse carceral complicity and Social Work Abolition, which argues that the profession is so deeply involved with colonial and capitalist structures of soft policing that it must be replaced by non-hierarchical community mutual aid.

The theoretical framework is grounded in the critique of carceral social work and black feminist traditions. It analyses how social workers often serve as agents of the carceral state in systems such as family policing and forced institutionalization. The presentation maps the historical complicity of the profession in population control, from assimilation projects to modern cooperation with police, arguing that systemic poverty and criminality are results of structural oppression rather than individual failure.

Applying the Dismantle, Change, Build framework of Critical Resistance, the paper evaluates practical implications for contemporary practice. Dismantling as decoupling social work from policing and punitive state apparatuses. Change as decolonising everyday practice and abandoning expert-led hierarchies, and build, as investing in life-affirming institutions based on transformative justice and genuine solidarity. Ultimately, the contribution challenges the role of researchers and practitioners as public intellectuals. It argues that if social work is to achieve its mission of social change, it must transition from a model of conditional charity, which maintains inequality, to a model of radical solidarity that builds collective power outside of carceral logic.

## **Craft for inclusive education: holistic support for children with ASD – Patrycja Mika**

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The aim of the presentation is to analyze how craft support inclusive education and children with special educational needs, with particular emphasis on Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Crafts are often perceived in education as manual development or a way to fill free time, even though their multidimensional importance in human development has been recognized for centuries.

Recent research indicates that engaging in crafts brings significant benefits to children with special educational needs, serving as a form of self-expression, supporting cognitive and emotional development, improving well-being, and promoting social integration. Participation in craft activities leads to increased self-esteem, social activity, reduced anxiety, increased empathy, and prosocial behavior.

The analysis was conducted based on data from several sources. First, the latest international research on the role of manual work in inclusive education and working with children with special educational needs was reviewed. Secondly, conducted own research in the form of a case study covering the educational environment of a selected kindergarten and school attended by children with ASD.

The research involved a semi-structured interview with a craft teacher and an art therapist working with children with ASD, which allowed us to capture their professional perspective and practical experience. At the same time, the study included the perspective of parents of children with ASD participating in craft classes, who completed a questionnaire with open-ended questions about their perception of the value of craft. The empirical material is supplemented by an analysis of the children's hand work products.

The results of the study indicate that craft activities can be effectively adapted to the individual needs of students, supporting their integration into the group, the development of social skills, a sense of agency, and the level of engagement during lessons. At the same time, challenges related to the adaptation of techniques, access to materials, the need to improve teachers' qualifications, and teachers' concerns about children's safety were identified.

## Dialogical Rupture in a Time of Polycrisis - On Silence, Conflict, and the Role of Social Work - Catharina Nickel

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Contemporary social work and social pedagogical research face a dilemma: While the discipline is normatively committed to challenging inequality, elevating marginalized voices, and building solidarity across difference, the frameworks used to assess the outcomes of social work initiatives often prioritize quantifiable outputs and evidence-based indicators, such as the number of clients served, attendance rates, or short-term behavioral changes. These metrics risk obscuring the normative foundations of social work and fail to capture its less tangible outcomes and impact. One of these overlooked dimensions of social impact is, for example, a society's ability to tolerate moral and political disagreement without resorting to silencing, exclusion, or withdrawal; hence a community's ability to "agree to disagree." This capacity offers a more durable indicator of social cohesion than many standard performance measures can capture, and it should be understood as an outcome of effective social work intervention. Practices such as negotiation, deliberate engagement with conflict, or principled refusal to participate in potentially harmful dialogue can surface hidden injustices and prompt the kinds of moral reflection that standardized metrics rarely capture. In the current moment, often described as a "polycrisis" in which overlapping global emergencies, institutional fragility, and social fragmentation converge, these dialogical capacities appear increasingly strained. Faced with uncertainty, fatigue, or a sense of futility, communities may retreat into "safe spaces," avoid contentious topics, or disengage from dialogue altogether. These responses should not be viewed merely as individual choices. Rather, they may serve as indicators of a system under strain. Precisely in such moments, the ability to sustain moral disagreement becomes both more fragile and more politically urgent. The social work community itself is not immune to these dynamics. Conflict-avoidance, ideological silencing, and intra-disciplinary forms of "cancelling" are observable in conferences, universities, and practice organizations. While social work often positions itself as a guardian of pluralism, it must also reckon with the ways difficult conversations are sometimes deflected or prematurely closed within its own spaces. If the field is to act as an agent of social change, it must also be the space where conversations continue when others retreat. This calls for a reconsideration of impact, one that goes beyond measurable improvements and also includes relational, negative, or absent outcomes as meaningful indicators of social work intervention. Consequently, the session invites participants to examine how silence and group polarization can contribute to the erosion of dissent, even in fields ostensibly committed to justice, and to consider how social work might foster its role as a public intellectual discipline that is capable of holding space for difficult conversations.

## **Social work and Pedagogy in the making: exploring theoretical knowledge as a region of thought in child welfare and protection practice - Dieter Oorlynck**

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Child welfare and protection (CWP) in Flanders (Belgium), as in many international contexts, is increasingly shaped by individualised, method-oriented and technocratic forms of knowledge. Findings from the first phase of this doctoral research indicate a clear dominance of individual and contextual theoretical frameworks in professional practice, while socio-pedagogical and critical-emancipatory perspectives remain marginal. These findings resonate with broader analyses of the technocratisation and individualisation of CWP.

The second phase of the PhD-research, which is ongoing at the time of the TiSSA conference, shifts the focus from identifying which theories are present in practice to examining how pedagogy itself takes shape in everyday organisational contexts. Pedagogy is approached not as a set of explicit principles or methods, but as a process of pedagogical meaning-making in which situations are interpreted, responsibilities are allocated and problems are defined. Central to this phase is the concept of theoretical knowledge as a region of thought: a shared, often implicit space that structures what becomes thinkable, relevant and legitimate within professional practice.

Methodologically, this phase adopts a qualitative, process-oriented research design. Fieldwork is conducted in six CWP organisations in Flanders and combines non-participatory observations of case deliberations, semi-structured interviews with professionals in key organisational roles (including pedagogical directors, quality coordinators, training coordinators and HR managers), and document analysis of policy texts, quality manuals, training materials and vacancy texts. These methods are analysed in conjunction to trace how pedagogical interpretations circulate across everyday practice, organisational routines and formalised documents.

At the time of the conference, data collection is ongoing and early analytical insights are beginning to emerge. The presentation will include preliminary empirical material illustrating emerging patterns in case deliberations, organisational routines and policy documents, showing how pedagogical interpretations are produced, aligned and stabilised across everyday practices within CWP organisations. Preliminary observations suggest that pedagogical coherence within CWP organisations is not primarily produced through explicit theoretical debate, but through routinised practices, shared language, quality procedures and organisational expectations that privilege certain interpretations while rendering others less visible.

By presenting this intermediate state of the research, the paper contributes to ongoing debates on the role of theoretical knowledge in CWP and offers insight into how social work and pedagogy is practically and organisationally produced in contemporary child welfare settings.

