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Università degli Studi di Sassari
Dipartimento di Scienze Umanistiche e Sociali

Social Work from an International Perspective

Erasmus+ Blended Intensive Programme

March/April 2026



Linnéuniversitetet 

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DIPARTIMENTO DI
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E SOCIALI



Blended Intensive Programme
Institutional Agreement/Commitment of the parties

This statement is to confirm that the undersigned institutions are willing to be partners within the Erasmus+ funded Blended Intensive Programme entitled "Social Work from an International Perspective" which consists of a virtual component on 20/09/2025 and a physical one from 13/04/2025 to 29/04/2025. The Katholische Stiftungshochschule München will participate with a total number maximum of 12 students/learners from the staff. Both institutions undertake to apply all the principles of the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education and to abet mobility rules.

For the 2025/26 academic year, the Blended Intensive Programme participants will meet at the Università degli Studi di Sassari (Sassari, Italy) from 13/04/2025 to 29/04/2025.

Commitment of the parties

Institution: Katholische Stiftungshochschule München
 Name of the signatory: Andrea Gerlach
 Position: Erasmus+ Institutional Coordinator
 Signature:

Institution: Università degli Studi di Sassari
 Name of the signatory: Prof. Gavino Mariotti
 Position: Rector
 Signature:

Date: 13.01.2025
 11:28:53
 GMT+02:00

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Date: 06.02.2025



Blended Intensive Programme
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For the 2025/26 academic year, the Blended Intensive Programme participants will meet at the Università degli Studi di Sassari (Sassari, Italy) from 13/04/2025 to 29/04/2025.

Commitment of the parties

Institution: Linnæus University, Department of Social Work
 Name of the signatory: Associate Prof. Jesper Johansson
 Position: Head of Department
 Signature:

Institution: Università degli Studi di Sassari
 Name of the signatory: Prof. Gavino Mariotti
 Position: Rector
 Signature:

Date: 12.01.2025
 11:25:57
 GMT+02:00

Signature:

Date:

Date: 10/02/2025

Signature page
 This document has been electronically signed using eduSign.

Electronically signed by
 Jesper Johansson
 Date and time of signed on
 2025-02-10 11:16 UTC
 as proof issued by
 Linnæus University



Virtual Component

BIP Erasmus+ "Social Work from an International Perspective"

2026-03-27 12:07 UTC

Recorded by

CHESA Stefano

Organized by

CHESA Stefano



Pia Strnad



DANIELA IDINI



Barzoo Ellass



Nellie Zetterlund



GIULIA SECCI



Mikael Bengtsson



Andrea Spranger



Kathrin Beck



CHESSA Stefano

MK

Michelle ...

MA

Marie Al...

RR

Rakel Ra...

SW

Sarah Wl...

LK

Leonie K...

LS

Lovisa Sw...

AM

ARMINN ...

DR

Daniel R...

AR

Alice RS...

TG

Theresa ...

NH

Nicola H...

TV

Tiko Ver...

M

Michaela

LB

Lina Rec...

DT

DALIA L...

AE

Amelie E...

HR

Hassan R...

+11

Draft schedule

(presented during the virtual component)



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Università degli Studi di Sassari
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Social Work from an International Perspective

Erasmus+ Blended Intensive Programme

12-18 April 2026



Linnéuniversitetet 



KSH-Katholische Stiftungshochschule München
(Prof. Dr. Kathrin Beck)

LNU-Linnéuniversitetet Kalmar-Växjö
(Prof. Dr. Mikael Bengtsson, Prof. Dr. Barzoo Eliassi)

UNISS-Università degli Studi di Sassari
(Prof. Dr. Stefano Chessa)





Prof. Dr. Kathrin Beck

My research and teaching interests relate to school social work, violence in schools, children and young people in precarious situations, international comparative social work and social work in Europe. I am also interested in photovoice as a participatory research method in social work.





Prof. Dr. Mikael Bengtsson

My research interests lie primarily within the sociology of professions, with a particular focus on the development of social work as an occupational group through the interplay between different levels and processes of differentiation, which include mobility, careers, the construction of qualifications and competencies, knowledge utilization, discretion, and work autonomy. I am also interested in social work education, professional improvisation within social work practice, and collaboration as an act of discretion in a broader sense.





