

# Institutional Ethnography

Newsletter of the International Sociological Association Working Group 06

## Table of Contents

From the President .....	2
In This Issue .....	3
Remembering Professor Kjeld O. Høgsbro (1950-2026) .....	4
WG06 Mentorship Seminars.....	5
Updates from the Taiwan IE Mentor Group.....	5
Continuing the IE Journey: Marj Devault on Retirement and IE's Future.....	6
Regional News.....	10
New Research Projects, Publications, Career Developments .....	14
WG06 Board of Directors 2026.....	15

## From the President



### Frank Wang:

As the 2025 winter issue has been postponed to 2026, spring is now around the corner. I hope all IE researchers are feeling the vibe of renewal for 2026.

The WG06 Board and Executive have been in office for over a year. They have held two meetings to prepare for and follow up on the community meeting—thanks to our Secretary, Morena Tartari. We successfully conducted our community meeting and ten IE sessions at the ISA Forum in Rabat, Morocco, with thanks to our program coordinators, Adriana Suárez and Sarah Murru.

Due to COVID-19, funding for academic travel to international conferences has dwindled, and strict border controls have made travel difficult. This has led to a significant reduction in ISA meeting participation. However, our online mentorship seminars, initiated by WG06, continue to thrive, providing valuable spaces for international IEs to connect, share, and collaborate. The “UK and the Americas” group and the Asia/Australia/Pacific group continue their meetings, and a new Chinese-speaking group in Taiwan started in March 2026. Details about these seminars can be found in this newsletter.

Finally, I want to pay tribute to our late WG06 board member, Professor Kjeld Olav Høgsbro, who passed away in January after a brief battle with cancer. Kjeld was a critical thinker and an active member of the IE community, especially instrumental in developing the Nordic IE community. We are deeply saddened by his loss and will miss him greatly.

We apologize for the delay of the 2025 Winter newsletter. This issue was made possible by the efforts of many individuals, especially Rebecca Lund and Nerida Spina, with editorial support from Pei-Ru Liao. We hope you enjoy this edition, packed with updates on the international IE community.

## In This Issue

Welcome to the December 2025 edition of the WG06 newsletter. In this issue, President Frank Wang opens with a tribute to Professor Kjeld Høgsbo, whose critical thinking and instrumental role in developing the Nordic IE community leave a lasting legacy we honor in these pages.

Despite ongoing challenges from reduced conference funding and travel restrictions that impact ISA participation, our community continues to thrive through innovative connections. The WG06 mentorship seminars have evolved into vital spaces spanning multiple time zones, with groups serving the UK/Americas and Asia/Australia/Pacific regions. Excitingly, a new Chinese-speaking group launched in Taiwan in March 2026, led by Professors Frank Wang and Kan-Lin Hsu.

This issue's centerpiece features Marj DeVault's reflections on retirement and IE's evolution. From her Cape Cod studio, where she now paints landscapes, DeVault continues engaging with IE scholarship while offering fresh perspectives on preserving core principles amid innovation. Her sobering thoughts on democracy and academic freedom remind us to protect decades of progressive academic traditions.

## Remembering Professor Kjeld O. Høgsbro (1950-2026)

By Rebecca Lund

We are deeply saddened by the news that **Kjeld O. Høgsbro** passed away on 11 January 2026, after a short and intense cancer treatment. He was surrounded by family and friends.



Høgsbro completed his PhD in Cultural Sociology in 1991 at the University of Copenhagen, Denmark. He established and served as research leader at the Institute for Social Development in Vanløse (1993–1999), focusing on research-based development of welfare institutions. He also worked as a research supervisor at the Centre for Social Work in Copenhagen (1998–1999).

From 2000 to 2008, he was a senior researcher at AKF: Regional and Municipal Research Institute in Copenhagen. In 2008, Høgsbro was appointed full Professor of Social Work at Aalborg University, Denmark. He retired in 2020 but remained a highly active Professor Emeritus.

Throughout his career, Høgsbro led research and evaluation projects on disability, mental health, homelessness, drug abuse, autism, ADHD, and dementia. He was a member of several councils in the Danish Ministry of Social Welfare, and also served a term as the chairman of Danish Sociological Association (1994-1996).