# Social Reporting from the Perspective of Critical Structural Social Work - Sini Pallasvuo

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In my theoretical PhD dissertation article, I examine social reporting, which is the most common form of knowledge production within structural social work in Finland. Social reporting is primarily carried out through an online form, to which mainly social welfare professionals submit entries. The form invites respondents to briefly describe a positive and/or negative phenomenon observed in everyday social work practice, along with a proposal for addressing the negative phenomenon. The purpose of social reporting is to generate qualitative information to support the development of welfare services and political decision-making.

Finnish social reporting has been shown to be system-oriented both as a method and as a form of knowledge production. It functions as part of the existing service system by producing system-centred information and system-focused development proposals (Rajala et al., 2024). Social reporting thus reflects the Finnish tradition of structural social work, characterized as consensus-seeking, depoliticized public-sector work with a strong emphasis on knowledge production. While the information generated through this tool may contribute to fine-tuning the service system, it offers limited support for advancing the broader goals of structural social work—namely a more just and equal society.

In the article, I examine the criteria that international critical structural social work theory (e.g., Mullaly & Dupré, 2019) sets for knowledge production in structural social work, including social reporting. Critical structural social work emphasizes the inherently political nature of social work and seeks to dismantle societal structures that produce inequality and oppression, in collaboration with people who occupy marginalized social positions. My aim is to consider what social reporting would need to look like for the knowledge it generates to support structural social work's broader aspirations for social change and justice, rather than merely contributing to internal service-system development.

My research is theoretical in nature; I do not analyse primary empirical data but instead draw on existing research on structural social work and social reporting. The contribution of this still ongoing study will be to offer a new theoretical perspective on social reporting. In addition, the article provides analytical tools for developing social reporting and for informing broader discussions about knowledge production in social work to support efforts toward structural social change.

# **The Two-Factor Model of Attachment Avoidance: Model Development, Measurement, and Clinical Implications – Magdalena Pietrzak**

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The purpose of the current contribution is to outline the theoretical framework and research agenda of a doctoral project focused on two distinct facets of attachment avoidance. The proposed conceptualization differentiates between avoidance of intimacy, defined as tendencies related to the formation of close interpersonal bonds and the degree of intimacy tolerated within such relationships, and avoidance of dependence, referring to dispositions toward situations that require reliance on others or the assumption of responsibility for them. Empirical support for the presence of these subdimensions has been provided in the author's prior research (Pietrzak & Ciecuch, 2024), is consistent with established theoretical models of attachment (Bowlby, 1980; Brennan et al., 1998; Mikulincer et al., 2003), and has also been articulated in recent empirical investigations (Karantzas et al., 2023). Within the doctoral project, the clinical relevance of proposed avoidance facets will be examined with respect to the presence and severity of personality disorder symptomatology, for which previous studies have reported heterogeneous and model-dependent associations with attachment avoidance (Hertanger et al., 2015; Siczek & Ciecuch, 2023).

## Fluid boundaries between formal and informal social work practices - Elke Plovie

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Interdisciplinary social work and social work research mostly focusses on how social work interrelates with other disciplines such as health care, urban planning, etc. and looks at how interdisciplinarity is key in addressing wicked problems in today's society. In this presentation I focus on a very specific form of interdisciplinarity, that is on the dialectical relationship between formal and informal actors in social work practices.

Today, informal actors such as volunteers, active citizens in the neighborhood, grass-roots organizations, social movements and activists are playing a vital role in realizing human rights and bringing about social change (Schrooten, Thys & Debruyne, 2019). They are for example involved in realizing the right to housing for migrant families (Debruyne & Plovie, 2025), are engaged in caring neighborhood initiatives (Plovie & Goris, 2023) or are advocating for equal rights for persons with disabilities.

The active role of informal actors is off course nothing new to social work, as in fact this is how social work started all together. In Belgium, charity initiatives from the church and the local guilds and later on, the labour unions and the feminist movements, prepared the way for the professionalization of social work (Claessens, 2017).

Recent 'participation turns' in policy (Dean, 2017; Garrett, 2018; Roets, Vanderkindere & De Stercke, 2018; De Rynck & Steyaert, 2019) invite citizens to actively engage while at the same time there is a bottom-up movement of citizens organizing themselves (Hurenkamp, Tonkens & Duyvendak, 2006; Holemans, Van de Velde, De Moor & Kint, 2018; Plovie, 2019; Schrooten, Thys & Debruyne, 2019, Schrooten & Welschen, 2022).

This presentation will deepdive into to the dialectical relationship between formal and informal actors in social work practices. I will make use of two empirical researches to construct a framework to understand this dynamic. In a first research, I conducted semi-structured interviews with citizen initiatives and questioned their collaboration with formal social work practices. In a second study, I focused on the collaboration between formal and informal actors in the specific context of care at the neighborhood level. In an action-research we both observed and intervened in this dynamic.

In the framework I present, I will challenge the strict demarcation between 'formal' and 'informal', identify different models of interaction between the formal and informal actors, question which kind of knowledge is valued and the claims each of those actors.

# Adult Disclosure of Child Sexual Abuse Exposure: Exploring Experiences of Juridification in Social Work Practice Responses - Ann Ryan

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Disclosure of child sexual abuse is complex and challenging. Many who experience sexual abuse in childhood delay disclosure, often until adulthood. It is commonly defined as a survivor/victim's revealing, through telling, reporting, or making a statement of childhood sexual abuse experiences (Jones, 2000). Storying of disclosure of child sexual abuse allows the person to develop their understanding of the abuse (Draucker & Martsof, 2008). Research has emphasized the importance of reactions to disclosure to the long-term welfare of the survivor/victim (Ullman, 2002; Allnock et al., 2019). In Ireland, adults who make disclosures of child sexual abuse can be channelled towards the State child protection services due to the specific functioning of mandatory reporting. This can result in adults becoming engaged with, what is known as, the Child Abuse Substantiation Procedure (CASP), administered by social workers within the Irish State's child protection. CASP directs Irish social workers when determining if a disclosure is founded or unfounded (substantiated) (Mooney, 2023). Engagement by the victim/survivor has been likened to a confessional, with information harvested to assess risk (Mooney, 2023). Through an analysis of the narratives of adults' experiences of engaging in this process, and social worker's experiences of implementing it, this paper explores what their experiences say about the juridification of social work responses to child sexual abuse. Juridification is a process where law, legal terminology, and legal practices expand into arenas traditionally dominated by social and interpersonal interactions (Ponnert & Johansson, 2018; Devaney, 2024). The creation of new laws and policies can add complexity and further bureaucratic burdens on individuals and professionals (Magnussen & Banasiak, 2013). Adult disclosure of child sexual abuse is characterised by shame, secrecy, and fear (Alaggia, 2005) – it is an experience that requires both physical and psychological safety and is dependent and influenced by human interactions. Associated with juridification is a movement in social work away from relationship-centred practice toward a bureaucratic, risk-averse approach (Ponnert & Johansson, 2018). The data collected as part of this study highlight adults' experiences of juridification, but also a growing 'comfort' in social work practice with this shift towards process-driven engagements. Concerns raised by academics, specialist services, and the Irish Health Information and Quality Authority center on the barriers, power dynamics, delay, and challenges to the survivor/victim's agency – these are supported and developed by this research. CASP seeks to establish "truth" while operating in a space where both testimonial and hermeneutical injustice are significant risks (Fricker, 2007). This research has engaged with adults who have disclosed and identified juridification at work as reported in their experiences of CASP.