Prof. Dr. Barzoo Eliassi

Barzoo Eliassi holds a PhD in social work and serves as an associate professor at Linnaeus University, Sweden. Eliassi's research area engages with social work, postcolonial studies, intersectionality, ethnic studies, migration studies, youth studies, citizenship, statelessness and social work with families, youth, and children from migrant backgrounds.





Prof. Dr. Stefano Chessa

His main fields of study and research are related to education and social policies, with a particular focus on educational processes, socialization, and family policies. Current and more specific research interests focus on emotional socialization, work-life balance, social participation, and responsible research.



Breakout-session (15 minutes)

- ***What do you have in common?*** Find 3-5 things that you have in common.
- ***Let us know:*** one speaker of each group presents the things they have in common.



Social Work from an International Perspective					
Sunday (12.04.26)	Monday (13.04.26)	Tuesday (14.04.26)	Wednesday (15.04.26)	Thursday (16.04.26)	Friday (17.04.26)
Arrival and check-in to accommodation	09.00 – 12.00 Kick-Off & presentations from students of all three countries plus discussion / questions	09.00-09.45 Mikael Bengtsson Lecture on Social Work as a Social Profession 10.00-10.45 Kathrin Beck Lecture on Social Work during Crises and Wartime 11.00-11.45 Stefano Chessa Lecture on Social Work in Third Sector Organizations	Independent research task in international trios: creative assignment	09.00-12.30 Panel discussion on internship and field training	09.00 – 12.30 International trios report: Presentation of creative assignment Reflection on the week in groups
	Lunch break	Lunch break		Lunch break	Lunch break
	City tour in German and English	15.00-17.00 Field visit		15.00-17.00 Field visit	Farewell
	Welcome dinner with all participants			Professors' dinner 20.00 – Open end Party ??	



Breakout-session (20 minutes)

Why international?

- International experiences so far?
- How international is social work?
- How do you feel about the upcoming BIP week?
- What are your expectations?



Assignment

On Monday, you will give a short presentation on **social work in your country** with your country group (**15 minutes**). Please answer the following questions:

- What does your education to become a social worker look like (Bachelor / Master / PhD)?
- How many placements do you have in your Bachelor program?
- What are the main fields that social workers work in after finishing their studies?



**We are very much looking forward
to welcoming you to Sassari!**





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Physical component

The BIP “Social Work from an International Perspective” with KSH, LNU and UNISS and as receiving HEI **takes place between 12.04.2026 – 18.04.2026 in Sassari.**

The main objective of this programme is to provide a deepened knowledge about **social work in different European countries.**

Main subjects:

- International social work
- Social work in Germany, Italy and Sweden
- Present and future issues in social work (e.g., social work in the context of inequality)

Methods include lectures and discussions, groupwork, field visits as well as social activities.

Outcomes: Students

- have knowledge about social work practice in different countries,
- have required skills to compare social work in the three different countries,
- can collaborate with students from other countries and
- can discuss opportunities and challenges related to social work practice.

Please allow me to pay tribute to a colleague who passed away in 2024, Günther Sander of the University of Mainz, whom I met in 1994 and who, together with my mentor Alberto Merler, helped me to appreciate the international dimension of the joint work among lecturers and students through the first Erasmus intensive programmes developed in collaboration with the universities of Mainz, Valencia and Östersund.



