

# **Graduation Day '25**

## **Conclusions & New Chapters**

September 19 | Kunsthalle Bremen

# Dean's Address

**Dear BIGSSS Graduates,**

it is finally done: the last chapter or paper is written and the defense lies – or will shortly lie – successfully behind you. What often felt like a long road still ahead now seems to have come to an end. However, being proper social science PhD graduates, you are probably well aware that few conclusions are ever firm. The eminent Chicago school sociologist Howard S. Becker famously remarked that the art of academic writing lies in successfully abandoning a project at the right point. Obviously, you've reached that point – for now.

Those further pursuing an academic career will soon realize that their PhD topic will come back to them in one way or another, and that whatever lies ahead of them now is just the beginning. But even those of you opting for a career outside academia will revisit their PhD experience from time to time. Regardless of which path you choose, you will look back and realize that you not only mastered complex theory, complicated methods, or arcane subjects. More importantly, you learned to persevere when things got difficult; you figured out ways around obstacles; you readjusted when plans did not work out; and you also made it through whatever self-doubts might have arisen. In doing all that, you contributed not only to scholarly debate, but you also grew as a person. You know that you can handle difficulty and uncertainty – and that is something you have every reason to be proud of! We at BIGSSS congratulate you, and we are happy to celebrate your achievement with you and your loved ones.

In that sense, as a Dean I wish all of us a wonderful Graduation Day 2025!

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Patrick Sachweh". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Patrick" and last name "Sachweh" clearly distinguishable.

*Prof. Dr. Patrick Sachweh*  
August 2025

# Program

- 15:30**      **Welcome by BIGSSS and University Leaderships**
- 16:00**      **Keynote Speech**
- 16:30**      **Coffee Break**
- 17:00**      **Fellow Address**  
Gamze Ipek & Tanya Keni
- 17:20**      **Musical Interlude**  
R-Cappella directed by Rucsandra Popescu
- 17:30**      **Graduation Ceremony Part I**
- 18:00**      **Musical Interlude**  
R-Cappella directed by Rucsandra Popescu
- 18:15**      **Graduation Ceremony Part II**
- 19:00**      **Reception**
- 20:00**      **Guided Tour Kunsthalle**  
Immersive Spaces (+ Pixelwald)
- 20:20**      **Guided Tour Kunsthalle**  
Pixelwald and Collection Highlights
- 20:40**      **Guided Tour Kunsthalle**  
Immersive Spaces (+ Pixelwald)

## BIGSSS

BIGSSS is an internationally renowned interdisciplinary school of doctoral training at the public University of Bremen and the private Constructor University Bremen. Since its foundation in 2002, the school has grown from just a handful of Fellows into a vibrant academic community with more than 65 international PhD researchers as of 2025. Our mission is to provide excellent supervision and demand-tailored training that enables our Fellows to pursue innovative research, gain valuable teaching experience, and actively contribute to a strong academic community.

At BIGSSS, several doctoral training programs are brought together under one roof, all adhering to the same high standards of quality in doctoral education.

Today, we celebrate our graduates and those on the eve of defending their dissertations. Completing a PhD is a remarkable achievement that requires intellectual creativity, perseverance, and resilience. At the same time, it reflects the many contributions our Fellows make beyond their individual research – through teaching, collaboration, and community engagement within BIGSSS.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to them for their dedication and commitment. On the following pages, you will find more about these outstanding personalities whose academic journey we are honored to accompany.

# **Graduates 2025**



# Gonzalo Arévalo Iglesias

Familialism begets familialism? How family solidarity shapes welfare preferences in Europe

Gonzalo Arévalo Iglesias holds a background in Political Science and Statistics from the University of Santiago de Compostela and has completed a PhD in Sociology at BIGSSS. His research explores the interplay between family arrangements and social policy in welfare provision, and their impact on public opinion across European welfare states, using a comparative survey-based approach. Gonzalo's work has been published in the Journal of European Social Policy and re-

*“I am grateful to BIGSSS for the friends I made, the growth I experienced and the coffee that fueled it all.”*

ceived the ESPAnet Doctoral Researcher Prize and BIGSSS Best Paper Award. Starting in autumn 2025, Gonzalo will join the Department of Political Science of the University of Amsterdam as Postdoctoral Researcher.

