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**CHILDREN'S RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES IN AN UNEQUAL WORLD:
RESEARCH, POLICY AND INTERVENTION**

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Small and overlooked - is infancy a blind spot of childhood studies?

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The United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child states in Article 1. “(...) a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years (...)”. Not denying the benefits of the universal approach of the UNCRC, advocating the rights and protection of children’s rights, regardless of age, there are relevant differences between the needs and abilities of an 11-days-old or an 11-years-old child. The hypothesis of this presentation is that so far, childhood studies is lacking a clear picture about the infant and the beginning of life.

In a preliminary systematic analysis of historical literature in infant research in Germany, starting from 1900, a strong dominance of medical and psychological approaches can be observed. Leading to the central questions: Did the infant reach the field of childhood studies in current days? Did we oversee the smallest member of society and not prioritize it against other life stages?

In the presentation, (1) this hypothesis will be illustrated by discussing dominant terms in early childhood research, e.g. *hospitalism* and their implications for the field of social pedagogy and childhood studies. Furthermore, (2) a change in perceiving the infant and his or her abilities will be discussed, since this shift also reveals potential for childhood studies. As with the gained knowledge in, e.g. attachment theory, neurosciences and/or experimental studies on the infants’ capabilities to the picture of the “competent infant” (Stone et al. 1974) rose. Moreover, (3) studies on child maltreatment in infancy will be portrayed, as based on the current realizations an entanglement of infant research and child protection stands out. Thinking about a newborn, which just entered the world, his or her vulnerability is apparent. Infants need protective and caring adults in their surroundings. The aim is to highlight central ideas for future directions, as the life stage is especially important for the child’s development.

The premise of the research project in general is that it is crucial for our discipline to be aware of its past paradigms and to keep it conscious, in the sense of remembrance and reappraisal, to shape the current and future dialogue. Finally (4) the author hopes to gain new insights by the participating colleagues about this matter in different international contexts.