**Transcript**

**Keynote, Fiona Williams, Policy & Power; Critical Conversations**

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So what I'm going to do in the next half hour, I think it is, is, I'm going to briefly discuss why I wrote the book, and summarise how I develop an explain my analysis an argument. So although the book is sort of crammed full of policy analysis, I'll be talking more less about policy itself, and more about how to think about policy and how to how to write about it, how to analyse it. So for some time, I'd become concerned that some of the more kind of transformative thinking that's been going on in social policy and around social policy, and in feminist, anti racist, critical race theory, as well as particularly around ethics, around disability, childhood migration, new work on age, poverty, and sexuality, not to mention the environment, that there were these sort of new sets of ideas, which didn't seem to be touching the core theories of social policy, or if they did, they did so rather selectively. But it was not just about new thinking. But also, especially over the last decade, that, that there's been a resurgence of social in social justice activism and experimentation at both local and transnational levels. So in terms of the activism, you know, 2008, the financial crisis produced occupy, and then more recently, there's been extinction, rebellion, Black Lives Matter, Global Women's strike me too, and so on. And again, these a lot of these a deal with aspects of social policy. And yet they find little reflection in sort of big theory, social policies, such as welfare, welfare, regime analysis, historical institutionalism, or even debates about welfare, state restructuring and retrenchment under new neoliberalism.

And of course, the recognition of the state of affairs was most clearly and most dismally expressed in the UK social policy Association's report in 2019, the missing dimension where is race in social policy, teaching and learning, and that, as many of you will know, found a lack of focus on race and racism in courses very low, minority ethnic representation amongst both staff, and students. Now, the discipline of social policy, of course, is not alone. In this respect. Many key social science disciplines have been held to account. But for me, personally, I'd been here before, you know, this produced a sense of deja vu. In the 1980s. I had written about this marginalisation of, at that time, both gender and race, in an article in critical social policy, racism in the discipline, social policy, a critique of welfare theory, and this outlined how imperialism, colonialism and nationhood had framed 20th century welfare, welfare states, and underpinned the development of the discipline. And I elaborated that in a book in 1989, social policy issues of race, gender, and class, which discussed the marginalisation of these issues in the discipline of social policy.

So I was thinking, Well, what's going on, you know, half to four decades of neoliberal welfare, and now a pandemic, where the need for analysis and transformative thinking has never been greater, especially to deal with multiple social inequalities and insecurities. What was going on that, that there seemed to be this sort of, lack of recognition of, of the sorts of ideas that we're we're really tackling This. Now, as far as my book is concerned, whilst I see the occlusion of race and racism as the most egregious aspect of this, I also see it as part of a more general trend of the mainstream of the discipline, but especially its core theory is to divest itself of the profound implications that emerge from a range of struggles and new planes over different and intersecting inequalities. And the thinking that comes out of those, you know, around, as I said, feminism, disability, migration, childhood, the environment, and so on. So in the book, I offer a number of reasons why I think this has happened, why there has been this particular neglect of race and racism, but also a more general regret or neglect of transformative thinking. And, incidentally, I'll just put up the reference, I've developed this in relation to race and racism. In an article co authored with Coretta Phillips, I won't go into all the reasons that I give in the book, but just to say that they, they derive in part from the internal characteristics of the discipline, the sort of ongoing empiricism, its class and labour market focus, and well as, as well as the paradox of a degree of complacency, complacency about being the discipline, which focuses on poverty and inequality.