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Postdoctoral Researcher in the project “Breaking the Silence: Politics, Workers’ Rights and the Future of Senior Care in Europe”  
University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands

# Liva Stupele

The Role of International Organizations in Healthcare Financing Policy in Central and Eastern European Countries; The Case of the Latvian Healthcare Financing Reforms



Liva Stupele is a healthcare consultant and policy expert with extensive experience in health system reform, patient safety, and digital transformation. With an emphasis on healthcare financing, quality enhancement, and innovation, she has collaborated with international organizations, government institutions, and hospitals in Latvia, Germany, and beyond. Liva has concentrated her academic research on the influence of international organizations on the reform of healthcare financing in Central and Eastern Europe.

*“I am grateful for all the opportunities and support that BIGSSS has provided in the form of lectures, peers, and community.”*



## Mareike zum Felde

Understanding Change and Continuity in Polish Politics  
Political Elites, the Party Politics of Higher Education  
and the Impact of Right-Wing Populism (1989 – 2021)

Mareike zum Felde graduated from East European Studies at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität in Munich with a major in comparative political systems. She has completed a PhD in political science at BIGSSS and worked as a Doctoral Researcher at the Research Centre for East European Studies at the University of Bremen. From 2020 to 2022, Mareike was Co-Head of the Bremen branch of the Young German Association for Eastern European Studies. Her research in-

terests include post-socialist political elites, the development of the Polish party system as well as higher education policies in the context of the political and economic transformation after 1989.

*“As an Affiliated Fellow of BIGSSS, I greatly appreciated the feeling of belonging during my PhD journey. I am very grateful for the international community I became part of, the continuous support from staff at BIGSSS and the friends I made during this time.”*

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Research Fellow: Leader of the Project Diamond Open Access and Managing Editor of the Quarterly Journal of Labour and Economic Research | State and University Library Bremen, Germany





## Patricia F. Zauchner

Raising the Acceptance of Rank Reversing  
Redistributions: The Role of Need Considerations

Patricia F. Zauchner studied Sociology (BA, MA) at the University of Vienna, where she also worked as a teaching and research assistant. She then joined SOCIUM at the University of Bremen as a predoctoral research fellow, where she programmed and conducted experiments in interdisciplinary projects and taught many seminars. Her research focuses on distributive justice, particularly need-based considerations in redistribution. During her time at SOCIUM, she was an Affiliated Fellow at BIGSSS, where she wrote her dissertation on rank-reversing redistributions and need considerations. After a postdoctoral position at SOCIUM, Patricia is now a postdoctoral research fellow at the University of Potsdam.

“BIGSSS was a wonderful experience, with a warm atmosphere, great support from the faculty, and, above all, amazing and lasting friendships.”

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Postdoctoral Researcher  
University of Potsdam



## Jenny Hahs

From Geneva to the World? Legal Segmentation  
and the International Labour Organisation

Jenny Hahs is a Research Fellow in Research Field 2, “Challenges of the Modern World of Work,” at DIFIS, University of Duisburg-Essen. A sociologist of work and organisation by training, she researches patterns of legal segmentation in (international) labour regulation and actor-centred inequality dynamics in global labour organisation. She also studies sectoral challenges for labour regulation amid labour market transformation. Previously at SOCIUM and CRC 1342,

University of Bremen, she earned her PhD at BIGSSS on “Legal Segmentation and the International Labour Organisation.

