**Abstract ESWRA 2017. Oral presentation, workshop or symposium.**

**Subtheme: Research on different forms of partnerships/cooperation – including power and conflicts in social work.**

**Empowerment or conduct of conduct? A research cooperation within the field of employment in a certain council in Denmark.**

Still, new public management dominates social work within the field of employment, and challenges are here sought to be overcome through standards, manuals, detailed legislation and control of social work. Focus is on punctuality, administrative effectiveness, and the activity-paradigm, and this has decoupled parts of the profile in social work in connection with citizens cooperation, the development of social analyses and the types of interventions created for specific types of problems in social work.

On the other hand advanced welfare is based on and is demanding an increased involvement of the citizens. This involvement has to be understood in two different directions:

* 1. Citizen involvement as closely connected to democratic values and citizenship – active participation solving the problems is a key to success.
* 2. Citizen involvement as a method to cut back social work activities and to inform self governance in a neoliberal frame. The citizens are responsible of dealing with their own problems.

Both understandings are present in social work practice today and are reflecting the cross pressure in the field where practice has to meet the demand of efficiency, cut backs and standardization and at the same time establish cooperation and partnerships with the citizens. This is a modern challenge in social work practice in advanced welfare. If the possibilities for the citizens are limited by predefined options defined by the social system it makes a difficult starting point for cooperation and partnerships between the citizens and the advanced welfare system, in which the success of social work demands that citizens are centrally involved in their own case and plays an active part in the social work.

But social work and research in social work has to create creative solutions to deal with the dilemma - how can predefined options lead to actual ownership? How can professionals learn to communicate and work with empowerment together with the citizens and at the same time administer cut backs and different forms of control? Empowerment as a concept reenters the stage in social work – especially within the employment area in Denmark.

Empowerment was reinstated into Danish social work with the cash benefit reform from 2014 in which empowerment is brought up under the headline:

*“The individual must have ownership over efforts related to him/her” (STAR ​​project-description,1).*

The reform sets the stage for giving clients more influence, and an experiment is carried out in 32 councils, where empowerment is being developed as a strategy and approach within employment. This underpins the work for enhanced user involvement in local “Job-centers” and this presentation discuss some of the major themes and conflicts in a local research cooperation in on council:

1. empowerment has to be defined and operationalized in very concrete terms referring to professional practice

2. empowerment has to learned through supervision in action to create true partnerships

3. the leadership has to take action to create an empowering organization