 But also it's come elsewhere, externally, especially in the kind of governmental both at national and supranational level, the the setting of the agenda of Social Policy Research, and that too, has focused over the last 20 years very much on labour market activation. And although a lot of important empirical materials come out of this, it's tended to have the effect of narrowing issues of discrimination Say down to attachment to the labour market as the dynamic for inclusion. And this also has been set within a set of ideas around assuming a post feminist and a post racial society which have tended to obscure if not demonised, radical thinking and in the area of social policy. But there are also aspects to do with the demands of the Academy. In including demands of the research assessment, which has seen a greater fragmentation, a specialisation and the siloing of of feminism, critical race theory, disability theory, the environment, etc. Again, this is a story of contradictions. It's not all bad, you need that sort of specialisation. But it's set. These are set within a hierarchy of sub disciplines, which reinforces their marginalisation, they tend to be lower down. So what I wanted to do was to provide a way of thinking and pulling together the political and theoretical insights which this new work that I was talking about, provides us with and looking at the commonalities in that work, as well as the tensions around these different areas.

But I wanted to do so in a way that also respected the specificities of those areas of work as well. So what I begin with is to combine intersectionality as an analytical frame with critical thinking in social policy. Now, for anyone not familiar with intersectionality. And forgive me if I'm telling you things you already know. It's an approach which has a long history based in black feminist struggle around race, class, gender, and sexuality. And it it really reemerged in this century as one of the most important political and theoretical developments to offer an understanding of the complexity of power relations. And it sees these as constituted not simply by one's gender, or race, or class or sexuality and so on. But by the ways these intersect in different ways over time, over place. And I argue that this is particularly suited to the study of social policy first, because it's highly attuned to the complex Multiple ways that poverty and inequalities intersect, and also how they're resisted. This is really helpful in understanding the social relations of welfare that is the relationship not only between people in the social world, but the relationship between users and providers of welfare. Second, because it focuses on an earthing the lived experience of those, especially those whose inequalities and voices are hidden or ignored. This, again, is very helpful in looking at policymaking making and implementation. Thirdly, it's not a grand theory, it's not doesn't even call itself a theory. As such, it's more an orientation that changes essentialist and reductionist thinking. And instead, it looks to the contradictory, contested and unsettled nature of phenomenon. And fourthly, which I found particularly important in in writing this book, it provides a coherence between its theory, its orientation, as I said, its methodology, how to apply that, and practice, that is the possibilities for transformative change, and in particular, for alliances and intersectional solidarities.

So following this, the book is divided into three parts orientation, which describes the frameworks I employ, analysis and praxis. However, intersectionality has some limitations, particularly that its parameters are often local, or national. So I do, I don't just work with intersectional analysis, I combine it with insights from other areas of critical thinking and Social Policy, such as cultural political economy, analysis, critical geography, and so on a whole number of different ways. I am kind of quite promiscuous in the way I use these different ideas. Secondly, in terms of my theoretical orientation, I was also seeking to overcome another limitation, as I saw it, as I see it in social policy. And that's that many social policy analyses of austerity, austerity welfare, are framed within an overly deterministic understanding of how, especially since the crisis of 2008, how the rise in inequalities are, as a result on the one hand of neoliberal ideology which permeates welfare states, especially marketization and privatisation, and on the other hand, the pressures of Global Capitalism and exerting pressure to rebalance economies away from wages towards profits, and I found that this was the dominant frame for looking at welfare states.

Now, I'm not saying that this is wrong. But in my view, it's inadequate to provide an understanding of the complex formations of poverty and inequalities, especially as they exist and are my most profound around race, migration place, gender, age, generation disability, and the way in which these have been shaped by national and supranational welfare states in the 20th century. Instead, I argue that we need to go deeper into neoliberalism and the crisis of financialized capitalism. And I look at three further crises which I say are part and parcel of financialized capitalism, capitalism, because I understand capitalism as being colonialist and racializing, patriarchal and extractivist and these three crises are also like the financial crisis, they are global in character in nature. And these are not so for crisis nor that, that I argue contextualise austerity welfare states not only the financial crisis, but the crisis of care and social reproduction, and particularly the devaluation of care, the crisis of the environment and climate change and the crisis of the racialized bordering of transnational mobility. And by that last one, I mean, the ways in which increasingly restrictive migration policies represent the shaping of inclusion and exclusion in ways that are part for a new period of colonialism. postcolonialism, as some would say, nationalism and racism. And I argue that this is a global phenomenon, but which also generates dehumanising technologies and racist practices that are carried into national spaces, and in particular, to welfare state policies. So, both singly and together, because I also argue that these crises intersect, think of migration and careworkers. These crises threaten human and planetary well being, and sustainability across the world in different ways. At the same time, I argue that the contestations movements and resistances at local and transnational levels that these crises inspire and that they provoke Black Lives Matter, XR #metoo, these profoundly changed the principles and practices of capitalism, and provide an insight into the possibilities of change, which I then return to later in the book.