“*The ‘open door policy’ has always  
meant what it says at BIGSSS.*”

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Research Fellow

German Institute for Interdisciplinary Social Policy Research (DIFIS)



# Adio-Adet T. Dinika

Digital Labour Mirage: Dissecting Utopias  
in Africa's Gig Economy

Zimbabwean-born researcher and writer Adio-Adet Dinika has adopted the phrase “Ich komme aus Norden, nicht aus Zucker!” –a fitting motto for his work on AI’s invisible architectures, weaponizing decolonial and critical theory to expose its hidden hierarchies. From data annotation platforms in Bogota to content moderation in Nairobi, he examines how tech capital exploits the bodily and emotional labor of the Global Majority. He also scripts radical alternatives for more just digital futures. His writing in Noema Magazine, Africa in Fact, and academic journals bridges scholarship and polemic – much like his whisky preference (neat, no sugar).

“During my proposal defense, a colleague called my work “an activist manifesto, not academia” – unkind, right? Well, no: I took it as a compliment; writing that unsettles, questions, and demands was exactly what I wanted then, and still want now.”

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Postdoctoral Research Fellow  
Distributed AI Research Institute (DAIR)



# Janosch Kullenberg

Beyond Coordination: Interorganizational Relations  
in the Field of Protection

Janosch holds a bachelor's degree from Humboldt University and Sciences Po Paris, and a master's from Oxford University. He has practical experience in peacekeeping, peacebuilding and humanitarian work in East and Central Africa. Following his doctoral course work, he pursued post-doctoral research on the Protection of Civilians mandate. He then transitioned to diplomacy, working with the German Mission to the United Nations, and currently serves at the European External Action Service in Brussels.

“Janosch has always been interested in the intersection between academia and practice. He brought his interest in real world problems to BIGSSS and he left with the conviction that the benevolent influence of theory can lead to much more meaningful practical insights.”

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Policy Officer at the European External Action Service (EEAS)  
Brussels, Belgium



## Henriette Bering

Staying Ahead of the Game: Extracurricular Activities and Inequalities in Educational and Occupational Attainment over the Life Course

Henriette Bering is a Postdoctoral Researcher at the SOCI-UM Research Center on Inequality and Social Policy at the University of Bremen, working on the DFG-funded project “The interplay of social contexts and genetic potentials: cognitive and educational development in the early life course.” She earned her PhD at BIGSSS, where she received the Best Paper Award and held a visiting fellowship at the European University Institute in Florence. Prior to that, she completed an MA in Sociology of Education at Uppsala University and a BA in North American Studies at Freie Universität Berlin. Her research focuses on social inequality, educational attainment, and the role of families in shaping life chances.

“*My time at BIGSSS has been valuable for learning, developing my research skills, and engaging with ideas and people that have shaped my work – I’m very grateful for the support I received and the friends I made.*”

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Postdoctoral Researcher in the project “The interplay of social contexts and genetic potentials: cognitive and educational development in the early life course” | University of Bremen, Germany



## Priya Singh

Social Protection and the Informal Workers:  
A Case Study of the Health (In) Security of the  
Beedi Workers in India

Priya Singh is a sociologist and Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellow with a PhD from the Bremen International Graduate School of Social Sciences, University of Bremen, Germany. Her doctoral research explored the health security of informal workers in India through a case study of beedi workers. She examined how they navigate health crises—turning to government welfare programs or relying on informal social networks. She holds a Master's in Labour Studies and Social

*“BIGSSS was a great learning experience and lifetime of friendships. I was assigned an officemate who became my lifetime friend and two best friends from Field A with whom I connected immediately during the prep forum. Apart from working on our theses we travelled across Europe and UK exploring different cultures and cuisines together.”*

Protection from TISS, where her dissertation was awarded Best Dissertation. She has also worked in the CSR sector with experience in designing and implementing development initiatives. She is currently a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Institute of Public Health, Bangalore, India.

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Post-Doctoral Fellow  
Institute of Public Health, Bangalore, India.



## **Gizem Irmak Sel**

*Turkey's Live-in Long-Term Care: A Kaleidoscopic  
Perspective on Everyday Negotiations*

Gizem Irmak Sel earned her bachelor's degree in Sociology and her master's degree in Gender and Women's Studies at Middle East Technical University before starting her PhD at the Bremen International Graduate School of Social Sciences. In her dissertation, she examines how live-in eldercare in Turkey is organised and negotiated in everyday life. She sees care as a fragile and relational practice at the heart of life, and enjoys the everyday side of research with curiosity for the small, unexpected ways relationships take shape.