Høgsbro was deeply committed to Institutional Ethnography and worked actively to bring it into dialogue with other sociology, theories and methodologies. In 2016 he became active in WG06 and served as a board member of the WG06 for two consecutive terms until stepping down in 2025. He was till the end a very active member in the Nordic network for Institutional Ethnography. He was known for his personal warmth and academic generosity, from which many in the network benefitted.

He will be missed and warmly remembered.

## WG06 Mentorship Seminars

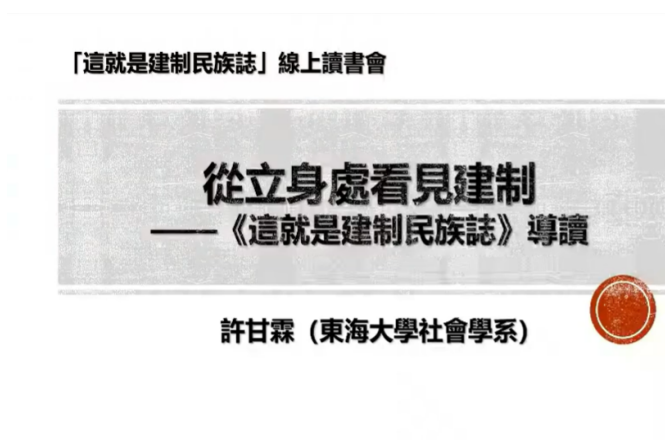
The ISA WG06-originated **mentorship seminars** are still going strong, with a "UK and the Americas" group meeting at noon (Eastern Time) on the third Wednesday of every month, and the Asia/Australia/Pacific group also provides valuable access to IE discussions and feedback for people in those time zones.

Meeting via Zoom since 2021, the original seminars were designed to provide opportunities for people at all stages of IE work to connect with a community of scholars. Responding to a need for access to other IE scholars, as we often find ourselves isolated in our own institutional and geographic areas, the mentorship seminars continue to provide a regular platform for discussing the challenges--and excitement--of conducting work using the ontology of institutional ethnography.

All are welcome to join (please contact **Janet Rankin** for the "UK and Americas" group: [jmrankin@ucalgary.ca](mailto:jmrankin@ucalgary.ca)), and the establishment of the Asia/Australia/Pacific group opens up new opportunities for people who would otherwise have found the mentorship seminars challenging to join due to time zone. If you're interested in joining the **Asia/Australia/Pacific** group, please contact **Nerida Spina** and **Annetta Cayas** at [asiapacificie@qut.edu.au](mailto:asiapacificie@qut.edu.au) or [n.spina@qut.edu.au](mailto:n.spina@qut.edu.au).

## Updates from the Taiwan IE Mentor Group

By Tzu-Hua Chen (PhD student, National Chengchi U.)



Professor Hsu Kan-Lin introducing Institutional Ethnography in the Taiwan IE mentor group on March 5.

**The Taiwan IE Mentor Group**, the first IE mentorship group in Chinese, was established in March 2026. It launched with a six-session reading series on *Simply Institutional Ethnography: Creating a Sociology for People*, the final book by Dorothy E. Smith. The group was founded by Professors Frank Wang and Kan-Lin Hsu. The book has recently been translated into Chinese by Professor Hsu and is

set to be published soon. The scheduled meetings are on March 5, March 26, April 23, May 7, May 28, and June 11.

The inaugural session on March 5 was led by Professor Hsu (<https://youtu.be/koeoMBwuEdA>). As a sociologist, he contextualized IE alongside other sociological traditions—including historical materialism, ethnomethodology, feminist scholarship, and Foucault. The subsequent five sessions will focus on the book itself. In each, four PhD students from the Departments of Sociology and Social Work at National Chengchi University and Tung Hai University will share their reading notes. These will be discussed with a Taiwanese IE researcher to explore how IE can be applied in various contexts. Everyone is welcome to join. Please contact **Chih Nan Kuo** at [heroxheroxhero@hotmail.com](mailto:heroxheroxhero@hotmail.com) for registration or additional information.

## Continuing the IE Journey: Marj Devault on Retirement and IE's Future

Email interview by Rebecca Lund



**RL:** *When did you retire, and how is life as a retired Professor and IEer?*

**MD:** I retired in 2015, when I was 65, so it was a bit early for an academic. I wasn't tired of my work, but my partner (now husband) and I had been commuting between our jobs in Syracuse and Boston for about 25 years, and I wanted to retire in time to give us some good years of life together. I also wanted to be able to provide more support for my mother, who was aging in Wisconsin. She moved into an assisted living apartment near us; she had

more difficulties than we expected, but I'm glad I could be part of those last years of her life.