## Reflecting on Impact: Politicisation and Social Work Research - Melih Samson

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In contemporary social work research, impact is increasingly defined through measurable outcomes and evidence-based accountability frameworks. These developments are embedded in broader neoliberal tendencies within welfare states, where efficiency, quantification, and managerial control shape both professional practice and research agendas. Research objectives are frequently framed in positive terms, such as capacity building, community development, or strengthening resilience. While such formulations appear constructive and are difficult to contest, they may prioritise immediate symptoms and interventions, leaving the structural dimensions of social injustice that cause them largely unexamined. In this context, social injustice risks becoming background rather than an explicit object of inquiry.

This contribution explores politicisation as a way of rethinking what counts as impact in social work research. Politicisation is understood as engaging with the structural dimensions of social injustice within professional practice and research. Rather than limiting impact to improvement within predefined categories, this perspective foregrounds institutionalised arrangements and power relations that shape everyday problems. It also raises questions of voice and representation. Social work research is often presented as a vehicle for amplifying the voices of people who are marginalised in dominant policy and public debates. Yet this claim requires critical reflection: whose voices are heard, how are they framed, and how are they translated into knowledge deemed legitimate? These questions remain relevant even when research explicitly adopts a politicising orientation.

Building on these considerations, this contribution reflects on the methodological and normative assumptions underpinning a PhD research on politicisation in social work. Social work is frequently positioned as a profession committed to addressing structural injustice, yet it may simultaneously reproduce elements of the inequalities it seeks to challenge. A similar parallel may arise in research. By critically examining whether its own research design risks reproducing the structural dimensions of social injustice it aims to address, this contribution explores the parallel between practice and research as sites where injustice can both be contested and inadvertently reproduced. Rethinking impact, therefore, requires not only attention to outcomes but reflexivity about how research participates in shaping problem definitions, professional agency, and possibilities for social change. The presentation invites dialogue on these tensions and on the responsibilities and limits of researchers.

In doing so, this contribution engages with ongoing debates about the role of researchers as public intellectuals. It suggests that the transformative potential of social work research lies as much in critical self-examination and co-production of knowledge as in the production of measurable effects.

## Structural Legacies and Engagement of Older Adults in a Post-Soviet Landscape - *Annela Samuel*

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This paper examines how historical, structural and spatial conditions shape social work and the engagement of older people in a post Soviet context, focusing on the northeastern Estonian town of Sillamäe. The collapse of the Soviet Union and Estonia's restoration of independence in 1991 marked a profound systemic transformation toward democracy and a market-based economy. The adoption of a neoliberal welfare model further reshaped social protection, producing poverty and marginalisation, disproportionately affecting retired persons and ethnic Russians. During the Soviet occupation, USSR-directed migration policy increased the Russian-speaking population from 11% to 30%. The effects were especially pronounced in Ida-Viru County, where approximately 80% of residents remain Russian-speaking. Sillamäe expanded rapidly as a closed town serving a uranium-processing plant and was largely populated by relocated Soviet specialists. The privatisation following Estonia's regained independence, factory restructuring with mass layoffs, and deteriorating relations with Russia led to a decline in the town's symbolic and social status. For many older residents, these shifts constituted profound ruptures in identity, recognition, and belonging. Within this ongoing transformation of governance and welfare institutions, engagement cannot be treated as a stable or neutral concept. Its meaning is context-dependent and shaped by policy frameworks. To analyse these dynamics, the paper draws on Arnstein's (1969) Ladder of Citizen Participation and Rocha's (1997) Ladder of Empowerment, framing engagement across micro, meso, and macro levels. The empirical material is based on qualitative interviews with six social workers and five local and regional policymakers in Sillamäe. The findings reveal a marked gap between national strategies, which emphasize engagement as co-production and everyday practice, where engagement is largely limited to individual service provision. Across all levels, engagement is often tokenistic, taking the form of information sharing or superficial consultation rather than genuine power-sharing or co-production. Collective and political forms of engagement remain largely undeveloped, while the town's historical and spatial legacies continue to shape and reproduce inequalities in engagement and participation. The findings show that social workers are in a challenging position, balancing policy expectations with the practical constraints of limited resources, time, and institutional support. Ultimately, the study underscores the importance of recognising older adults as active, capable participants whose knowledge, experience, and agency must be supported through context-sensitive social work and institutional structures, enabling them to meaningfully shape their own lives, communities, and broader societal decisions.

## **Examining the Merging of Knowledge Model: Power, Impact, and the Researcher's Role in Participatory Social Work Knowledge Production - Jordan Shaibe**

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As social work research is increasingly required to demonstrate impact, participatory and co-produced approaches raise critical questions about how impact is defined, realized, and legitimized. In collaborative contexts involving academics, practitioners, and experts by experience, power relations do not disappear but are reconfigured in complex ways. This doctoral research examines how power dynamics are navigated within the Merging of Knowledge (MoK) model and what forms of impact emerge through participatory knowledge production processes.

MoK is a participatory methodology that brings together academic, professional, and experiential knowledge in structured, dialogical inquiry around social issues. While often presented as an epistemically sound alternative to hierarchical knowledge production, this study approaches the model critically, asking how epistemic justice is enacted in practice and how participants cope with persistent power asymmetries. Two research questions guide the dissertation:

- (1) What practices and action principles of the MoK model address power relations that emerge in research involving different knowledge types (lived experience, professional, and academic)?
- (2) How do participants and facilitators perceive the contribution and success of the MoK model in producing new knowledge to address the selected issue?

Drawing on a Critical Theory framework, the study employs a qualitative, action-oriented methodology, including semi-structured interviews with MoK participants and facilitators, participant observation of MoK processes in academic settings, and analysis of process artifacts. These data allow for close examination of interactional practices, moments of tension, and reflexive negotiations within knowledge co-production.

Preliminary analysis points to recurring methodological and ethical dilemmas: divergent understandings of impact, constraints on the recognition of experiential knowledge within academic norms, and the ways participants, facilitators, and researchers become implicated in sustaining or challenging epistemic hierarchies. Rather than treating impact as a predefined outcome, the study conceptualizes impact as an emergent, relational, and contested process.

The session invites discussion of the challenges of conducting participatory processes that aspire to social change while operating within institutional expectations of evidence and impact. By examining MoK from within, this research contributes to debates on the role of social work researchers as agents of change and the conditions under which knowledge co-production can support more just forms of impact.