# Nelson Sindze Wembe

Longing and Belonging in Black African Diasporic  
Narratives written in French and Spanish

Nelson Sindze Wembe is a doctoral candidate at the University of Bremen, Germany, and member of the research group Contradiction Studies as well as associate researcher at the Bremen International Graduate School of Social Sciences. Born in Cameroon, he speaks French, English, Spanish, and Catalan, and is learning German. His research examines longing and belonging in Black African diaspora literature, with interests in Francophone and Hispanophone

African literature, diaspora studies, hybridity, and comparative literature.

“*At this BIGSSS home,  
everyone belongs.*”

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Finishing my PhD as a research fellow  
Research Training Group: Contradiction Studies, University of Bremen





# Hudu Banikoi

Towards Sustainability in the Coastal Blue Economy: Navigating Institutional Change for Coastal Resource Co-Management in Ghana

Hudu Banikoi is an institutional economist with a research interest in environmental and resource governance in the tropics. He has substantial research experience in South/Southeast Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. His most recent research work examined the challenges of coastal resource governance transitions for sustainability in Ghana. Hudu has a bachelor's degree in Land Economy from the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science & Technology (KNUST), a master's degree in Environmental Governance from the University of Freiburg, and a PhD in Economics from BIGSSS. He currently works as a lecturer at the Department of Land Management, University of Business and Integrated Development Studies (UBIDS), Wa, Ghana.

“A perfect PhD is a finished PhD.”

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Lecturer



# Anne Speer

Incorporating Status Bias into Prejudice Research

Anne Speer is a Postdoctoral Researcher at the Research Institute Social Cohesion (RISC) and Research Center on Inequality and Social Policy (SOCIUM), University of Bremen. Her research focuses on the intersection of intergroup relations and socioeconomic inequalities. Such inequalities not only form prejudices against social groups but also shape the social milieus – the ‘bubbles’ – in which we live, with profound consequences for social cohesion. Anne has earned

*“BIGSSS. Ingredients: strong expertise, multiple disciplines, different cultures, mentors and role models, constructive feedback, never too little humor, coffee and sweets, heart-warming support, friendships. Instructions: Mix ingredients and let sit for a couple of years.”*

her B.Sc. in Psychology at Utrecht University and M.Sc. in Psychology at the University of Osnabrück before continuing her academic journey at BIGSSS.

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Postdoctoral Researcher Research  
Institute Social Cohesion (RISC) & Research Center on Inequality  
and Social Policy (SOCIUM), University of Bremen



# **Tanya Ashish Keni**

*Honor, Dignity, and Migration: Navigating Cultural Norms and Threat Responses Among Native Indians, Germans, and Indian Migrants in Germany*

Tanya, originally from India, is an intercultural trainer and psychologist with a master's degree in counseling psychology. She moved to Germany in 2021 to pursue her doctorate in cross-cultural psychology, focusing on migration and adaptation. Before her PhD, she worked as a counsellor in India, supporting students with mental health and career decisions. Currently, she is a lecturer at the International Foundation Year at Constructor University and a freelance intercultural trainer. A trained Indian classical dancer, Tanya also teaches dance in Bremen, blending her love for culture, movement, and social connection.

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Instructor (International Foundation Year)  
Constructor University



# Nils Tobias Henschel

The Negative Secondary Transfer Effect:  
Underlying Processes and Facilitating Conditions

Born in Dortmund, Nils completed his BSc Psychology in Nijmegen from 2013 to 2017. From 2017 to 2019 he completed his MSc Psychology at Jacobs University Bremen, where he met his now wife. Extracurricular classes in statistical programming & Research Assistant work prepared him to work as a Research Associate in the DFG funded project ToRealSim from 2019 to August 2022, applying computational social science methods to study opinion polarization. Between 2019

“It is hard to pick a favorite memory because there are many good ones, but I remember feeling incredibly proud when, after many months of work, I saw the first publication that I had co-authored.”

and 2024 he completed his PhD at BIGSSS, researching the negative secondary transfer effect, publishing 3 first- & 6 co-authored papers. Since September 2022, he is working at Statista, automating updates via ETL pipelines as a Data Engineer.