Sassari, 2008

Final schedule

Social Work from an International Perspective

Sunday (12.04.26)	Monday (13.04.26)	Tuesday (14.04.26)	Wednesday (15.04.26)	Thursday (16.04.26)	Friday (17.04.26)	
	<p>09.00 – 12.30 <i>Aula Lessing</i></p> <p>Kick-Off & presentations from students of all three countries plus discussion / questions</p> <p>Stefano Chessa Participative research method: creative assignment explained</p>	<p>09.00-12.30 <i>Aula Lessing</i></p> <p>Mikael Bengtsson Social Work as a Social Profession</p> <p>Kathrin Beck Social Work during Crises and Wartime</p> <p>Barzoo Eliassi Social Work in the Context of Social Division and Migration</p>	<p>Independent research task in international trios: creative assignment</p>	<p>09.00-12.30 <i>Aula Lessing</i></p> <p>Stefano Chessa Social Work in Third Sector Organizations</p> <p>Panel discussion on internship and field training</p>	<p>09.00 – 12.30 <i>Aula Lessing</i></p> <p>International trios report: Presentation of creative assignment Reflection on the week in groups</p>	
	<p>13.00 Lunch break <i>Mensa universitaria ERSU</i> Via dei Mille, 102 - Sassari (group travels there together)</p>	<p>13.00 Lunch break <i>Mensa universitaria ERSU</i> Via dei Mille, 102 - Sassari (group travels there together)</p>		<p>13.00 Lunch break <i>Mensa universitaria ERSU</i> Via dei Mille, 102 - Sassari (group travels there together)</p>	<p>13.00 Lunch break <i>Mensa universitaria ERSU</i> Via dei Mille, 102 - Sassari (group travels there together)</p>	
Arrival and check-in to accommodation	<p>15.30-16.30 City tour in English Meeting point at Piazza d'Italia</p> <p>17.00-18.00 City tour in German Meeting point at Piazza d'Italia</p>	<p>15.30-17.30 Field visit to <i>Cooperativa Sociale Il Sogno</i> https://www.cooperativailsogno.org/ e <i>Cooperativa Sociale Differenze</i> https://www.coopdifferenze.org/ Via G. De Martini, 18 - Sassari (group travels there together)</p>			<p>16.00-18.00 Field visit to <i>Associazione di Promozione Sociale Officine Condivise</i> https://www.officinecondivise.com/ e <i>Cooperativa Sociale EduPè</i> https://www.edupe.it/ c/o Centro POLISS Via Baldedda, 15 - Sassari https://www.comune.sassari.it/it/servizi/servizio/Centro-Poliss-Spazio-Giovani/ (group travels there together)</p>	Farewell
	<p>20.00 <i>Ristorante Asfodelo</i> Via Roma, 134 - Sassari Welcome dinner with all participants</p>				<p>20.00 <i>Ristorante Tritus</i> Via Giorgio Asproni, 2 - Sassari Professors' dinner</p>	
					<p>21.00 – Open end Final party organized by the students (location to be defined) (<i>optional</i>)</p>	

Students' presentations



Social Work in Sweden

— Alice Rådevik, Cornelia Brattborn, Nellie Zetterlund, Hassan Rahimi, Erna Sivac, Lisen Bergqvist, Rakel Rudestam, Lovisa Svensson, Amanda Linderos, Ella Brink, Nancy Zaatar —

What does your education to become a social worker look like (Bachelor / Master / PhD)?

- Bachelor - seven semesters - 210 ECTS
 - Social work, law, psychology and more
 - Central part - professional, respectful and empathetic approach.
 - Critical perspective on legislation and practice
- Master - eleven semesters
 - Different specializations
 - Other areas such as criminology
- PhD - 240 ECTS credits which contains 60 credits at advanced level + 4 years of research
 - Further specialization
 - Research

How many placements do you have in your Bachelor Program?

Hassan, Cornelia, Amanda, Erna

- About 120 places in program
- Social Work has a shortage of workers
- Many fields in Sweden to work
 - Ex Manager at an elderly home, or handler at social services department
- 17 weeks of practical studies/placements - 20 weeks considering the theoretical studies included
- Quite free to chose where to have placement, can have some difficulties

What are the main fields that social workers work in after finishing their studies?

Ella, Alice, Lisen

- Social case worker - disabilities, financial difficulties, substance abuse issues, elderly care, and children and families.
 - Counselor - School, hospital, social service,
 - Social managers within elderly care, disability services, and child and family services.
-

Thanks for listening :)





**Katholische
Stiftungshochschule
München**

University of Applied Sciences

Study of social work in Germany

13. 04.2026

Our Building



What does your education to become a social worker look like (Bachelor/Master/PhD)?



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- Bachelor
- 7. Semester
- We have a obligatory Practical Semester (4 Semester)
- 210 ECTS -> same as in Sweden :D

- At the End you get the Bachelor of Arts

- A Master is possible but not that common

How many placements do you have in your Bachelor program?



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The practical study phases in the Social Work (B.A.) program in Munich, aimed at building professional competence, are divided into three practical phases:

- ✓ Practical Phase I: Orientation phase 3 Weeks
- ✓ Practical Phase II: Foundation phase (practical semester) 4,5 Months
- ✓ Practical Phase III: Specialization phase 3 Weeks

These practical phases are a central component of the Bachelor's degree in Social Work and are integrated into the overall concept of the program.

