

## **Chair Group Citizenship And Humanization of the Public Sector - Place for 5 PhD candidates**

### **Chair group**

[Citizenship And Humanization of the Public Sector](#)

You can also have a look on [the Dutch website](#).

### **Supervisor**

[Prof. dr. Thomas Kampen](#)

### **Short introduction into the research field**

The research of the chair group Citizenship and humanization of the public sector focuses on how to promote full citizenship and humane public services: how can we organize professional work in public services in such a way that it does justice to people, offer recognition and dignity and treat them fairly? This is complicated because there are often conflicting values, for example equal treatment and tailor-made service delivery, protection and freedom, development, and adaptation. As a result, professionals (from ideal typical professionals like doctors to civil servants and everything in between) are confronted with conflicting assignments and moral dilemmas: how can you deliver tailor-made solutions while also treating everyone equally? Or offer more personal attention but also work more efficiently? Moreover, there is inevitably permanent scarcity in the public sector. There are always limited resources but virtually unlimited needs and wants. The result is that service is always imperfect and flawed.

Due to these dilemmas and the permanent lack of time and resources, public professionals quickly fall short and experience moral distress and moral dilemmas. To cope with these, they sometimes tend towards one-sided care, indifference, or strictness. This can be prevented if they regularly talk to each other about their work, and correct each other's one-sidedness. To achieve this, everyday democracy is necessary: there must be power and counter-power. Citizens must be able to criticize professionals freely, and professionals must also be able to criticize each other, and their managers, without fear of negative consequences.

We mainly focus our research on interactions in context: interactions between citizens themselves, and between citizens and professionals working in public organizations, and the influence of public organizations and social developments. We try to understand issues from different, possibly conflicting perspectives between, for example, citizens and professionals.

Our research combines conceptual and theoretical research into ideals of humane service and good citizenship with empirical research into how ideals work in practice, and historical research into how ideals and practices evolve and change and how they (sometimes over time) impact people's lives. Because of this interplay between empirical and normative questions, our research is related to empirical ethics. In empirical ethics, answers to normative questions are sought in an interdisciplinary way through empirical research.

We often pay attention to moral emotions such as guilt, shame, pride and indignation. Moral emotions can hinder but also promote the pursuit of full citizenship in a humane society. We also pay attention to diversity and solidarity. Global migration is increasing diversity in backgrounds, philosophies of life and values. How do public organizations and their professionals do justice to diversity between citizens, and how do they try to promote mutual solidarity? How do public service providers address injustices, the responsibilities borne by public institutions in rectifying injustices, and the methods employed to engage professionals in these processes?

Because meaning-making (in interactions and through moral emotions) plays a crucial role, our empirical research is mostly qualitative. Our research is usually carried out transdisciplinary, in collaboration with stakeholders, such as (organizations of) citizens/clients, professionals, or policymakers. We think it is important that our research is also read and seen by the people we write about. Therefore, in addition to academic articles in scientific journals, we also write articles and opinion pieces for a broader public, create an exhibition, a cartoon, a podcast, or a glossy magazine based on research. We focus our research on citizenship and the humanization of the public sector in six areas:

- 1) professional (moral) dilemmas and moral distress,
- 2) social work,
- 3) care practices for vulnerable groups,
- 4) social security and unemployment,
- 5) local and everyday democracy and
- 6) historical memory and transformative justice.

<b>Chair</b>	<a href="#">Citizenship And Humanization of the Public Sector</a>
<b>Supervisors</b>	Prof. dr. Thomas Kampen, dr. Femmianne Bredewold, prof. dr. Margo Trappenburg, Prof. dr. Evelien Tonkens

**Subfield of Research: a) Professional (moral) dilemmas and moral distress**

We welcome projects on professional (moral) dilemmas in public services and moral distress, where feasible, in cooperation with the chair group on Humanist chaplaincy. How do professionals deal with pressures and moral dilemmas in the context of, for instance, austerity, marketization or bureaucratization? How do professionals struggle with reconciling the great diversity among citizens with the pursuit of equal treatment? How do they struggle to reconcile ideals of equality and democracy with organizational hierarchies?

**Examples of research questions**

How do public professionals experience moral dilemmas and moral distress?

How do public professionals deal with tensions between contradicting ideals?

