

ENGLISH SUMMARIES

Nina Kramp: Obligated to Community: Multiple Versions of Institutional Co-Existence in Danish Kindergarten and School

By analyzing ethnographic narratives from everyday life in a kindergarten unit and two preschool classes in a Danish public school, this article explores how community takes shape in children's early institutional years. While pedagogues and educators in Danish institutions for children commonly use 'community' as a uniform term for children's institutional co-existence, the analyses reveal that community in practice is enacted as radically different forms of institutional co-existence that obligate children in markedly different and occasionally conflicting ways. Leveraging Annemarie Mol's (2013) methodological tool 'ontonorms', the article identifies multiple versions of community and shows how pedagogical practices – navigating the tension between individual and collective and variously emphasizing either similarity or difference among children – not only organize particular ways of being together but also produce normative ideas about what children ought to be for one another. The article thus contributes to a more nuanced understanding of community in practice in early childhood institutions.

Keywords: community, practice, ECEC institutions, school, ontonorms, obligation

Nana Vaaben: Obligations, Reproductive Work and Broken Social Contracts in the Danish Welfare State

The article takes its point of departure in the public debate about school refusal, youth distress, and the broader care crisis in Denmark. It examines how obligations in this context are made invisible and displaced between different actors, all of whom believe that someone else has the responsibility to act. Drawing on e.g. Marcel Mauss' and David Graebers' theories on social contracts, and Nancy Frasers' feminist critique of capitalism, the analysis shows how both teachers and parents are caught between different types of obligations, and how they feel let down by "society", which has failed to live up to a social contract. Empirically the article draws on a number of different research projects on schools, teachers and student teachers from the last 13 years, and on the documentary *The School's Lost Children* and correspondence with the people behind it.

Keywords: obligations, school, reproductive labor, social contracts, capitalism

Marie Leth Meilvang og Stella Mia Sieling-Monas: Digital Obligations: Navigating Vulnerability and Compliance in the Digital Welfare State

This article examines how the digitalization of the Danish welfare state produces new forms of obligation, responsibility, and dependency between citizens and public support systems. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork among vulnerable citizens and their digital encounters with public services, the article analyses how access to welfare increasingly depends on digital competencies, technological infrastructures, and social relations. Digitalization is approached not merely as an administrative tool, but as an organizing principle that reshapes relationships between the state, citizens, and civil society. The article introduces the concept of *digital obligations* to capture how citizens are expected to navigate digital systems to claim rights and benefits. At the same time, the analysis demonstrates how these obligations are frequently displaced onto volunteer organizations. The article shows that voluntary organizations face a dilemma when mediating citizens' digital obligations to the state because they have no formal or legal obligation to help citizens, yet they do the work because they feel socially and morally obligated to do so. By combining anthropological perspectives on welfare, obligation, and state-citizen relations, the article contributes to the ongoing debates on digital inclusion and welfare state transformation. It shows that digitalization does not simply create access or exclusion but also establishes new social and moral infrastructures through which public services, responsibility, and citizenship are reconfigured.

Keywords: welfare, digitalization, inclusion, obligation, vulnerability

Julie Laursen: Punishment as a Contract

Preventive detention in Denmark is imposed on the basis of serious violent offences, individual characteristics, and assessments of the risk of reoffending. As an indeterminate sanction, it is widely regarded as particularly burdensome – at times even described as a form of "perpetual custody". Yet the narratives of those serving preventive detention reveal a more complex relationship with the state. For many, preventive detention is not understood solely as punishment but also as a form of "contractual" arrangement with the state. This contractual framing, however, generates a distinctive form of moral ambiguity. Detainees frequently articulate that their debt to their victims is, by definition, unredeemable, regardless of the length of their confinement. At the same time, many expressed that they had, at some point, repaid their debt to the state and that they have fulfilled the obligations embedded in the sanction. It is within this tension between irreparable harm, institutional expectations, and perceived reciprocity

that their experiences take shape. Drawing on 35 interviews with individuals serving preventive detention in Danish prisons, the article examines how broader penal policy objectives intersect with the lived realities of everyday life behind bars. In this context, punishment emerges not merely as a legal instrument but as a relational configuration between the state and the punished subject: one marked by negotiation, obligation, and competing moral claims. The article argues that punishment can be conceptualized as a form of obligation between the penal state and the individual, and it considers the penal-political, ethical, and anthropological implications of adopting such a perspective.

Keywords: indeterminate sentences, punishment, obligations, guilt, debt, prisons