Main fields after finishing:

- **Child and Youth Welfare**
 - Work in youth welfare offices, homes, youth centers
 - Family Support and Counseling
- **Family Support and Counseling**
 - Help with parenting, conflicts, or crises
 - Advice during separation or financial problems
- **Health and Mental Health**
 - Support for people with mental illness or addiction
 - Work in clinics or counseling centers
- **Disability Service**
 - Assistance for people with disabilities
 - Promote independence and participation



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School Social Work

- Work directly in schools
- Support students, parents, and teachers

Migration and Integration

- Support for Refugees and migrants
- Help with integration and social participation

Homeless Support

- Help people without housing
- Support with basic needs and reintegration

Resocialization/Criminal Justice

- Work with offenders
- Support reintegration into society



Thanks for Listening :D

(and the extra Time)

Yours

Dani, Fede, Sarah, Pauline,
Amelie, Michaela, Marie, Nici,
Theresa, Leonie, Pia, Caro,
Michelle und Andrea <3



How to Become a Social Worker

Registration Requirements and Procedure

Registration Requirements

- ▶- Bachelor's Degree / Specialist Degree
- ▶- Qualification - State Exam
- ▶- Residence in the Region or local area of the Order
- ▶- No prior disqualification or criminal conviction

- ▶ An application must be submitted to the local Council with:
 - ▶ - Documentation certifying possession of the qualification
 - ▶ - Proof of payment of the registration fee

Registration Procedure

Cancellation

- Upon request of the interested party
- If the necessary conditions for registration are no longer met

Main Sectors Where Social Workers Work After Graduation

Overview of Employment Opportunities

1. Public Sector

- ▶ - Municipal Social Services: Support for families, minors, the elderly and people in difficulty.
- ▶ - Local Health Authorities: Assistance for patients with health and social problems (disability, mental health, drug addiction) (ASL).
- ▶ - Courts (Juvenile and Ordinary): interventions to protect minors and families in situations of hardship or violence.
- ▶ - Prisons and Justice Services: Social reintegration of prisoners and alternative measures to detention.
- ▶ - Schools: Support for students with social or family difficulties.

2. Private and Third Sector

- Social Cooperatives: work with vulnerable people ,migrants,minors,disabled and homeless people.

- NGOs and Associations: inclusion projects,protection of rights and social emergencies.

- Nursing Homes and Elderly Residences: Assistance and protection of guests rights.

3. Freelance Work

- ▶ Some social workers work as freelancers, offering consultancy services to families, companies, and public entities.

Why is the work of a social worker important?

- ▶ Social workers are essential because they help people regain dignity, autonomy, and social inclusion by removing obstacles that limit their freedom and well-being.



**3. How many
placements do
you have in your
Bachelor
program?**

What is the placement and why is it involved in our program of study?

- ▶ The placement is a training and operative activity designed to facilitate an initial contact with the field of the social work.
- ▶ The trainee is supervised by the social worker tutor and the trainee teacher with the purpose to provide support along the way.



How many placements we have in our Bachelor program

In our Bachelor program, there are three placements:

- First placement (3 cfu, 75 hours)
- Second placement (9 cfu, 225 hours)
- Third placement (12 cfu, 300 hours)

First placement

The execution is scheduled to take place in the classroom because that the teaching is given by the social worker

The goals:

- To develop the ability to observe and reflect on the reasons of choosing this profession
- To learn the technical-professional tools of the social workers and its competence in services offered to the person
- To learn the contents of Ethical Code and the professional documentation involved in the practise

Second and Third placement

Both involve the direct experience of support processes for individuals, group and communities.

The second placement involves participatory observation of the activities carried out by the social worker.

The third one involves active and practical participation in the activities carried out by the social worker.

Common elements

- ▶ Use of social work tools such as professional documentation, interviews, reunions and home visits.
- ▶ At the conclusion of both placements, is required a written report where the students have to report and analyse the activities, done during the experience, in relation to the predefined objectives

4. WHICH MAIN CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES DO YOU SEE FOR SOCIAL WORK AND SOCIAL WORKERS IN YOUR COUNTRY TODAY?