**Place for:**

1 external PhD candidate

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**Chair**

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**Supervisors**

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**Subfield of Research: b) Social work**

We welcome qualitative research projects related to foundations and practices of social work: for example research on moral and professional dilemmas in social work, on interactions between social workers and clients, or on changes in collaboration between professionals, volunteers and other informal carers, ideals of professionalism and citizenship/clients-identities in the contexts of welfare state reform and societal changes, especially growing social inequality and polarization. We also supervise qualitative studies on the effects of social work interventions in the Netherlands. Think of a comparison between social policies in different

municipalities, the impact of interventions on different client groups (mental health patients, people with intellectual disabilities, multi problem families). Or a comparison between social work interventions in different countries. Or a comparison between help provided by paid social workers versus help by volunteers, versus help by family and friends. We would also welcome research about topics regarding the profession e.g.: does it make a difference if social workers are employed as civil servants rather than professionals? How does the call for a more political approach to social work impact their practice and professional status?

<b>Examples of research questions</b>	<p>Examples of research questions</p> <p>How do social workers and volunteers cooperate in supporting the societal integration of refugees?</p> <p>How do social workers cope with conflicting ideals of professionalism?</p>
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#### **Subfield of Research: c) Social inclusion and social work practices**

- In many countries in north-western Europe, the welfare state is changing, and governments expect a great deal of informal care. In the Netherlands, citizens are also increasingly expected to rely on informal instead of professional care. We welcome projects on how informal care is organized for and around various 'vulnerable' groups in our society, e.g. persons with intellectual disability, persons with a psychiatric background, elderly with dementia and or persons with a mental disability who also suffer from addiction. We encourage PhD students who want to engage with the question to what extent care dependent people want to rely on social network

members like neighbours, family members and or acquaintances and what reasons they raise for accepting or refusing informal care, to submit a proposal. Proposals may focus on informal care within ‘family systems’ e.g. how care is distributed and shared within families, but we are also interested in care in other settings e.g. how care is organized between neighbours and in neighbourhoods. Proposals that focus on projects and initiatives which encourage mixed forms of care – where formal and informal carers collaborate - are also welcomed, like for example the newly developed ‘Familyhouses’ (Gezinshuizen) where younger persons with multiple problems are receiving professional care, but which are set up and designed in such a way that neighbours are encouraged to support these ‘families’. We also would like to supervise qualitative studies which compare informal care policies in different countries and how these policies affect the care for and social inclusion of more ‘vulnerable’ groups in society. How do people with a migration background experience the accessibility of professional help and care?

<b>Examples of research questions</b>	<p>Examples of research questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How can social inclusion policies encourage social inclusion of ‘vulnerable’ groups in society?</li> <li>- What can be expected from social work professionals in supporting informal care practices.</li> </ul> <p>How can formal and informal carers collaborate in achieving social inclusion of vulnerable groups?</p>
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<b>Subfield of Research: d) Lived experiences of social assistance, unemployment and reintegration</b>	

Paid work is an important pillar of full citizenship for many, and living on social assistance or working in sheltered employment is supposed to be temporary. However, finding and keeping a job is far from self-evident. We welcome qualitative research projects on how people experience unemployment, sheltered work and re-integration in the context of welfare state reform, and under what conditions they experience recognition. What does full citizenship mean for people with few opportunities to find and keep decent work, such as people with disabilities, former refugees or people on social assistance benefits? What does (un)paid work mean for people and how can it contribute to full citizenship? What does humane service mean to them and how can it be promoted? What do people who are unemployed and people who reintegrate into the labor market experience as just, and under what conditions do they experience recognition?

<b>Examples of research questions</b>	See above
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<b>Subfield of Research: e) Everyday democracy in public institutions and democratic professionalism</b>	

We welcome projects that focus on everyday democracy in public organizations, and on efforts towards democratic professionalism. How do citizens and professionals cope with the tensions between equality and hierarchy? How can citizens raise their voice and influence everyday practices in the public sector, as well as policy? Which (new) forms of (local) participation do citizens experience as useful? How can professionals, like social workers, contribute to more confidence in democracy? How can unintentional exclusion in democratic and professional practices be prevented and broken, so that more diversity is created within groups of active citizens? How can

social workers and citizens actively confront major social challenges such as the energy transition? What can democratic professionalism entail here?

**Examples of research questions**

See above

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