## **Social Work as a Tool for Supporting the Interactions of Refugee Families with Children with Intellectual Disabilities in a New Sociocultural Environment - *Oleksandra Shromova***

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This paper focuses on the role of social work as a key tool for supporting the interactions of refugee families raising children with intellectual disabilities in a new sociocultural environment. The context of forced migration significantly increases families' vulnerability, as they simultaneously face specific needs related to raising a child with an intellectual disability, language barriers, limited familiarity with institutions, and different sociocultural patterns of care.

The aim of the research is to understand the experiences and interaction strategies of Ukrainian mothers and fathers who are raising a child with an intellectual disability in the host society. Furthermore, it examines their interpretations of the role of social work in navigating interactions within a different sociocultural environment — namely with social institutions, services, and the broader social context.

The study is designed as a qualitative inquiry grounded in an analysis of scholarly literature. Data collection relies on approximately twenty semi-structured interviews with parents, which will be processed using thematic analysis. The research findings will offer critical implications for social work practice with refugee families, highlighting the intersectionality of disability and migration.

## **Housing trajectories of families living in family shelters: trust, information practices and structurally produced instability - Veronika Sikorová**

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This research focuses on the housing trajectories of families with children living in family shelters and examines the processes shaping their movement between different forms of insecure and standard housing. Housing trajectories are conceptualised as dynamic and often cyclical processes rather than linear transitions towards independence, produced through the interaction of structural conditions, institutional arrangements, and everyday practices of families and professionals (Clapham, 2002). Drawing on qualitative interviews with parents and social workers, the research shows that repeated returns of families to shelters should not be understood as individual failure, but as a structurally conditioned phenomenon. The transition into the private rental market emerges as a key and highly vulnerable moment in these trajectories, where housing market barriers, institutional constraints, and families' uncertainty intersect. The analysis further highlights the role of information practices and trust in shaping housing trajectories. Families' housing-related decisions are strongly influenced by how they assess available information, which sources they trust, and how they interpret guidance provided by social workers. Residential and outreach social work thus functions as a crucial mediator of information and trust, actively participating in the formation of housing trajectories. From a practice perspective, the findings confirm that repeated shelter use is structurally produced and cannot be addressed solely through individual-level interventions. The study contributes to the European debate on why, in the absence of changes in housing policy, the role of social work remains predominantly reactive and why it is necessary to strengthen structural and long-term forms of support.

## Expanding Personal Assistance to Individuals with Mental Health Problems: Challenges, Opportunities, and Research Perspectives in Austria - Marianne Skopal

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Personal Assistance (PA) is a key service that enables individuals with physical disabilities to lead self-determined lives and participate socially. In Austria, it is implemented as a lay profession. With the introduction of the Harmonization Directive in 2023, PA was extended to individuals with mental health problems. This expansion brings new challenges, as not all principles of traditional PA can be directly applied to this target group.

PA for individuals with mental health problems is being offered as part of a pilot project in Vienna, which is accompanied by a research project of the University of Applied Sciences Campus Vienna, of which I am part. The study aims to examine the perceptions of both assistance users and personal assistants to identify specific challenges and opportunities. The initial findings suggest that PA for individuals with mental health problems cannot be effectively provided by untrained individuals.

Building on these initial findings, my PhD project will further investigate the implementation of PA for individuals with mental health problems in Austria. The first publication will focus on the evaluation of the pilot project and an international comparison of how PA is implemented in other countries. This international perspective aims to provide valuable insights into approaches that could enrich the Austrian context.

Furthermore, I plan to conduct interviews with representatives of the Independent Living Movement to incorporate the perspectives of individuals with disabilities who actively advocate for inclusion into my research. A needs assessment in Austrian federal states using a questionnaire will also be part of my research. The aim is to determine whether the concept of personal assistance is suitable for the affected individuals or whether alternative forms of support are required. Additionally, I will organize participatory workshops with the target group to discuss and further develop the research findings.

The central research question of my PhD project is: How can the concept of personal assistance be theoretically situated within the inclusion discourse and the context of the UN-CRPD, and to what extent can it be applied to individuals with mental health problems? What organizational, financial, and professional frameworks are necessary to successfully implement the expansion of the target group?

I plan to use the PhD Pre-Conference Supervisory Panel to present initial findings from the evaluation and outline the next steps of my research and dissertation based on these results. I would like to pose the following general questions to the panel:

- Are the presented findings a solid foundation for my further research?
- Is the planned approach comprehensible and promising?
- What additional aspects should be considered in the international comparative analysis to improve the implementation of personal assistance in Austria?

## **The Role of Social Workers in Developing Rights Based Social Services - Zurab Tatanashvili**

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As population of Georgia continues to age, the need for social services that protect the rights, dignity and participation of older adults is becoming increasingly important. While social services for older people have expanded in recent years, less attention has been paid to whether these services are genuinely grounded on a human rights-based approach and how social workers contribute to their development and delivery.

This study aims to explore the role of social work in shaping and implementing rights-based social services for older adults in Georgia. The research focuses on the extent to which human rights principles are reflected in social service programs and standards, the involvement of social workers in program development and implementation as well as the factors that influence older adults' willingness and ability to claim their rights in these services.

The study is guided by the Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) and relevant standards for social services emphasizing dignity, participation, access, equality, accountability and non-discrimination. A sequential mixed-methods design will be used, combining content analysis of policy documents and service standards with quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews and focus groups involving older service users, social workers, and social service experts.

The presentation introduces theoretical and methodological framework of the study and discusses its relevance for understanding the future development of inclusive and rights-oriented social services for older adults in Georgia.

## Constructing the Normative Dimension: Social Work Education in Europe - Daniel Ternyik

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Embedded in the work of the growing global social work community, this dissertation explores the normative dimension of social work in the European education context. It serves as a criticism of understandings that attribute social work inherent consistency across European countries. Despite these differences, the global community of social workers has grown stronger over the years. Social work is increasingly framed by shared global values and ethical principles, while at the same time there remain different interpretations. There is little research that explicitly examines the normative dimension in social work education at several levels (programs, teachers, students) across countries, indicating a clear gap in the existing literature.

This study aims to compare how the normative dimension of social work is conceptualized, constructed, and negotiated within social work education programs—specifically through curricula, pedagogical practices, and student perceptions—in Germany, Hungary, and Ireland. The focus is on training programs because these seem to be more standardized and harmonized than practice. Rather than merely determining what good practice is (normative and applied ethics), the project also adopts a metaethical perspective by analysing how “good” practice is conceptualized, negotiated, and institutionalized within education. Using inductive methods to study how the normative foundation of professionalism develops in social work education is understood as a way to build empirically grounded global standards.

Drawing on Silvia Staub-Bernasconi’s theory of the triple mandate (state, citizen, and profession) and the conceptualization of social work as a human rights profession, the project looks at whether her theory is applicable on the ground, or whether it is more a utopian concept. Opposed to attributing prescribed values to the third mandate (the one towards the profession itself), the research adopts a constructivist research philosophy and an inductive approach to explore how normative orientations are constructed in undergraduate programmes.

The dissertation applies a mixed-method approach with three levels. The first level belongs to the undergraduate programmes and consists of an analysis of curricula. The second level includes qualitative interviews with social work educators and program coordinators. The third level focuses on students through focus groups. In the latter, students will engage with ethical dilemmas as part of a Participatory Action Research. My aim is to create an as diverse sample of universities as possible.

