

Populist politics, migration and reshaping of the Finnish welfare state

For decades, immigrants' social rights and access to welfare have been critical issues within European discourse; however, with the latest wave of 'migration crisis' European society and polity seems to have been shaken. At the centre of this sense of insecurity and risk has been the concept and provision of the 'welfare state'. Historically, social policies and welfare provisioning have had a crucial role in promoting social inclusion while preventing the materialization of practices of social and political divisions in society. Altering this trend is the populism foreground of the politics of insecurity about migrants by making citizens anxious as to their risk to the 'welfare state'. The utopia of the welfare state and dystopian sense around the future of European welfare after an extraordinary influx of migrants has shaped politics, which has taken a decidedly populist turn in Finland and other European countries. Migrants appear to unsettle the politics and policies of the welfare state. To understand fully the implications of the emergence of the migrant as the unsettling element of our time, we shall engage with research that explores the limits of 'welfare state'. The differentiation of social rights between immigrants and the native population will be explored by examining social policy, work practice and educational research, and implications for services and interventions. Even within emigrant population, there is differentiation between labour migrants and asylum seekers. The workshop will also interrogate the dominant view that asylum seekers are a burden on the economy and welfare state and their skill set and capabilities are undervalued vis-à-vis needs and demands of the society. Not only are asylum seekers perceived as an unproductive population and a burden on economy, but they are often considered a threat to safety, security and culture. The stereotypical construction of an image of the migrants perpetuates a sense of insecurity and apprehension. Responding to populist politics, the welfare state limits its engagement with asylum seekers merely to aid and asylum and shirks away from allowing forced migrants to make decisions around their life and situations and need for services. What can Finnish social work research share as to the complex relationship between migration and welfare states? (Source: Jha, Ottósdóttir & Anand, 2019). Within the framework of the theme, the workshop will invite social worker researchers (practice researchers, students and academics) as well as collaborating social scientist to present papers on the following interdisciplinary themes:

- Populism, security and migration
- Integration and inclusion
- Health, wellbeing and social quality
- Welfare state, utopia or dystopia?
- Participatory research with migrants
- Coproduction and co-design, integration services
- Diversity and critical intercultural competence

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