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Data Ops Engineer  
Statista GmbH



# Carina Hartz

Social Cohesion in Times of Crises: Understanding Cohesive Entities in Europe

Carina Hartz is originally from Kiel, Germany. She studied Sociology and Psychology at the University of Mannheim, including a year abroad at the Universidad del Atlantico in Colombia. She completed her Master's degree in Psychology at Constructor University (formerly Jacobs University), where she also pursued her PhD as part of BIGSSS. Her doctoral research focused on social cohesion, combining interdisciplinary insights from sociology and psychology. She is particularly interested in understanding the dynamics of social cohesion and times of crises in diverse societies.

“*BIGSSS was the best part of student life—without the grades, but with all the intellectual challenges, supportive mentorship, and lasting friendships across cultures.*”

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Psychologist  
Elbe Klinikum Stade



# Dariya Koleva-Gebauer

Rethinking Resistance: A Mixed-Methods Study of  
Online Resistance Communities

Dariya Koleva-Gebauer completed her undergraduate degree in Politics and International Relations at the University of Aberdeen, Scotland, in 2019. During her studies, she visited Constructor University Bremen (back then Jacobs University) on Erasmus Exchange in 2017. She returned to Bremen in 2021 to pursue her PhD in Political Science within BIGSSS. Her doctoral work examined practices of everyday resistance in digital settings and contributed to the fields of political participation and political communication. She currently works

as Accreditation Coordinator and Lecturer, combining her interests in teaching and higher education management.

*“I enjoyed my time in BIGSSS very much and I am grateful to have met so many amazing colleagues and friends. I remember all of it fondly, but I will particularly miss the BIGSSS colloquia. The CU campus cat, Oreo, also deserves a special mention – seeing him always cheered me up after a long day in the office.”*

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Accreditation Coordinator and Lecturer  
Constructor University



# Ekaterina Widmer-Lytkina

The Impact of Perceived Relative Deprivation and Emotions on Populism

Ekaterina Widmer-Lytkina is currently a Postdoctoral Researcher at the SOCIUM Research Center on Inequality and Social Policy at the University of Bremen. Her main research interests include emotions and their impact on political attitudes, psychological and sociological explanations of populism, perceived and objective relative deprivation, social injustice, coping, comparative social research, and experimental research methods. Her current work focuses on understanding the phenomenon of populist support and the impact of populist communication in capturing audience attention. The ultimate goal is to identify ways to mitigate the negative effects of populist communication and ideology on political behavior and decision-making.

*“At BIGSSS, you learn to manage the entire research process independently—from developing an initial idea, drafting a budget, and applying to an ethical committee, to setting up a study, collecting data, cleaning it, analyzing the results, and writing everything up. This makes you a well-prepared researcher and equips you to apply for research grants.”*

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Post-Doc

SOCIUM Research Center on Inequality and Social Policy,  
University of Bremen



# Cristina Greculescu

Teaching Grit: Examining the Effects of a School-Based Intervention to Foster Grit

Cristina Greculescu completed her PhD in Psychology at BIGSSS in 2025. Her dissertation examined how brief, web-based school interventions can foster grit and support students' academic success. Alongside her doctoral research, she worked for 15 years at Constructor University (formerly Jacobs University), first as Associate Registrar and later as Teaching and Resource Planning Coordinator, where her responsibilities included course planning, lecturer coordination, and academic

resource management. She also taught courses in psychology and media studies at Constructor University and Touro University Berlin. Since September 2025, she is a National Data Manager at the University of Münster.

