



### **Professor Maria Mendel — Opening Keynote Lecturer**

Professor Maria Mendel, PhD, D.Sc., is a distinguished scholar of social pedagogy at the **University of Gdańsk** and an internationally recognized authority on community-engaged research, pedagogy of place, and the social dimensions of knowledge production. Her work has been instrumental in advancing critical, participatory, and solidarity-oriented approaches to research that connect universities with communities, civil society, and public life.

Professor Mendel's scholarship explores how education, research, and social action intersect within concrete social spaces, emphasizing responsibility, relationality, and democratic engagement. Her influential concepts of *pedagogy of place* and *common space* resonate strongly with the Living Knowledge movement's commitment to co-creation, civic engagement, and research for the public good. She is the author and editor of numerous seminal books and articles, including *Pedagogika miejsca*, *Pedagogika miejsca wspólnego*, and *Parent Engagement as Power*, and has published extensively in both Polish and English.

Beyond her academic contributions, Professor Mendel has played a key leadership role in shaping higher education and research culture. She has served as **Vice-Rector for Education** and **Director of the Institute of Pedagogy** at the University of Gdańsk, and she currently leads the **Department of Social Pedagogy**. She is also a co-founder of the **Polish Research Network About Parents in Education**, fostering collaborative, participatory research practices at national and international levels.

In recognition of her outstanding impact on social science and public life, Professor Mendel has received numerous honors, including the prestigious **Johannes Hevelius Award**.