The paper calls for a research-informed conceptual framework for global social work education that redefines international standards as empirically grounded and context-sensitive. I am not yet able to present any initial research findings at this point, as the project is still in its early stages.

## Homelessness, squatting and social work: An urban ethnography of informal home-making at the margins of urban life - *Jef Timmermans*

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This ethnographic study examines the complex interplay between homelessness, squatting and social work, exploring squatting as an informal home-making practice and strategy among people experiencing homelessness (PEH). Building on the disciplinary field of social work research, this project addresses three key gaps by shifting (a) from a limiting research focus on housing precarity to home-(un)making, (b) from a criminalizing to a lifeworld-oriented perspective on squatting, and (c) from individualized case-work to a rights-based mandate of social work. Grounded in urban ethnography, the research foregrounds the lived perspectives and experiences of PEH who squat (PEHS) through an immersive, in depth participant observation within their diverse, ambiguous, and contested lifeworlds, in the context of Ghent and Brussels. In doing so, building on socio-spatial theory and rooted in the fundamental right to housing, this PhD-project aims to strengthen a social work perspective on homelessness and squatting, challenging dominant criminalizing discourses and policies.

Research questions:

RQ1: How is squatting among PEHS shaped by the physical-material places in which they live, and how do these spatial contexts allow for an understanding of their home-making and un-making strategies?

RQ2: What are the individual and collective lived experiences of PEHS in relation to how they make and unmake their spatial environment as a home?

RQ3: How do social workers negotiate and challenge power relations, and create socio-political and systemic conditions in realizing the rights of PEHS?

To answer these questions, the study consists of three main research activities: (1) an exploratory context and discourse analysis of national and local policies on housing, homelessness and squatting, based on related documents and interviews with policymakers and experts; (2) the co-creation of narrative and poetic vignettes with participating PEHS to capture their stories, lived experiences, and housing pathways; and (3) focus groups with social workers to further examine their perspectives, practices, and strategies in supporting PEHS.

Building on my experience in my master thesis and currently in the initial phase of this PhD, I aim to reflect with fellow PhD researchers on the conceptual, practical, and ethical dimensions of doing and writing ethnography at the margins of urban life. Through this PhD-Pre Conference, I hope to exchange insights on (re)politicizing and rights-oriented approaches within social work and social work research, striving towards social justice and human dignity.

## Entering residential care: an exploration of social work practice when removing children from their families to place them in residential care in Italy - Sara Teresa Tornielli

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Social workers in Italy may place children at risk of significant harm in residential care through a court order, following an assessment, or through an emergency placement, if the child is exposed to serious and immediate danger. Currently, 48% of children out-of-home are in residential care. Social workers are bound to the Code of Ethics and to National Guidelines, however little is known about social work practice when placing children. This research investigates the practice of social workers when planning and placing a child in residential care through these areas.

The study uses mixed-methods: firstly, a national closed-question survey was disseminated by regional accreditation bodies to social workers. Participants were asked to self-select if they had placed a child in residential care within the last 5 years. The unit of analysis was the social workers' latest placement. Data analysis on 2752 responses was conducted using R, observing contingencies to identify statistically significant relationships. A random selection of social workers who gave their availability for a follow up interview through the survey were then invited to take part in focus groups to discuss results.

Results show that emergency placements accounted for 40% of reported placements and law enforcement was involved in 58% of reported placements, despite guidelines recommending minimal involvement. Families of migrant background were more likely than Italian families to have a child placed via an emergency placement and more likely to have police involvement in the placement. Social workers who felt personally at risk during the removal and placement were more likely to have law enforcement present. 26% of social workers stated that the decision to place the child out-of-home was made by the courts, as their assessment proposed alternative forms of support. 80% of social workers agreed that they gave parents enough information about the placement, however, only 17% agreed that they took the parents' views into account when choosing the residential care provider, showing a lack of shared decision-making. Children participation showed similar trends: they were given a voice in assessments for the court (62% of social workers agree) but their influence was limited (28% of social workers agreed to the child's views influencing the choice of placement). Finally, 28% of social workers believe the placement could have been avoided with more resources to work with the family at an earlier stage.

These results describe hegemonic practice and underline the impact of structural disadvantages. By showing the prevalence of cooperation between social workers and law enforcement, this study invites further critical thought on the issue. This research offers a broad snapshot of practice through an anti-oppressive and critical perspective, and welcomes further research with affected children and parents to co-construct participatory knowledge.

# Ageism against older people in social and healthcare services in Italy - Serena Turco

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## 1. Description of the area of investigation

Ageism, defined by Butler (1969) as “prejudice by one age group toward another”, is examined in the WHO Global Report on Ageism (2021), which distinguishes between explicit and implicit forms and highlights their impact on service quality and equity of access. This study investigates manifestations of ageism towards older people in social and healthcare services in the Italian regions of Tuscany and Lombardy, considering three interconnected levels: structural (institutions, policies and legislation), cultural (values, language and representations), and personal (individual attitudes). The theoretical framework draws on Thompson’s PCS model and on anti-oppressive social work.

## 2. Research methods

To analyse the personal level of ageism, a quantitative survey was conducted among social workers in Lombardy and Tuscany using a questionnaire composed of Likert scales, vignettes and the ROPE test. Likert scales assessed attitudes and opinions towards older people. Vignettes, based on hypothetical scenarios, enabled the indirect exploration of implicit ageist practices. The sample was divided into two groups: one received vignettes referring to adults (up to 65 years), and the other the same scenarios referring to older people (over 65 years). The ROPE test is a validated 20-item scale measuring everyday ageist behaviours. To investigate structural and cultural ageism, a qualitative analysis of regulations governing access to social and healthcare services is currently underway, using a theory-driven thematic grid.

## 3. Preliminary results

The questionnaire was sent to 8,055 professionals and collected 2,044 responses (86.3% from Lombardy; 13.7% from Tuscany). Overall, 68.5% reported not knowing the concept of ageism. Work with older people is perceived as less valued (47.8%), while work with minors is considered more complex (88.7% vs. 49.4%). Supervision is seen as particularly necessary in child services (90.3%), though still important in older people’s services (81.4%). Vignette analysis shows that, under identical conditions, older people are perceived as less autonomous and their refusal of interventions is less often fully respected, suggesting implicit ageism and more paternalistic professional approaches.

## 4. Implications for professional practice

Ageism remains under-investigated and insufficiently recognised among social workers. This study aims to promote awareness and support transformative change towards more inclusive and equitable services for older people.

# The Construction and Interpretation of Emotions in Child Welfare Practice: Some Theoretical Reflections - *Giulia Turrina*

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Social work is, at its core, an interactional and emotional practice (Bauer et al. 2018). The work carried out by social workers is deeply embedded in relational encounters that require continuous emotional engagement, regulation, and negotiation. This form of Emotionsarbeit (Hochschild, 1990) does not occur in a vacuum; rather, it is shaped by broader social norms, institutional expectations, and power structures.

