**Norm critique - new air for a stagnated concept?**

*5. Norm-critical studies in research and education*

*Marta Padovan-Özdemir1*

*Jo Krøjer1, Lotta Björkman2, Lovise Brade3*

*1 Roskilde University Center (RUC) 2 Södertörn University 3 Mid Sweden University*

Proposal: Norm critique as concept is at its core an oxymoron, i.e., a term in contradiction. Norms designate the normal, the taken for granted, firstness and hegemony. Critique denotes questioning what is considered normal, common sense, and dominant structures (Padovan-Özdemir 2024). Despite this contradicting etymology, norm critique as a concept and phenomenon is well established in the Swedish context and there is a widespread commonsense understanding of what it entails even if the definition continues to be disputed and - perhaps intentionally wobbly. Over the past decade, norm critique (and its numerous alterations such as norm creativity, norm consciousness, normativity sensitivity etc.) has developed into a tool that is supposed to challenge injustice, unequal rights and discrimination. It has been taken up as a mode of governance within several Swedish institutions and appears in a variety of guidelines and manuals, conferences, educational events and policy documents. This popularization has been problematized by critical scholars as well as public debaters. Some argue that the popularization of norm critique might be due to the liberal discourse within which the concept has been adopted - making it at times more a question of having access to the right vocabulary and ticking the right boxes than about challenging unequal structures and redistributing symbolic and material privilege (Qvasebo 2019). Others like Henriksson (2017) suggest the popularization of norm critique to be symptomatic of contemporary forms of power, through which individual subjects discipline themselves in the name of emancipation. Political opponents argue that the spread of norm critique is a symptom of radical identity politics and, thus, constitute a hazard society as we know it (Björkman 2024). Taking point of departure in these tensions, this panel will bring together researchers from different national and disciplinary backgrounds with a hope and interest in both exploring, confronting and theoretically advancing norm critique and the ‘change’ it is expected to generate. We will do so by dis-entangling parts of the concept (what are norms? what is critique? what is change and on what grounds do we seek it?) and discuss what critiques of norm critique can be raised and with what theoretical implications? The panel will host 4-8 speakers matched with a designated discussant. Together they will engage in discussions about the theoretical foundations and implications of norm critical practices. Some speakers will be invited but conference participants are also welcome to suggest papers for the panel.