

Digital interactions in Social Work practice

Anne Wullum Aasback, Phd. Student, NTNU,
department of Social Work

My background

- Social worker
- Research
- Digital technology



Agenda for today's lecture

- Introduction to virtual interactions and digital communication
- How to think about technology in social work practice
- Traditional Social Work goals and methods in virtual interactions
- Ethical considerations in digital social work



How does the digital transformation impact Social Work?



Societal
changes
impact
social
problems



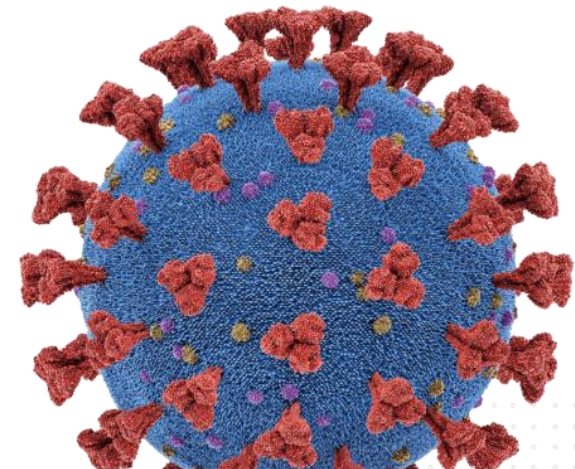
Professional
practice changes
as a result of the
digital
transformation



The Corona pandemic

‘Before the coronavirus outbreak, our office had a goal that everyone should do at least one video meeting, and it felt a bit weird! We didn’t think we were going to reach that goal. And then the coronavirus came, and everybody was having video meetings within the first week.’

- Norwegian Social Worker



What is digital intercation?

- Synchronous?
- Communication one to one or between several parts?
- Chat, video
- Different digital platforms
- Integration of elements like pictures and smilys 😊

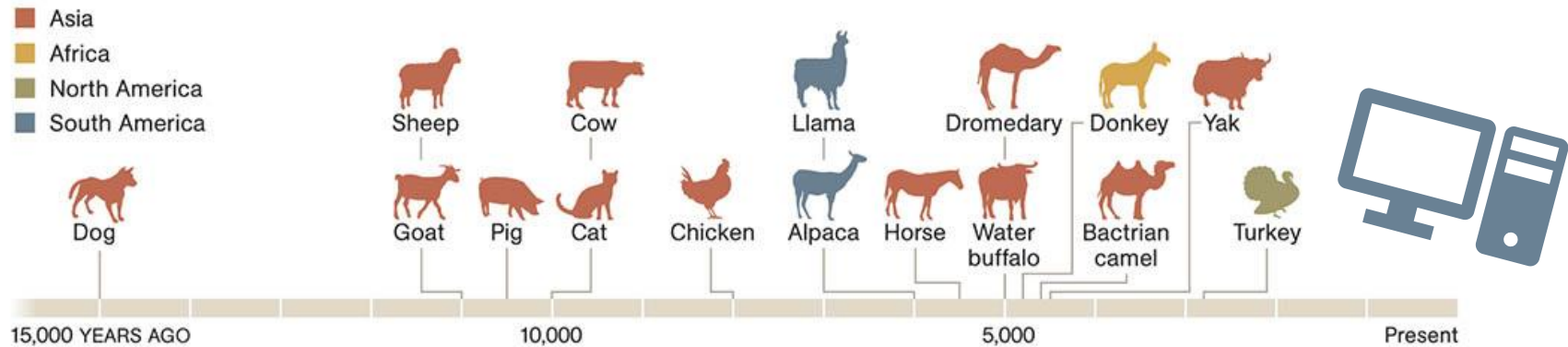
Written digital communication

- **Online disinhibition effect** is the lack of restraint one feels when communicating **online** in comparison to communicating in-person.
- Misinterpretations
- Transferring communication skills to written

Virtual video interactions

- Losing part of the social interaction
- Meeting in the Clients «homeground»
 - *‘I was surprised by the way her home looked. [...] I would have seen her differently if she just came to the office. At home, I got to see more of the context, not just the parts that needed help.’ - Socialworker*
- Relational aspects
- Groupwork

Integrating digital technology into social work practice – domestication theory



Traditional Social Work goals and methods in virtual interactions

- Presence and accessibility
- Empathy
- Participation
- Ethical practices

Precence

‘To be present. That we still provide support. That we are still here for them. That we are just a phone call away or that we can meet for a chat. That there is someone who cares and is available. That is important.’

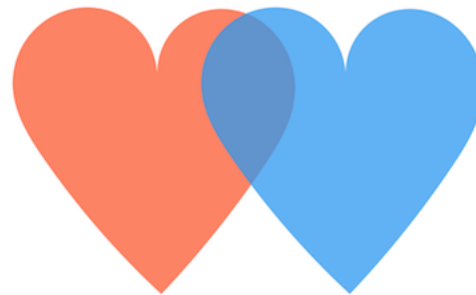
- Norwegian Child welfare worker

Empathy

«Empathy gets harder when we just sit in front of the computer and write, it is important as a councilor to see the one you are talking with to get feedback»

-Councilor at employment service

EMPATHY



Participation

- Change of roles and expertise
- Self-management
- Digital skills of the client

Ethical considerations

- Privacy concerns
- Personal boundaries
- Austerity measures as an argument for digitalization

Integrating digital interaction in social work practice

- Digital competence
- Connection between technical expertise and social work expertise
- Choice of communication channel
- Blended services