Opportunities within challenges

- ▶ New and changing problems: social problems and needs change, the social worker has to change the approach and adapt.
- ▶ High migratory flows and increasing discrimination: social integration of people who migrate to Italy and for the acceptance of differences; multicultural opportunity for the social worker.
- ▶ Few jobs in the public sector: the public work of social workers in Italy is decreasing. Boost the private work and the third sector.
- ▶ Challenge and opportunity to communicate: try to control the way media and people talk about social services, and represent it differently

**5. SPECIFIC AREAS OF
KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS
THAT ARE BECOMING
INCREASINGLY
IMPORTANT FOR
SOCIAL WORKERS IN
ITALY**

SKILLS ALREADY PRESENT IN THE TRAINING PLAN

- ▶ Digital skills: know how to use online platforms, manage data safely, do remote support.
- ▶ Advocacy skills: defend the rights of people with whom you work and raise awareness about social issues.
- ▶ Intercultural approach: sensitivity towards diversity. Ability and tools for interaction with different cultures.

THINGS TO IMPROVE AND ADD TO THE TRAINING PLAN

- ▶ Sociomedical integration: Reflect academically on how we can overcome the differences between the tools and languages used by the members of the team to work better between the health professions.
- ▶ Emotional work: learning to know and recognize your own emotions, so that you can adapt the way you live them and manage them better. It should be added to the academic training as it is fundamental in the work of the social worker.

Creative assignment explained:
Photovoice

Photovoice is a participatory visual qualitative research method that combines photography and narrative storytelling to capture individuals' lived experiences, particularly those from marginalized or underserved communities. The approach allows participants to visually document their environments and experiences, enabling them to share insights into social, political, and health-related issues. Photovoice is frequently used in public health, sociology, and community development to empower participants and engage them in advocacy and policymaking.

Photovoice was developed in 1992 by Caroline C. Wang of the University of Michigan and Mary Ann Burris, a program officer for women's health at the Ford Foundation in Beijing, China. The method is based on the premise that images, combined with participant narratives, can be used to express community and individual needs, concerns, and priorities.

The approach draws on several intellectual traditions, including documentary photography, theories of empowerment, and feminist theory. It is also informed by participatory health education practices and the work of Paulo Freire, particularly his concept of critical consciousness as described in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Wang and Burris noted that Freire emphasized the use of visual images as a means of encouraging critical reflection on social and political forces shaping everyday life, and that Photovoice extends this idea by enabling community members to create the images themselves.

Photovoice was first implemented with rural women in Yunnan Province, China, where it was used to inform government policies and programs affecting their lives. Since its initial application, the method has been adapted for use in a range of contexts and populations. Documented applications include work with refugees in San Diego seeking access to in-person medical interpretation services, homeless adults in Ann Arbor, Michigan, community health workers and teachers in rural South Africa, and individuals living with brain injury.

Photovoice has been adopted across disciplines, including public health, education, social work, and community development, and is frequently combined with other community-based and participatory action research methods. It is a qualitative approach used to address sensitive and complex issues, allowing individuals to share their perspectives. It is used to elicit and analyze data for knowledge dissemination and mobilization. The aim is to inform and support the creation of appropriate interventions and actions regarding complex problems, including health and well-being, social inequality, and socioeconomic disparity.

The photovoice model has also been used in higher education to teach social work students. Photovoice has also been used to engage children and youth, providing them with an environment and opportunity to communicate concerns and coping strategies to policymakers and service providers. Overall, photovoice is used to investigate participants' lived experiences concerning systemic structures and social power relations and to communicate these experiences through a non-verbal medium.

A photovoice project should aim to:

- Empower individuals to document and reflect on community assets and concerns;
- Invite critical dialogue and create knowledge about community issues using photographs as a medium for group discussion;
- Reach policymakers and stakeholders. Photos taken by participants serve as discussion tools and reference points, guiding conversations with researchers and other participants.

How Photovoice Works

Participants Take Photographs: People directly impacted by a certain issue are given cameras or smartphones to document their day-to-day lives or specific experiences.

Discussion and Reflection: After capturing their images, participants discuss what their photos represent. These reflections can highlight critical insights about their challenges, aspirations, or the realities they face.

Creating a Narrative: Through storytelling, participants attach personal meanings to the images. This narrative adds context to the photographs and can be used to communicate powerful stories to a wider audience.

Advocacy and Policy Change: The results from photovoice studies are often shared with decision-makers, researchers, and the public to bring attention to important community issues. This approach can help advocate for policy changes by offering a visual and emotional appeal alongside data.