I always thought that in retirement, I would continue to do research and writing, which I've always enjoyed. But I found that living in an academic context was more important than I realized for my thinking and engagement with scholarship. Away from all that intellectual energy, the urgency of scholarship has grown fainter—but it hasn't disappeared. Bob and I moved to Cape Cod, a sandy peninsula at the eastern edge of Massachusetts, where we had vacationed for many years. It's an environmentally fascinating area with stunning landscapes—ocean beaches, salt marshes, many kettle ponds, and lovely forested areas. So I've had no problem finding non-academic things to do. In

addition to hiking and puttering in our yard, I've been a nature guide for school children, volunteered with a local land conservation organization, played in a women's golf league, and taken up painting (more on that below). We've also done some great international traveling, mostly to Europe. If this all sounds too idyllic, I can also report that as one gets older, one moves more slowly and everything seems to take more time, even for someone like me who is lucky enough to be quite healthy. And of course, these days we spend time sadly following news of the frighteningly authoritarian turn in the US, and engaging in the various communities of resistance we can find in our area.

**RL:** *Are you still engaged in academic work? If so, what?*

**MD:** I'm still deeply interested in the growth and development of IE scholarship, and I generally say yes when there are opportunities to engage. That means that I still follow IE news, review IE articles that are sent to me, evaluate dissertations, and so on. As you know, Rebecca, in 2020, I traveled to Norway to participate in your Nordic group's wonderful book launch. And I've written a few chapters and articles since I retired—various sorts of overviews of the IE approach. Each one responded to a slightly different call, so each was a nice challenge, even though the material is now quite familiar. (I can provide the citations below if you think folks would be interested.)

Most recently, I wrote something for a Dorothy Smith symposium in the U.S. journal *Sociological Theory*, under the title "Dorothy Smith's Sociology for People: Theory for Discovery." In the U.S., Dorothy is most often taught, I think, as a feminist theorist in the "standpoint" family. I wanted to make clear in the piece that, beyond her early emphasis on women's experience, Dorothy's work offers a fundamental theorizing of the coordination of social action and the ontology of organizations. In order to do that, I needed to start with what I knew and then take a deep dive back into Dorothy's writing in order to extend my own understanding—and then figure out how to articulate what I had learned. It was a fun challenge, and I'm pretty happy with the result.

**RL:** *When you gain a bit of distance from the work you have been deeply committed to for years, you may gain a new perspective or a sense of clarity about certain key questions or debates. Is there something you would like to say to IEers today?*

