



PROGRAM FOR THE DAY

ESWRA Social work practice research SIG Milan
 Wednesday 12th of April, 09.30 – 15.30

Co- creation *within* social work practice research – Coping the flux of practice

The general aim of the **SIG Social Work Practice Research** is to strengthen the knowledge–base for social work practice and research throughout Europe, and to respond to the contemporary emphasis on evidence-based practice with collaborative, research-led and innovative means. In this year’s (2023) SIG - conference we would like to take a close look at the idea and practice of **Co-creation within social work practice research**.

The **SIG of Social Work Practice Research** is inspired by the [Salisbury statement](#) of Practice Research, revisited and developed further in [Helsinki 2012](#) , [New York 2014](#), [Hong Kong 2017](#), and [Melbourne statement 2022](#).

The statement builds upon the idea that practitioners and researchers are united by the desire to improve social work practice, meeting the need to develop relevant knowledge for better practice in the ever changing, complex and uncertain situations, what we have called the flux of practice.

This opens up questions for advancing social work practice research: How do we design processes allowing everyone (researchers, practitioners, service users, students and other stakeholders) to fully participate in the co-creation of knowledge? What are the possibilities and challenges related to democratization of research methods for co-creation? How can we design and facilitate research processes to ensure that the outcomes are relevant to and useful for practice, while at the same time expanding and promoting research/theoretical knowledge? How does co-creation in social work challenge “traditional” ideas of valid knowledge? How can we think about and respond to challenges related to language and power? How can we engage students in social work practice research? And what are the skills needed in social work education to meet the new demands for co-creating social work practice knowledge?

The SIG-conference will bring you abundant of opportunities to explore the theme of the conference together. The program contains plenary speeches, where we will elaborate over the presentations in light of the statements on Social work practice research. We will also have a group-based sharing session on diverse practice experiences in each other’s social and cultural contexts.

Organizing committee

- Simone Boogaarts-de Bruin. Dep. of Master Social Work, Han University of Appl. Sciences (NL)
- Camilla Landi Department of Sociology at the Catholic University of Milan (Italy)
- Sui Ting Kong, Dep. of Sociology, Durham University (UK)
- Elke Plovie University of Applied Sciences UC Leuven-Limburg (Belgium)
- Sara Serbati, Dep. of Philosophy, Sociology, Pedagogy, Appl Psychology, University Padova (Italy)
- Martine Ganzevles – HU University of Applied Sciences Utrecht (the Netherlands)
- Catrine Torbjørnsen Halås - Centre for Practical Knowledge, Nord University (Norway)



PROGRAM FOR THE DAY

- 0930 - 0955** **Welcome and presentation of participants and program**
By Martine Ganzevles, Institute of Social Work, University of applied sciences Utrecht
- 0955 - 1015** **Exploring Social work practice research statements. How does it challenge social work practice research today?**
Catrine Torbjørnsen Halås. Nord University, Norway.
- Presentation of questions for analyzing presentations**
Sara Serbati, University of Padova , Italy, and Catrine Torbjørnsen Halås, Nord University.
- 1015 – 1050** **Let’s reflect together: “the power” of the research function within social work practice with vulnerable families to bridge the gap between research-practice**
Sara Serbati and Daniela Moreno. Department of Philosophy, Sociology, Pedagogy and Applied Science, University of Padova, Italy.
Discussion
- 1050 - 1105** Break
- 1105 - 1140** **Co-designing an action framework on politicization of social work**
Elke Plovie, University of Applied Sciences UC Leuven-Limburg (Belgium)
Discussion
- 1140 - 1200** **Crucial change in child and youth welfare**
Masterstudents Corina Lustenberger and Simon Gutknecht. University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland (School of Social Work)
Diskussion
- 1200 - 1300** Lunch
- 1300 - 1335** **Examining the utility of participatory approach for democratising social work practice research** (Online)
Sui-Ting Kong Durham University, Department of Sociology, United Kingdom
Discussion
- 1335 - 1410** **Doing a multicase study on emergent systemic everyday practice in child welfare**
Ilse Julkunen, with co-researchers Ida Nikula and Tobias Pötsch) University of Helsinki.
Discussion
- 1410 – 1420** **Break**
- 1420 - 1510** **Group session – Exploring participants experiences in light of the idea of co-creation within social work practice research**
- 1510 – 1530** Plenary – summing up.

Each plenary presentation is given 20 minute presentation and then 15 minute discussion

ABSTRACTS

Let's reflect together: "the power" of the research function within social work practice with vulnerable families to bridge the gap between research-practice

SERBATI SARA, MORENO DANIELA

Department of Philosophy, Sociology, Pedagogy and Applied Science, University of Padova, Italy

The presentation will focus on the participatory perspective of the Participative and Transformative Evaluation, a research-practice methodology used in social work with vulnerable families during the 10-year journey of the P.I.P.P.I. (Programme of Intervention for Prevention of Institutionalization), an innovative intervention strategy implemented in Italy to reduce child neglect and prevent the placement out-of-home of children 0-14 y.o. The programme is inspired by the resilience of Pippi Longstocking, a metaphor of the children's strength and resilience in facing challenges and difficulties. P.I.P.P.I. results from a longstanding collaboration between the Laboratory of Research and Intervention on Family Education of the University of Padova and the Italian Ministry of Welfare.

Several are the 'implementation strategies' adopted to bridge the gap between the programme innovations, deriving from research evidence, and the adoption of these effective interventions into practice, referring to the political level, such as organizational and the practice level. They will be presented during the main conference.

At the SIGconference on practice-research in social work we will focus on the practice level, exploring how the Participatory and Transformative Evaluation support participation of families, valorising the research function inside the practice.