Lectures



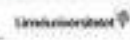
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Social work as a (social) profession – focusing on Germany, Italy and Sweden

Mikael Bengtsson

Dr, researcher and senior lecturer in Social Work
Department of Social Work, Linnaeus University, Sweden

One assumption: *Social work as a discipline*

- Research
- Education
- **Profession and practice**

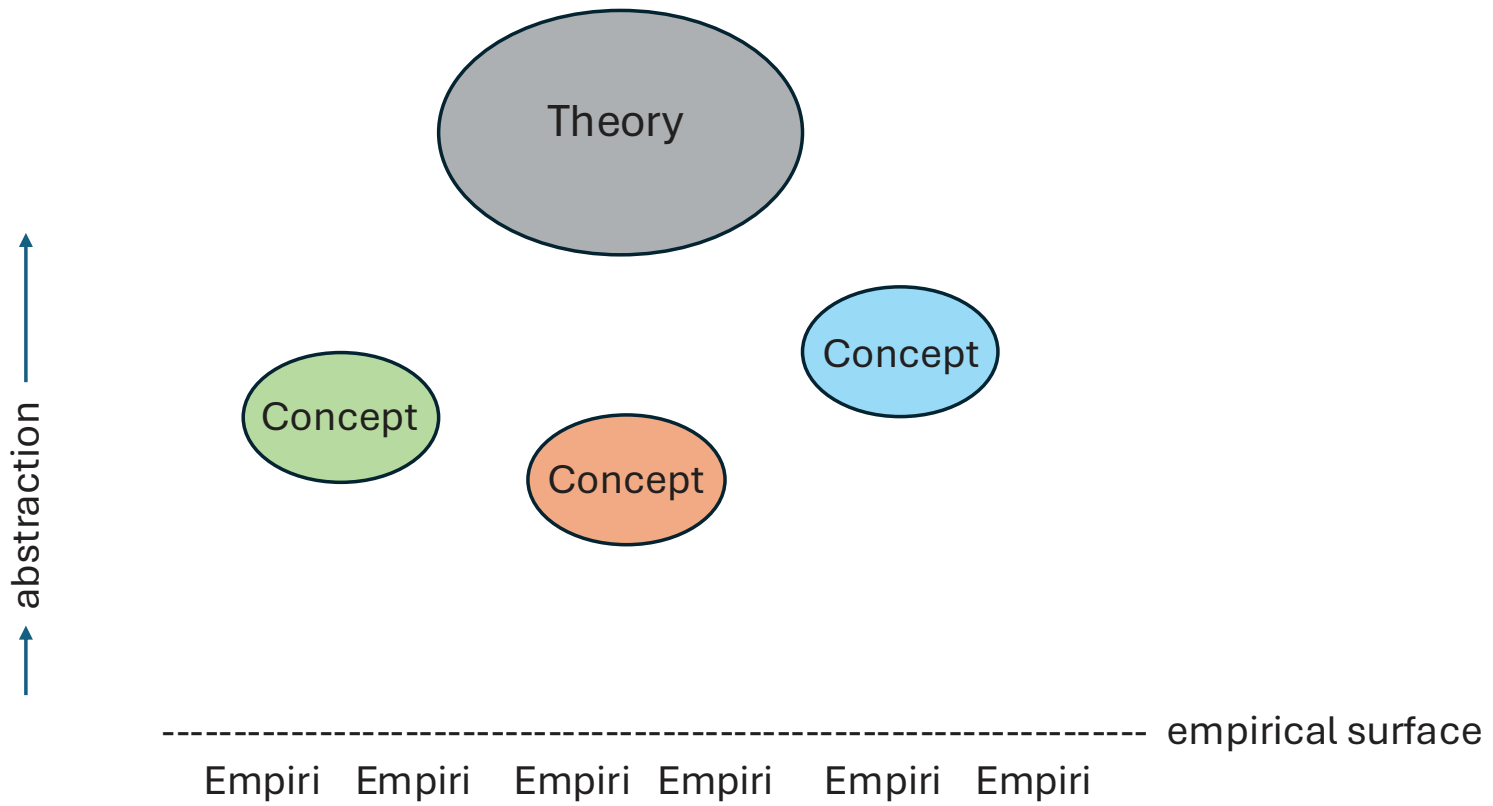
Time, place and space – doing like the pioneers of social work?

We are all shaped – and “indoctrinated” – by the spaces we live in. Assumptions may be rationalizations to handle complexity but sometimes held on weak and questionable grounds – biased interpretations and prejudice.