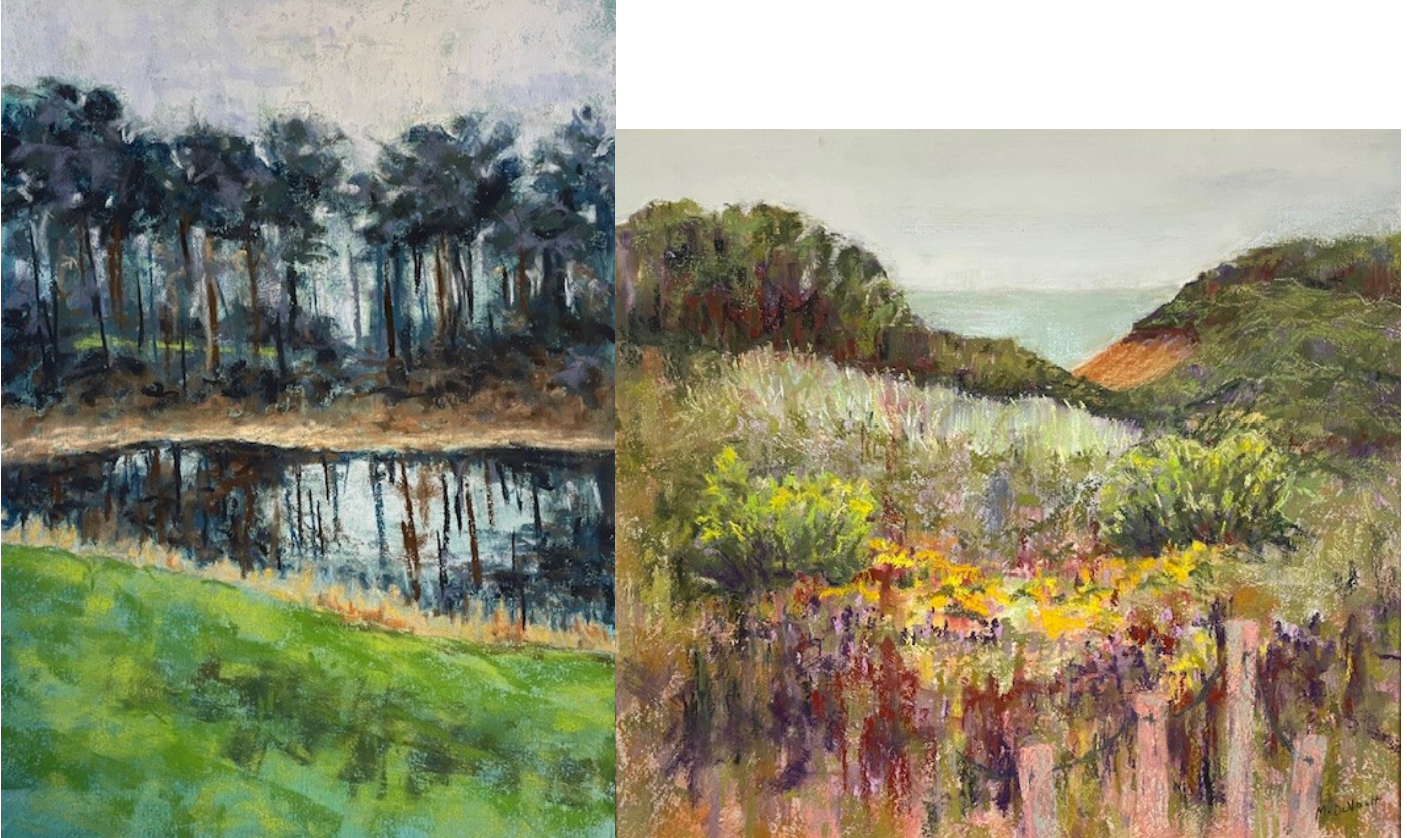
**MD:** I certainly want to say, "Keep up the good work!" It's been a great pleasure to see how our IE networks and organizations have continued to develop. I'm not so involved in the face-to-face meetings anymore, but my sense is that our community has retained its friendly and generous spirit, with various kinds of mentoring and collegial exchange happening in clusters here and there. Somehow, it seems to me that face-to-face interaction has been especially important for IE'ers. I first encountered IE in Dorothy's early writing, but I quickly learned that it was in meetings with other IE scholars that I really got familiar with the ideas, the strategies of thought, and the excitement of piecing together IE analyses. I'm indebted to Dorothy's early students in Toronto who welcomed me

into their circles in the 1980s and beyond. Of course, Zoom and other video conferencing platforms have made it easier now to meet “face-to-face” (though it’s still even better to get together in person).

If I do have any messages for IEers today, I think they’re probably articulated in an essay titled “Elements of an Expansive Institutional Ethnography,” published in the Luken and Vaughan Palgrave Handbook of IE (2021). The subtitle calls it a “conceptual history,” and it does have a chronological organization. But the message I had in mind was something like the following: Institutional ethnography has changed over time, responding to new thinking, new members of our research community, and new concerns in our societies. (Dorothy was always pushing the approach forward, and most often in partnership with others—she was so good at listening, discussing, diagnosing and considering new challenges and how to meet them.) That kind of change and development in the approach means that there’s not one way to pursue institutional ethnography, but rather some core principles and a toolkit of various strategies for investigation and analysis. I’m excited about new ways of conducting and presenting IE, but I also hope folks won’t lose track of some of the still powerful earlier ideas and approaches.