There's one final aspect of my development of this orientation. And that is this, that my analysis is also concerned with the analysis of Social Policy at different scales, global, regional, national, local, and in particular, how welfare states at national level are unsettled by and attempt to settle these crises. Right. So that's what I, I kind of see is going on all the time, right. So I translate these crises into a second frame of analysis for analysis at national level. And, in short, this represents the second frame is what I call the family nature, nation work nature frame. And I argue that these domains, these are institutional and discursive domains, whose social relations practices changes, and Qantas stations shape and are shaped by welfare states at national level. So in other words, what I'm arguing, and I put the four domains in full there, what I'm arguing is that welfare governance can be understood as an ongoing attempt to settle the changing and challenging conditions of family care, intimacy, work, around paid and unpaid labour, nation and all that that implies nationhood and nationalism. And in the past two decades, particularly the challenge of nature, environment, climate change, etc. And this frame allows for a picture of complexity, multiple inequalities, as well as what are the sources of legitimacy for welfare state policies, and maybe you can begin to see that certainly, in the last 10 years, that the in invocation to family nation and work and also to think about denying or accepting nature has has really been the focus of a lot of policy and a lack of social policy.

So in the second part of the book, where are we, the second part of the book, I use this and the, the, the the other crises, I use this to analyse to make sense of the past decade of social policies, and one of the chapters is devoted to the UK from austerity to pandemic. And in that I make connections across these different sorts of policies that have been part of austerity welfare. So for example, I use family, nation and work intersections to look at the dynamics of the devaluation and depletion of care. And I look within this at how, for example, the Welfare Reform Act and Universal Credit has been applied to mothers, how it induces poverty that is both gendered and racialized, how its subordinates care to pay work but also within this there has been a diminishing of children's rights and also the marketization and commodification of care work. And that these have all contributed to the this devaluation and depletion of care. In terms of nation, I look at the significance of post racial discourse as an attempt at settling, right. This has weakened anti discrimination attempts, it's increased surveillance with also in combination with these internal bordering practices. I argue that that the external bordering of migrants coming into the country that the technologies of that have been used as a template applied to welfare to restrict restrict people's entitlements to welfare. So, for example, in the hostile environment, and the Windrush betrayal, but I also argue and this is something I can go on to a bit more because I've written more about this recently, in a historical way, about the techniques for dehumanising other marginalised welfare subjects such as disabled people. I also bring together the concept of macro politics, that is the state's capacity to decide who is and is not disposable, with nation and nature, where I examine rental tower, the discourses of Brexit nation, and of course, the management of the pandemic, which is also of course, about the the devaluation of care. Now, as I said, I've, this is just a reference, I was going to go into this more, but I don't think I've got any time I'll just move on. This is a reference to an article that's just come out, which looks at these aspects, it looks at what I call domestic colonialism over the 20th and 21st century in the welfare state.