Emotional expression within institutional settings tends to be implicitly regulated rather than formally codified, shaped instead by professional norms, organizational cultures, and routine interactional practices. Specifically, institutional encounters define which emotions are considered legitimate, who is entitled to express them, and under what conditions such expressions are deemed appropriate. Scholars have described the gendered, racial and classed emotive order allowing subjects different spaces for expressing emotions depending on their categorial location (Bonilla-Silva, 2019; Kyed & Özkaya, 2025; Lorde, 1997).

Gendered, racialized, classed, and ableist social structures shape and organize emotional life in ways that contribute to the stigmatization and delegitimization of the emotions expressed by marginalized groups (Monrad, 2025), underscoring the need to reflexively examine how social work practices may regulate, validate, or dismiss the emotional expressions of marginalized service users. In such a context, the expression of anger emerges as a particularly morally charged and unevenly distributed emotional possibility. Certain actors are granted legitimacy to display anger as rational concern, professional frustration, or justified reaction to procedural obstacles. In contrast, individuals occupying structurally subordinate positions, such as clients or service users, frequently see their anger reinterpreted as irrationality, loss of self-control, deviance, or moral failure (Ahmed, 2004; Garrett, 2024).

The presentation explores an alternative approach to anger, understanding it not merely as a disruptive or morally suspect emotion, but as a political one that enables marginalized individuals to challenge and question the dominant social order (Lyman, 2004). As a response to perceived harm, misrecognition, or structural constraint, it can carry strong epistemic potential, offering insight into lived experiences that might otherwise remain obscured.

When taken seriously, such expressions of anger may open a window into how institutional interventions are felt and understood, revealing the affective consequences of welfare governance. Engaging with anger in this way shifts the analytical focus from regulating emotion to recognising its capacity to make inequalities visible and challenge the normative frameworks that judge certain individuals' emotional expressions.

## Self-identification of young carers and ethics of care: ‘insider research’ within a young carers organization in Flanders - *Lena Van Bergen*

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Young carers are children and young people who take care of a person close to them who has a long-term illness or disability, or another need for long-term care or support. The Flemish organization ZoJong! was founded for and by these young people, aiming to provide them with recognition and (peer) support while advocating for their needs. As the only organization of its kind in the region, they played a major role in popularizing the term ‘young carer’ in Flanders. I have been active within ZoJong! myself for several years, first coming to them as a young adult carer myself, then becoming a volunteer and later joining the board.

My data collection mainly consisted of participant observations at activities organized for young (adult) carers at ZoJong!. Multiple methodological and ethical specificities arised during this process. Firstly, since I am used to co-leading activities at the non-profit, this is a space I inhabit naturally – I am present anyway, whether or not I am doing research. Secondly, I have a leading role in the organization, which meant extra care needed to be taken to make sure participant gave their consent freely and willingly. Thirdly, my own experience as a young carer is inseparable from my role as a researcher or as a volunteer at ZoJong!, requiring constant critical reflexivity as a researcher.

One of the goals of my research was to clarify the effects of self-identification of young people with the term ‘young carer’. My results show both individualizing and collectivizing meanings to this self-identification. On the one hand, it helps young carers to meet each other, feel less alone and recognize that their situation has a collective and political dimension. On the other hand, they also identify as a young carer to access flexibility at school or to be able to explain their situation to others.

Questions for the panel: Do you have any recommendations for interesting literature that ties into the themes I discussed? As a more experienced researcher, could you share any insights on dealing with these challenges?

Looking at (self-)identification from a feminist ethics of care lense, theorized by Joan Tronto, allows for a critical examination of these various meanings and strategies. Tronto argues for a generalized care ethic that should be applied to everyone, rather than leaving all the caring tasks to certain individuals – mostly women – because they supposedly possess certain inherent qualities – ‘women’s morality’. Care work should instead be fairly and democratically distributed. Giving recognition to (young) carers shouldering disproportionate amounts of this work by means of a label is not enough. In this presentation, I therefore argue that while the category of ‘young carer’ can be empowering and strategically useful, it also risks stabilizing the very inequalities it seeks to address if it is not accompanied by broader structural change.

## **Resistance of Lecturers Resistance of lecturers against the Neoliberalisation of Social Work Programmes in Flanders and the Netherlands - Bart Van Bouchaute**

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This PhD research project examines how lecturers in social work programmes at Universities of Applied Sciences in Flanders and the Netherlands engage in practices of resistance against processes of neoliberalisation, and how such practices can be strengthened as a contribution to the politicisation of social work. While there is growing recognition that neoliberal transformations in social work practice also reshape social work education, recent scholarship increasingly explores the potential of education to challenge neoliberal rationalities. This study contributes to that emerging literature by foregrounding the central, yet under-theorised, role of lecturers in processes of resistance.

Rather than conceptualising resistance as a straightforward opposition between an external neoliberal logic and unaffected academic actors, this research adopts a dialectical perspective. Resistance is understood as emerging from the ambivalent position of lecturers who are themselves shaped by neoliberal processes of subjectivation. This subjectivation is characterised by tensions between pressures for increased performance and promises of individual autonomy and self-improvement. Lecturers are simultaneously constrained by, supported by, complicit in, coping with, and critical of neoliberal rationalities. From an action research perspective, this ambivalence is not treated as an obstacle leading to absolute paralysis or nihilism, but as a productive starting point for collective reflection and transformative action.

The presentation reports on findings from the second, exploratory phase of the research project, following an international scoping review of the literature. In this phase, lecturers from social work programmes were selected using the reputation method and interviewed about their experiences with neoliberal tendencies within their programmes, their interpretations of these developments, and the positions they and their colleagues adopt in response. These interviews function not only as a means of analysis, but also as a first step in a dialogical process aimed at making implicit practices of resistance visible and discussable.

Building on these findings, the next phases of the action research will focus on the development, experimentation, and critical evaluation of collective practices of resistance together with lecturers. The presentation therefore formulates two guiding questions for the subsequent action cycles. First, a question of agency: how can practices of resistance against neoliberal rationality grow from the ambivalent processes of lecturers' subjectivation? Second, a question of strategy: how can these practices move beyond individual and silent resistance, and developed into more collective, public and disruptive interventions that challenge neoliberal rationality within social work programmes?

## **Either You Get Sick or You Quit? Stressors and Relief Factors of Digitalization in Social Work – A Participatory and Critical Research Perspective - Nadine van der Meulen**

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Digitalization is profoundly reshaping social work practice, professional identities, and organizational structures. While digital tools promise efficiency, accessibility, and innovation, they simultaneously generate new forms of strain, particularly in a field already marked by high emotional demands, staff shortages, and structural underfunding. This PhD project explores how social workers and representatives of service-providing organizations experience digitalization as both a source of stress and a potential relief factor.

The study is situated within a critical and participatory research framework that understands social work research not merely as descriptive, but as an intervention into existing power relations. Drawing on Critical Social Work, Professionalization Theory, and Actor–Network Theory, digital technologies are conceptualized as active actors within socio-technical networks that shape professional agency, ethical decision-making, and inclusion or exclusion processes.