**RL:** *Are you enjoying other activities? I have heard that you are painting and also exhibiting paintings - would you mind sharing some pictures of your paintings and telling us about them? (Yes, I’ve been a casual watercolor painter for years (when I was on vacation, mostly)).*

**MD:** In 2020, I noticed a class on painting with soft pastels; I signed up and discovered a new medium that I love. Pastel is basically pure pigment, held in chalk-like sticks but with very little binder—it’s usually applied to a sanded paper, and the paper will hold layers of pastel in place. Using it has a wonderful sensuous feel and can produce wonderfully vivid colors. I find that painting is challenging in some of the ways that academic work engages us (things to learn, projects to plan and think about, joys of success, and the frustrations of “not there yet”), and painting has become one of the main activities these days. It’s also a social thing. I meet people in classes and workshops, and I go out with a group for plein air painting once a week in warm weather. I do enjoy sharing my work (though I’m a bit shy about social media), so I’ve taken advantage of some local, non-juried shows and applied for a couple of juried ones (without success so far)—and I’ve even sold a few paintings. Not making a career, however, just having fun.



I'll include a couple of photos. I'm mostly interested in doing landscapes, usually of Cape Cod scenes, and I'm often interested in trees.

**RL:** *Given the contemporary undermining of democracy and academic freedom in North America, do you think there is something WG06 should do to support IEers there?*

**MD:** Wow, I wish I had a good answer for this one. It's a generous question, so thank you for asking. It must be very difficult to work in a university in the U.S. these days—but I don't feel that I have a good on-the-ground sense of what that looks like, or what could help, other than a sense of solidarity with like-minded colleagues. Many people here are not only devastated by all that's happening, but also, still, a bit stunned. Although we expected "the worst" when Trump was elected, most of us have been surprised at the scale and speed of destruction and cruelty we've been witnessing. There's also a disorienting sense of ordinary life going on, while truly terrible things are happening. I believe that the tide will turn—there's plenty of evidence now that a substantial majority of the population does not support this administration. But it will take time, and I'm not sure how we will pick up the pieces going forward. I do hope those of you in other parts of the world will be able to withstand this broader turn toward authoritarianism, beyond the U.S., and preserve the values and principles of wise and humane democratic governance.

One thing I've been thinking about is the importance of preserving the ideas and institutions we value—forms of knowledge and practice that progressive academics have built over the last five or six decades. I remember the early days of 2nd -wave feminism, when we were startled to find that an earlier women's movement had been written out of our history, so I'm painfully aware of how easily that kind of erasure can be engineered. I'm not sure if that thought could be the beginning of an answer to your question, or where it might lead. I can only offer that thought. It would be interesting to know how others would answer the question.

### **Citations for my retirement writing:**

- Institutional Ethnography: A Mode of Inquiry and a Strategy for Change. Pp. 83-101 in *Researching Social Problems*, Amir Marvasti and A. Javier Treviño (eds.). Routledge, 2019.
- Elements of an Expansive Institutional Ethnography: A Conceptual History of its North American Origins. Pp. 11-34 in *The Palgrave Handbook of Institutional Ethnography*, Paul C. Luken and Suzanne Vaughan (eds.). Palgrave Macmillan, 2021.
- Revisiting the Ruling Relations. Pp. 119-136 in *Critical Commentary on Institutional Ethnography: IE Scholars Speak to its Promise*, Paul C. Luken and Suzanne Vaughan (eds.). Palgrave Macmillan, 2023.
- Dorothy Smith's Sociology for People: Theory for Discovery. *Sociological Theory* 41 (#4): 314-323, 2023.

## **Regional News**

### **Nordic region**

#### ***PhD courses***

'Welfare from below': *Profession, care and learning in an Institutional Ethnographic perspective*, Roskilde University, Denmark. 13-15. January 2026 <https://study.ruc.dk/class/view/39197>  
Course organised by Steen Baagøe Nielsen, with teaching contributions from Ann Cristin Nilsen, Rebecca Lund, Carsten Juul Jensen, Kevin Mogensen.

*Power, Knowledge and Materialism: Working with the Foundations of Institutional Ethnography (IE)* University of Oslo, Norway. 11 – 13 March 2026 <https://www.uio.no/studier/emner/hf/hf/KFL9036/>  
Course organised by Rebecca Lund and Colin Hastings. Contribution from Sergio D'Agata.