The presentation will refer to case studies about interventions realised by following the P.I.P.P.I.s methodological directions for the work with vulnerable families with children aged 0 to 3 years. From the standpoint of the Critical Best Practices (Ferguson, 2012), the cases help to illustrate three different components of Participative and Transformative Evaluation: reflective and critical thinking, decision-making and opportunities for parents' capabilities to flourish. The three dimensions of the Participative and Transformative Evaluation are leading to appraise the research function of the evaluation processes (Dewey, 1933; Shaw 2012) in social work in the stance of the pedagogical tradition of human educability. They will be discussed looking for opportunities and challenges for their realisation.

Co-designing an action framework on politicization of social work

Elke Plovie, Coordinator Center for Burgerschap en Participatie, Docent. UC Leuven-Limburg

Social workers have a political mission. In international definitions we find that social work realizes changes embedded in a pursuit of social justice, equality, solidarity and human rights. Politicization is one of the ways social workers can shape those changes.

Politicization refers to practices that contribute to the public disagreement about how we want and can live together. With 'the public' we refer to the openness of the difference of opinion. This difference of opinion is inextricably linked to the underlying balance of power. Politicization practices question and disrupt the existing order, making people and issues visible and audible (again).

Social workers are often active in practices in which the shortcomings and injustices in society become painfully clear, or in practices where the ambition to change that society takes shape in concrete alternatives. The special position of social work, close to the social environment, is a strong stimulus for politicization processes by workers and/or participants.

Today, politicization had been put back in the spotlights in Flemish social work and it has been adopted as one of the key features of 'strong social work' in Belgium Flanders. In order to support social workers in these politicization processes, an action framework was elaborated by a development group with Flemish practitioners, academics and social work lecturers. A basic action framework was launched at the Flemish social work conference.

From all Flemish schools for social work, researchers engaged in social work practice research came together to create a common research agenda for politicization. The goal is to create knowledge on politicization that helps us to finetune the action framework. This finetuning process is a co-creative endeavor with both practitioners and researchers identifying and discussing blind spots and fields of tension in the framework.

I will present the process of this co-creative endeavor and how this combined effort has the potential to strengthen a social justice approach of social work.

Crucial change in child and youth welfare

Corina Lustenberger, and Simon Gutknecht, FHNW University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland, School of Social Work

Research on working conditions and challenges inherent in child and youth welfare has identified a variety of stressors social workers experience such as confrontations, shift-work, bureaucracy, time pressure, lack of staff, mental burden, unrealistic expectations, lack of appreciation... Low wages, not enough training to prepare for practice and resources, which are cut by the demands, further complicate the situation (e.g. energy-giving activities such as hobbies, social contacts).

The problem has been recognised and suggestions are being made from different sides (politics, professional association etc.) on how working conditions could be improved. However, the perspective of the social worker themselves has not been considered or is even still not known. Our planned study aims to capture social workers' experience by exploring what is crucial for them in the field of child and youth welfare in Switzerland.

What are pivotal conditions and dynamics social workers in child and youth welfare identify as crucial for a change?

The following points were demanded by professionals in Germany: more employees, more appreciation, better wages, supervision, improved infrastructure, more time for individual client care, less bureaucracy... They do not perceive organisations as a support at all and employee retention do not seem to have found an established place in social work yet.

The authors are planning focus group discussion with social workers to find answers on their question and wonder how they can find out about the most important topics who are crucial to them while working in this field. Based on that they are thinking about ways to let the voices of social workers change things which need to be changed on a sophisticated professional ethical reflexion.

Examining the utility of participatory approach for democratising social work practice research

Sui-Ting Kong Durham University, Department of Sociology, UK

The synergy between social work practice research, given its quintessentially collaborative nature, and participatory action research (PAR) has been explored by many researchers. Participatory action research (PAR) or sometimes called participatory research (PR) is a research approach that emphasises working 'with' instead of 'on' people. According to the UK Participatory Research Network (UKPRN), the aim of PAR/PR 'is to maximize the participation of those whose life or work is the subject of the research' (visited on 10 November 2022). Those traditionally seen as the receivers and users of knowledge are involved in the design, implementation and dissemination of research, making decisions on the knowledge production process to ensure usefulness, relevance and workability of the produced knowledge (Kong, 2016).

This presentation will revisit some participatory research traditions and draw the parallels with some key ideas in social work practice research. Some innovative participatory methods will be also presented here to further explore how democratising social work practice research might enrich our knowledge production through the lens of extended epistemology.

Doing a multicase study on emergent systemic everyday practice in child welfare

Ilse Julkunen (with co-researchers Ida Nikula and Tobias Pötsch), University of Helsinki.
ilse.julkunen@helsinki.fi

Background: A systemic approach within child welfare is being implemented in social work in Finland. There is some knowledge on the implementation process, but not knowledge on broader outcomes for end-users and how the professional knowledge expertise is being developed in a systemic perspective. The overall aim of this two-year study is to gain knowledge about which everyday effects in a systemic context are created in three newly formed multilingual wellbeing service county areas.

Methods: This paper presents the methodological design in aiming for knowledge of the systemic real effectiveness practice of social work. The study is planned collaboratively with the practitioners, user organisation of after care and experts within the field. It is based on the knowledge development within three multilingual areas which also form the knowledge interest of the study. What is unique in this study is the multicase design which aims at developing learning processes between the different areas, a methodological approach that is seldom used in social work research. Another point, is that this study will be performed during a historical situation in Finland when a large wellbeing services county reform is implemented, which has a huge impact on doing research in practice.

Conclusions and implications: We believe that creating a relational approach to studying everyday effects serves to close the gap between research and practice. In this paper we will reflect on the practice based research process and what we have learned so far.