And so two further chapters in the analysis section, focus first on agency, which I see as one of the most important critical developments in social policy analysis, and here I look at the multiple ways in which providers users and an activists in health and welfare provision, exercise their agency and look at the different forms of contestation that this may give rise to from kind of high level mobilisation to the quieter forms of reciprocal everyday solidarities. And crucial in this is the ethics of care. But both of these I argue, begin to prefigure alternative approaches to welfare, which as I said earlier, is something I pick up later on in the book. What I draw attention to in this, in this chapter on agency, is what I call the double helix of the social relations of welfare. And by that I mean that we are both constituted through wider social structural relations of power. But as users and providers we are also part of an interconnecting spiral that signifies the particular and often institutional relations of power that we find ourselves in as users or providers of services or indeed as both. Now, a third chapter in of analysis, picks up the the the devaluation and depletion of care in a global context. And I look here at the transnational Political Economy of migrant care work. And this is where the crisis of the global crisis of care and also restrictive migration practices overlap where they intersect. And I offer a decolonial analysis understanding this transnational political economy as part of the history and continuation of the gendered racialization of servitude. Also, using an intersectional analysis provides me it enables me to examine differences scales, the different scales of policy and practice. So that interpersonal relationship of care and how that relates to nationally, different intersections of policies around care, migration and employment, and relate that to the transnational scale of political change and activism. And I end that by asking, what sort of reparations are new forms of social justice? Does this racialization of serving to require us to follow?

So these questions that I raised in these chapters lead me on to the final part, which is about practice. And I return here to how the three the three particular crises, the time bringing up care, ecology, and racialization how they are being contested, and what new principles are emerging, what new political ethics, which might be relevant to future social policies. So here I'm recalling that part of what welfare states are about is the practical rear realisation of our reciprocity and moral obligations, one for another. So I look at the dovetailing and the tensions in an among the ethics of care, the ethics of environmentalism, and the ethics of de coloniality. What I argue they have in common, at least the progressive elements of them having common is a challenge to the universalization, of Western liberal notions of the superiority of rational white male autonomy, autonomy, as well as the fact that each of them in different ways looks to alternative models of care and relationality, to different forms of economic systems, which are both just and sustaining and serve human flourishing. As well as looking to different forms of democratic plurality versality, which strives for solidarities across difference, and the new planetary humaneness. So for example, within decolonial ethics, I focus on Sylvia Wynter's notion of being human as Praxis a new way of narrating what she calls ecumenical humaneness, of narrating that into peaceful coexistence. And I argue that from these, we can translate them into a new set of practical political principles for a future eco welfare Commons. In other words, what are the new moral obligations that that should underpin welfare states. And I argue that crucially, these are about relationality, and interdependence, and they provide five areas of moral obligation into dependence as planetary in the sense of the relationship between humans and the ecosystem. Enter dependence as global in the context of historical and contemporary geopolitical inequalities, the thing, the very thing that the pandemic showed, so clearly, and intergenerational obligations not simply to existing children, but to future generations not yet born. But just as importantly, not just about the future, but about the dehumanised racial suffering of the past and of past generations. And how we look at that obligation in terms of both material and moral obligations to reparation.

So, together I say there is a new obligation to form a new humaneness of coexistence of pluriversality. And this depends on cooperation, solidarity, respect for, for, for caring, and importantly, respect for plurality for caring and importantly for deliberative dialogue. So, these implying new forms of recognition, redistribution and representation. And then, finally, I detail in different ways, how these aspects are being prefigured through many examples of collective action at local and transnational levels. And I also try and carry through the intersectional analysis in terms of what do coalition's of solidarity actually mean? And why are these important for transformative thinking and action on welfare state? So I examine these preferred curative activism in terms of how they generate three forms of relationality of care and connection of scale that is from local to the transnational and intersectional dialogues and alliances. And I look at how these can contribute to a transformative welfare commons or eco welfare commons. And I find that many ideas have been innovative here many useful ideas, but they are least for coming on racial justice, anti racist solidarity is reparations, reparation and geopolitical inequalities. So there is still a lot to be done. So in the final chapter, I aim to explain what the implications are for teaching learning and researching social policy. And here I one of the things I want to show is that we can draw from a lot from linked prefigurative academic and activist practices. So there, I will finish Thank you very much.