## Italy, UK/Ireland Network

### *ERQ conference in Trento (Italy), July 2025*

Morena Tartari (Northumbria University) and Órla M. Murray (Northumbria University) organized a session on IE at the international conference on Ethnography and Qualitative Research (ERQ) in Trento, Italy, on the 10th of July 2025. The room was full of IE enthusiasts, newcomers, and curious colleagues from different fields. Furthermore, Morena and her 14-year-old son presented a paper in the same session. Here is the abstract:

While funding institutions emphasise the impact that academic mobility has on the trajectories of academic careers, the impact on the lives and families of those same academics involved in academic mobility and the problems that they meet are often under-researched and not properly taken into consideration. Particularly under-scrutinized is how the relational, social, and economic precariousness due to academic international relocations shapes the ways in which family can be “done” and is done. Moreover, the perspectives of children and young people are never included in those data.

Inspired by the approach of Institutional Ethnography (IE), an alternative sociological approach created by Dorothy Smith (2005), this paper explores these issues through a case study and discusses how the emphasis on the value of mobility in higher education careers sometimes neglects the hidden costs and struggles of transnational families.

This study combines IE, auto-ethnography, and collaborative and visual research with children. It analyses the gaps between family and children’s needs and institutions’ ruling relations in different countries, the reorganization of family everyday life, the transformation of family practices, the struggles to reach social inclusion after one and multiple international relocations. In particular, the presentation will analyse the challenges posed by the immigration and education systems.

The results allow for a discussion of the tensions between the contemporary representations of academic careers and precariousness, institutional expectations, and the reality of doing family across borders.

By pointing out the opportunities and challenges that adults and children who are members of academic transnational families face, this presentation aims to stress the importance of doing research on this specific category of transnational families, including children as co-researchers, and promoting IE as a tool for reflection on social problems among young people and children.

Morena says: “My son was extremely captivated by IE. We studied concepts and terminology together, thought about how our experience could be read and understood through IE, wrote the paper together, prepared the presentation, and his speech. For him, it was an extremely formative experience in which he learned how to reinterpret our journey as a family struggling with international academic mobility. I am very thankful for this opportunity and to the school staff who have made this trip to the conference possible.

The participants and papers of ERQ Conference.

## 24. Institutional ethnography: Researching for social change

Convenor: Morena Tartari & Órla Murray (Northumbria University)

**10 July, 4:15 p.m. to 7:15 p.m. | Economics Building, Room 2D (second floor)**

### *Contributions*

**Daniela Perucca Gallegos** (University of Edinburgh), «Mapping the workplace support for working family carers: A work in progress».

**Senzio Sergio D'Agata** (University of Milano-Bicocca), «Unsustainable lives in sustainable cities: Hegemonic struggle on socio-ecological relations in post-political cities».

**Gabriele Orlandi, Nicola Martellozzo and Roberta Raffaetà** (University Ca' Foscari Venezia), «Institutional intimacies: Generating social change through day-to-day collaborations with wildlife conservation authorities».

**Rebecca Agnoletti** (Centro Ricerche EtnoAntropologiche - CREA), «L'Etnografia Istituzionale come strumento di monitoraggio e trasformazione sociale. Il caso del progetto Afghanistan 2030 - Next Leaders».

**Morena Tartari** (Northumbria University), **Alessandro Tartari Marini** (Excelsior Academy), «Between the opportunities of academic mobility and the struggles of doing family across borders: An ethnographic case study».

## ***IE Research Stream at ESA 2026 Conference in Warsaw, Poland***

Morena Tartari (Northumbria University), Órla Murray (Northumbria University), and Sarah Murru (KU Leuven) have received approval from the European Sociological Association (ESA) for an IE Research Stream at the **ESA 2026 Conference in Warsaw (Poland) - 25-28 August 2026**.

The IE Research Stream is the n. 18 on the ESA 2026 call for papers.

The call for papers is now open, with a deadline of **30 January 2026**.

Here you can find the link to the call for papers:

<https://europeansociology.org/conference/2026/event/4ad13b2b-4554-48ee-a273-e68d7002aab9>

This will be the third edition of this Research Stream on IE, which has, over the years, been a joyful and significant opportunity for networking within our IE community.

Please consider joining us in Warsaw!

## ***Institutional Ethnography Group Launching at Northumbria University Newcastle (UK) in Spring 2026***

**Northumbria University Newcastle (UK)** has funded *the IE Group @ Northumbria* which will launch in 2026. Órla Meadhbh Murray, in collaboration with Northumbria colleagues Morena Tartari,

Faten Khazaei, Tamara Mulherin, and Elisabeth Griffiths, was awarded the internal funding to launch and build this new group to provide a hub for IE methodological training, mentorship, and funding at Northumbria. The group will build on pre-existing IE networks and methodological training in collaboration with the UK and Ireland IEN and the European Network of IE.