*“What I will remember most from my time at BIGSSS is the warmth, support, and friendships that made me feel part of a big, diverse, colorful, and brilliant academic family whose energy and ideas inspired me throughout my journey.”*

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National Data Manager (ICCS 2027),  
Universität Münster





# Gamze Ipek

## Life Goals and Well-Being: The Role of Work-Family Interference

Gamze Ipek is originally from Istanbul, Turkey. After earning her bachelor's degree in Sociology and Psychology from Istanbul University, she completed a master's degree in Organizational Psychology at Istanbul Bilgi University. She worked for three years as a Human Resources Specialist at Turkish Airlines before returning to academia to pursue her PhD at BIGSSS, Constructor University Bremen. Her doctoral research focused on well-being at work, especially in the context of work-family interference. She currently works as an HR researcher, driven by a passion for contributing to a better world of work.

“BIGSSS was one of the most beautiful turning points in my life – not only empowering me to grow into a confident researcher but also giving me the experience of living in a new country, lifelong friendships, and the most supportive mentorships.”

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HR Researcher  
Top Employers Institute, Germany

# Other Graduates

## **Anders Hentschel**

Social Policy Coordination within the European Semester: EU Policy Recommendations and Domestic Responses

## **Anna Fejös**

Professional Trajectories of Roma in Hungary – Claiming Space in Education, Business and the Arts

## **Ante Malinar**

Influence of International Organisations on Social Policy Making in Vulnerable Countries: The Case of Croatian Healthcare Financing Policy

## **Christina Grabbe**

Enfant Terrible of Policy-Makers and Mobile Workers' Porous Safety Net – The Challenges of the EU Coordination of Social Security

## **Ekaterina Vorobeva**

Central Asian Migrant Entrepreneurship in Russia: Refining the Mixed Embeddedness Approach

## **Ertila Druga**

Social Health Insurance in Albania: Examining the World Bank's role in Health Care Financing Reform (1990 – 2022). Activities and Strategies

## **Florian Buchmayr**

Das Politische und das Soziale – Eine empirische Analyse des Verhältnisses zwischen sozialen Lebensbedingungen und ideologischen Positionen

## **Greta-Marleen Storath**

Migrant Care Work in Sweden. Sustainable Solution for an Ageing Society or Disruption of the Nordic Welfare State

### **Hung H. V. Nguyen**

Party Positioning Space: A Comprehensive Framework for Understanding Multidimensional Policy-Making Dynamics

### **Jelisaveta Belić**

Negotiating Personal Values in a Complex Social World: Well-being Implications for Emerging Adults

### **Jessica Nuske**

Sozialwissenschaften in dritter Mission: Transdisziplinarität als Versuch der souveränen Offenheit gegenüber Gesellschaft

### **Josephine Assmus**

Free to Move but Unprotected: Cross-Border Cooperation and Enforcement of Mobile Workers' Rights in the EU Single Market

### **Juma Kalyegira**

The Role of Basic Psychological Needs Satisfaction for the Psychological Wellbeing and Social-Cultural Integration of Refugees in Rhino Camp Refugee Settlement, Uganda

### **Kristin Noack**

Migrants needed: Understanding the Role and Experiences of Migrant Care Workers in Formal Elder Care Provision in Germany

### **Marlene Seiffarth**

The Perpetuation of the Migrant-in-the-Family Care Model in Italy

### **Michael Martin Richter**

Power, Politics, and Anti-Corruption Reforms in Ukraine:  
The Role of Western Actors

### **Pay Laurin Jessen**

Moral Deviance Across Cultures – Investigations of the Human Moral Mind

## **BIGSSS**

Dr. Christian Peters | Managing Director  
BIGSSS | Bremen International Graduate  
School of Social Sciences  
[cpeters@bigsss-bremen.de](mailto:cpeters@bigsss-bremen.de)  
Universität Bremen  
Mary-Somerville-Str. 9  
28359 Bremen, Germany  
[www.bigsss-bremen.de](http://www.bigsss-bremen.de)

## **Editor**

Jessica Maczuga | Senior Coordinator  
of the Deans' Office  
BIGSSS | Bremen International Graduate  
School of Social Sciences

## **Design**

Uni-Druckerei | Servicestelle für Gestaltung  
und Produktion