Methodologically, the project follows a mixed-methods design. The qualitative core consists of 50 open, participatory “ero-epic” conversations, inspired by ethnographic traditions that emphasize dialogue, mutual respect, and participants’ experiential knowledge. Interviewees are treated as epistemic agents rather than data sources, and findings are validated through participatory feedback loops. The quantitative component complements this approach through an online survey inspired by stress and recovery models, focusing on perceived digital demands, resources, and coping strategies.

A particular focus lies on marginalized perspectives within the profession, including social workers with disabilities, neurodivergent professionals, and others whose experiences are often absent from dominant research narratives on digital social work. Preliminary findings indicate that digitalization intensifies stress through constant availability, increased documentation demands, and blurred boundaries between work and private life. At the same time, relief factors emerge when digital tools are designed inclusively, support autonomy, enable flexible working arrangements, and reduce administrative burdens.

For the PhD-Pre Conference, this contribution foregrounds methodological, ethical, and reflexive challenges: How can participatory research be realized under conditions of digital acceleration? How can researchers avoid reproducing technocratic notions of “impact” while still making the transformative potential of their work visible? The paper invites discussion on the role of early-career researchers as critical and activist scholars navigating academic, professional, and political expectations.

## Pillars of Trust in the Information Practices of Clients in Field Social Work - Veronika Vantuchová

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Contemporary digital society is characterized by massive flows of information, technological acceleration, and increasing demands on information literacy. This image, however, sharply contrasts with the reality of stigmatized neighborhoods, where structural inequalities, informational marginalization, and poverty accumulate. Limited access to reliable sources, informational uncertainty, and power asymmetries between institutions and residents create an environment in which the ability to acquire, verify, and interpret information becomes a key prerequisite for social inclusion. In this context, epistemic trust emerges as a socially and relationally grounded mechanism that determines whether information enters circulation as relevant and usable. The absence of trust not only deepens informational inequality but also restricts participation in services and decision-making processes.

The aim of this research project is to identify and analyze the pillars of trust and distrust in informational processes within the context of field social work and to understand how these pillars shape clients' information strategies. The main research question is: What factors shape trust and distrust in the information practices of individuals living in stigmatized neighborhoods, and what role does field social work play in this process?

The research is grounded in a constructivist paradigm and employs grounded theory methodology (Charmaz), which enables the generation of concepts directly from empirical data. The empirical part is carried out through 10 walking interviews with clients of field services and 5 semi-structured interviews with social workers. This design captures the relationship between environment, information strategies, and the dynamics of trust. Iterative analysis (open–axial–selective coding) aims to develop a conceptual map of the pillars of trust and distrust and to understand how these pillars shape information flows in stigmatized neighborhoods.

The expected outcome is a theoretical model linking epistemic trust with information practices, offering practically applicable principles for designing interventions: from supporting information literacy to participatory communication protocols and institutional measures that reduce epistemic burden on clients. The contribution of this research lies not only in describing social reality but in opening space for its transformation: cultivating trust as a public good that enables information to circulate predictably, comprehensibly, and fairly. In a broader sense, the study demonstrates that social work and social pedagogy can, through critical and imaginative research, not only respond to inequalities but actively challenge them and co-create conditions for a more just informational environment—thus fulfilling their role as drivers of social change.

# The Lived Experience of Adults with Visible Difference: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis in the Context of Czech Social Work - Tereza Veselá

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Visible difference (VD)—encompassing congenital (e.g., cleft lip/palate, birthmarks) and acquired conditions (e.g., burns, scars)—significantly impacts psychosocial well-being and social inclusion. In the Czech Republic, this remains a neglected area of research, often caught in a "care gap" where medical intervention concludes without addressing long-term social consequences. This study, part of a doctoral dissertation, utilizes the framework of social inclusion versus social exclusion to interpret the subjective realities and identify specific support needs of adults with VD.

The primary research questions are: 1. How do adults with VD experience and interpret their daily lives and social interactions within the Czech environment? 2. What meaning do these individuals attribute to their interactions with the care system, and what support strategies do they perceive as vital for their social inclusion?

**Methodological Framework:** The research follows a qualitative strategy using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). The methodological framework is firmly anchored in the theories of social inclusion and social exclusion, perceiving visible difference as a complex, multidimensional phenomenon rather than a mere medical diagnosis. This approach is chosen for its ability to provide a detailed examination of personal lived experience and how individuals make sense of these experiences within their social environment.

**Sample:** A purposeful sample of adults with VD, recruited through patient organizations.

**Data Collection:** Data is gathered through in-depth, semi-structured interviews.

**Researcher Positionality:** A critical component is the researcher's reflexivity; the investigator shares the lived experience of VD, allowing for a deep, "insider" empathetic understanding.

**Ethics:** The study utilizes a trauma-informed approach and principles of Non-violent Communication (NVC) to ensure participant safety and prevent re-traumatization.

**Expected Results:** The research aims to identify factors of social exclusion and specific support needs. Outcomes include mapping coping strategies and systemic barriers within Czech services. The final output will provide recommendations to increase professional sensitivity and promote inclusive social work practices.

**Discussion:** The study shifts from a medical model to a focus on the phenomenological essence of living with VD and "face quality". It addresses the gap between individual lived experience and professional education in social work.

**Questions:** 1. How can I effectively manage the process of "bracketing" my own lived experience within the IPA framework to prevent my personal perspectives from unintentionally overshadowing the participants' unique interpretations? 2. Given that visible difference is currently a marginalized topic in the Czech social work curriculum, what strategies could be most effective for translating idiographic qualitative findings into tools that increase professional awareness and sensitivity?

## Practitioner turned researcher: Reflecting the transition of roles from Social Worker to Social Work researcher - Frederike Weß

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For many decades, the German higher education system has distinguished between theory-focused universities and practice-oriented universities of applied sciences within the tertiary education sector. The majority of social workers are now trained at universities of applied sciences (cf. Klevermann et al. 2023: 309).

In recent decades, these institutions have significantly expanded their research capabilities, with the result that some universities of applied sciences have introduced the right to award doctorates in specific disciplines, including social work. A pioneer in granting doctoral rights for Social Work is the Social Work Doctoral Centre in Hesse. A study on the socio-demographic characteristics of doctoral candidates in Social Work at the Social Work Doctoral Centre in Hesse showed that they differ significantly from other doctoral candidates. Compared to other disciplines they are often older when beginning their doctoral studies, are less likely to have followed traditional educational pathways, and usually work in the field before or alongside their doctoral studies (cf. HAW WINS 2025).

The literature on doctoral studies in social work primarily describes the organizational challenges arising from less favourable conditions and constant pressure to prove their legitimacy (cf. Sauer et al. 2019: 463–466; Klevermann et al. 2023: 308–311).

In my contribution, however, I wish to discuss the differences arising from the fact that those pursuing a PhD at a University of Applied Sciences have not followed a traditional academic career path. In particular, I will focus on the fact that some researchers have years of professional experience in the field of social work.