Northumbria will host a series of research talks by international IE scholars who will be visiting Northumbria in Spring 2026 - Colin Hastings (University of Waterloo, Canada); Susan Wright (Aarhus University, Denmark); and Adriana Suárez Delucchi (Universidad Católica de Temuco, Chile) – alongside networking, grant writing, and IE methodological training workshops with Gráinne Kearney (Queen's University Belfast), Liz Ablett (Newcastle University, UK), and Alicja Pałęcka (University of Warsaw).

In May 2026, there will be a series of IE methodological training sessions in-person at Northumbria, including a 1-day introduction to IE workshop in collaboration with NINEDTP and a 2-day advanced IE workshop co-run in collaboration with the UK & Ireland IEN, with 10 x £100 bursaries for UK-based PhD students without access to other funding. Precise dates and detailed tbc, but please email **Órla** for further details and to register your interest – **[orla.murray@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:orla.murray@northumbria.ac.uk)**.

## New Research Projects, Publications, Career Developments

### *Book and Article Publications*

**Morena Tartari** (Northumbria University) has published a new article in the Journal *About Gender – International Journal of Gender Studies*. The article is titled “Practicing Dorothy Smith’s feminist alternative sociology in the criminal justice system: A case study” and is available in the 2025 issue 14(28), a special issue titled “Genders, Crime and Criminal Justice” edited by Sandra Sicurella (University of Bologna) and Cirus Rinaldi (University of Palermo). The article is in the English language and available in Open Access on the journal platform from January 2025:

<https://riviste.unige.it/aboutgender>

### *New Research Projects*

**Dr Grainne Kearney** (co-founder of the Institutional Ethnography Network for UK/Ireland) from Queen’s University Belfast is part of a research consortium which has been awarded £900,000 by NIHR (the National Institute for Health and Care Research) to explore the work and career progression of doctors with disabilities in the UK NHS (National Health Service). **The work strand led by Dr. Kearney will use an Institutional Ethnography approach from the standpoint of doctors with disabilities.** The goal of the research is to support the retention of doctors with disabilities in the workforce through equitable access to training and career opportunities.

**Professor Alexander McClelland** has received a (CAD)\$982,541 Team Grant from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research to establish a national Community-Based HIV/STBBI Public Health Observatory aimed at strengthening Canada’s response to HIV and other sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections. **The project will use institutional ethnographic research methods to examine how public health surveillance systems operate in practice and how they are experienced by communities most affected by HIV and STBBIs.** Working with organizations representing sex workers, migrants, people who use drugs, and people living with HIV, the Observatory will map how policies, data practices, and institutional processes shape community experiences with public health systems.

Led by a coalition of community organizations, including the HIV Legal Network, Butterfly: Asian Migrant Sex Worker Support Network, Community Alliance for Accessible Treatment, HIV & AIDS Legal Clinic Ontario, Maggie's Toronto Sex Workers Action Project, Stella, l’amie de Maimie, and the Somerset West Community Health Centre, the initiative brings together community leaders, researchers, legal experts, and public health practitioners. The Observatory aims to improve health equity and support communities in shaping policies that affect their health and well-being.

## WG06 Board of Directors 2026

### **President**

Frank T.Y. Wang, National Chengchi University, Taiwan [tywangster@gmail.com](mailto:tywangster@gmail.com)

### **Vice-President**

Rebecca Lund, Centre for Gender Research, University of Oslo, Norway  
[rebecca.lund@stk.uio.no](mailto:rebecca.lund@stk.uio.no)

### **Secretary-Treasurer**

Morena Tartari, Northumbria University, UK  
[morena.tartari@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:morena.tartari@northumbria.ac.uk)

### **Board Members**

LaNysha Adams, Edlinguist® Solutions LLC, USA  
[lanysha@edlinguist.com](mailto:lanysha@edlinguist.com)

Nerida Spina, Queensland University of Technology, Australia, [n.spina@qut.edu.au](mailto:n.spina@qut.edu.au)

Adriana Suárez-Delucchi, Bristol University, UK  
[adriana.suarez@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:adriana.suarez@bristol.ac.uk)

Colin Hastings, University of Waterloo,  
[c2hastings@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:c2hastings@uwaterloo.ca)