Schröer-Werner emphasises that this leads, amongst other things, to doctoral social workers developing their research topics from questions that arise while working in the field – which have hitherto been under-researched – and transport this insight into academia (cf. Krüger et al. 2025: 8). Lotty adds that research conducted by practitioners holds the potential to be better applicable into practice due to better understanding of contextual issues (cf. Lotty 2021: 852).

Whilst this holds great potential for uncovering academic blind spots, I would like to focus on the transition of roles that social workers undergo in this process.

Having worked with migrants as a social worker for nine years, I experienced this shift dramatically, as I was suddenly no longer in the role of a supporter but was dependent on the research participants' willingness to tell me their stories. In my contribution, I would like to reflect on the extent to which my practical experience has, at times, complicated my research, but has certainly also enriched it.

## Between a rock and a hard place: Feelings, Conflicts, and the contradictions of Professional Social Work - Annika Wisser

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My dissertation project examines the conditions and processes under which social workers politicize themselves in the field of working with refugees, as well as the associated contradictions and conflicts in social work practice. This is achieved through the adoption of a Reflexive Grounded Theory approach and the use of narrative interviews to analyse biographical and social processes. The aim is to understand contradictions and tensions that emerge in the pursuit of anti-racist social work practice.

The research desideratum is to analyze and connect theory of white socialization and the production of professionalism, as well as the merging of gender studies and anti-racist theories. The research aims to develop an object-based theory that reflects the complex power and domination relations in social work and their impact on the professionalization of social workers working with refugees.

While reflexively analysing the analytical knowledge production/construction processes at a collaborative research interpretation meeting, I made use of Ahmed's (2004) affect-theory to identify what I have dubbed "emotional outbursts", leading me to speculate how distinction processes shape the knowledge production of researchers.

With that perspective in mind and expanding this with the conflict-analytical perspective from Eichinger und Schäuble (2022, 20024) I will adopt the same approach with the interview material itself (rather than knowledge production/construction process), to explore the perspectives of the interviewed social workers with a focus on how they construct and perceive powerholding spaces.

I have found that the social workers' narratives overwhelmingly focus on stories of conflict. It is fascinating to see where the social workers position themselves in these stories. I will examine the role of social workers in how they navigate between agency and power on one hand and inaction and powerlessness on the other within a restrictive system, and thus examine the following questions: How do social workers deal with ambiguity and ambivalence between their (political) stance and what they say and do? How can social workers learn to tolerate these ambivalences and contradictions within their social work practice in an already complex and multifaceted field of work?

To end, I will also examine the effect of this on those social workers work with—so called, service users.

## **Barriers to Accessible Communication for Hard-of-Hearing People in Romanian Health and Social Care Services - Monica Florina Zdrite**

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The decline in hearing acuity is one of the most common sensory disabilities worldwide, yet institutional accessibility for hard-of-hearing (HoH) people remains uneven, particularly in health and social care. In Romania, there is limited research on how public institutions ensure accessible communication for HoH service users. This paper presents an exploratory qualitative study examining how accessible communication is produced or obstructed within public hospitals (with a focus on Emergency Departments) and public social work services. Grounded in critical disability studies and rights-based practice, the study investigates how accessibility is enacted, negotiated, and constrained, and how organisational arrangements shape institutional responses to HoH service users. It asks which organisational conditions enable or hinder institutional communication accessibility, and what forms of reasonable accommodation professionals develop when formal arrangements are absent or inconsistent. Attention is directed to organisational features such as protocols, resourcing, time pressures, material and digital communication supports, and staff preparation/training. Social workers are treated as key informants because they routinely operate at the interface between service users, clinical teams, and administrative procedures, and are often responsible for navigating access barriers and coordinating support across settings. Data will be generated through approximately 30 semi-structured interviews with social workers employed in hospitals ( $n \approx 15$ ) and in municipal or county social work services ( $n \approx 15$ ), recruited through purposive, criterion-based sampling. Interviews explore professionals' experiences with HoH service users, perceived barriers and facilitators, adaptive strategies, and the role of organisational culture and internal policies in shaping inclusion. Interviews will be analysed using reflexive thematic analysis. A short participatory validation workshop with HoH advocates will be used to refine practice-oriented recommendations. Findings will inform recommendations at three levels: micro (interactional practices), meso (organisational routines and internal policies), and macro (policy and regulatory implications). The study will produce (1) a mapping of the informal and formal accommodation strategies used by professionals in everyday encounters with HoH service users (micro), (2) a practice-grounded typology of organisational barriers and facilitators shaping communication accessibility across emergency and social service pathways (meso), and (3) a set of co-validated recommendations translating these findings into organisational and policy priorities (macro). By reframing communication inaccessibility as an institutional issue involving communication accessibility and reasonable accommodations rather than an individual deficit, the study offers a rights-oriented, practice-oriented framework to strengthen accessibility for HoH service users.

## **Bridging the gap between social pedagogy, social work and L2 acquisition: the case of Ukrainian refugees' integration in Finland - Egor Zharovskiy**

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Finland is one of European countries which accommodated thousands of Ukrainian refugees fled from the war between Russia and Ukraine started in February 2022 (Koptsyukh & Svyrenenko, 2025). Regardless of the reason for leaving a home country and social context behind this decision, refugees represent a vulnerable group of people who often exposed to multiple pressure factors in the host country (Phaller-Rott et.al., 2019). When it comes to Ukrainian refugees residing in Finland under the temporary protection status, they are expected to fulfill an integration requirement which implies search for a job, attending profession-oriented courses and improving Finnish or Swedish language skills (Alho et al., 2023).

The effectiveness of this task directly depends on how Finnish social workers navigate Ukrainians throughout the integration process and what kind of practices and guiding principles support the focus on refugees' well-being and social inclusion. On a conceptual level, these practicalities refer to the issue of interconnection between the social care institutions in Finland and methods of social pedagogy enabling Ukrainian refugees to integrate better and improve their Finnish or Swedish language skills as an inalienable part of their inclusion. In light of this, my study addresses the following research question: How do Ukrainian refugees residing in Finland engage with social care institutions and improve their Finnish language skills as the part of integration?

Drawing on in-depth interviews with Ukrainians (n = 38) residing in Finland on the grounds of temporary protection, I will outline in my presentation the results of thematic analysis on refugees' attitudes towards social care system in Finland and Finnish language requirements, integration-related challenges associated with their daily routine after getting a residence permit and insights on the role of social workers in refugees' work-life prospects in Finland. In particular, I identified that Ukrainian refugees generally demonstrate resilience and persistence in terms of fulfillment integration requirements and learning Finnish language without the resort to the guiding help of social workers and social care institutions considering them as inefficient. As a result, the role of social workers in terms of the refugees' L2 acquisition and integration becomes less substantial, which may lead to expansion of gaps between the primary role of social work in facilitating Ukrainian immigrants' integration and their current basic needs in terms of language learning essential for social inclusion. I suggest that such gaps have long-term negative implications for the role of social workers in Finnish welfare state and blur the practices and principles of social pedagogy towards not only Ukrainian refugees but also any other group of Finnish residents.