Students in social work are often working on their awareness and understanding of the “psychosocial realities” of human life as well as “tools” to interpret and act upon them – combining macro, meso and micro perspectives.

Generally, history and comparisons have a lot to tell us about what we are into, ourselves, each other and society.

And what could be more useful and practical than a good theory 😊



Central concepts of this analytical tool – within theory of professions

- *Profession* – A knowledge-based occupation with some mandate to do certain things in a society under autonomy; a consistent and self-strengthening relation between a kind of knowledge, an object and a practice (Brante, 2014, p. 279). (**category**)
- *Professionalization* – Changes of an occupational group towards increased ”autonomy and control over its own education and the content, prerequisites and conditions for professional practice” (Dellgran and Höjer, 2005, p. 248, *my translation*). (**process**)
- Our analytical tool: Central attributes of a profession and steps in professionalization
 - *Established professional education*
 - *Knowledge base that generates a work field*
 - *Monopoly over the link between specific skills and work field*
 - *Professional organization*
 - *Ethical standards*
 - *Autonomy at different levels (over its education, organizational methods, working conditions, how to get things done)*

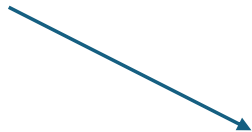
(Abbott, 1988; Weiss & Welbourne, 2007; Lorenz, 2021)

Purpose of this lecture

- To briefly trace and describe social work as a (social) profession by using the concept professionalization
- Present material and an analytical discussion that, *hopefully*, can contribute to navigating social work contexts and the content of this BIP, and in doing a professional role

In many European countries before and around 1900...

- Industrialization
 - Urbanization
- } Structural change
- Sell labour to survive – people a resource for state & in capitalism
 - Miserable living conditions
 - Fear of revolution
 - No developed welfare systems – no social economic “umbrella”
 - No social work occupation, but philanthropic un-educated charity – including moral judgements of deserving and un-deserving
 - International exchange of ideas and knowledge
 - “The social question” engaged, some had knowledge, network and ability to act



Something had to be done

In many European countries before and around 1900...

- The social work-pioneers called for changes of the interplay between state and individuals – engaged at macro, meso, micro-levels – in essence:
 - Social policy processes (also requested by labour movement, social democracy)
 - Professionalization of social work – controversial – occupation and an education that integrated theory and practice, holding field placement as the “signature pedagogic”.
 - Organizing of welfare services and service provision
 - Better living conditions, structural requisites for ”living”, wellbeing, and enabling individuals to ”function” in society; ***support in and control of private spheres in a psychosocial sense***

In many European countries after 1900...

- Variation of policies and social work between state/nations
- Social work as *education* and *occupation* – step 1 and 2 in professionalization
- A drive for professional status (Weiss & Welboure, 2007) based on specific knowledge (psychosocial interplay)
- Wellbeing and social justice as guiding values for this **moral work** in highly politicized areas of human life
 - But always these values? (see Pierson, 2021)
 - Or both complicity and resistance to the opposite? (see Iokamidis & Wyllie, 2024)
- Social work have been and is enmeshed in various regimes, tensions and conflicts in different state/nation-contexts (Lorenz, 2021) – different versions of social work? Is it the same profession? Similarities and differences?

Which version of social work are we thinking of?

- **Liberal welfare model**
- **Conservative welfare model**
- **Social democratic welfare model**

- These models are ideal types — in reality, often combined.
- Welfare regimes don't just shape welfare systems – inherent policies also shape what social work is supposed to and can be.

Welfare models – very brief repetition (Esping Andersen, 1990)

Liberal welfare model	Conservative welfare model	Social democratic welfare model
Market based insurance solutions. Means-tested benefits	Social insurance linked to work (trad. male breadwinner)	Universal social insurance and services financed by the state and municipalities (+private insurances) and tested benefits
Low tax pressure, but often progressive scale. social insurance paid by individual.	Low tax pressure (but often progressive tax scale)	High tax pressure (and progressive tax scale) Social insurance paid by state and employers
Market based solutions	Family based support	State responsibility and "ownership" of resources – state involvement
Strong individual responsibility	Status- and occupation-based benefits	Relatively high level of decommodification/financial- and social security
"Sell your labour or products/services on the market"	Strong individual- and family-responsibility for situations and solutions	"Everyone should come along" Decrease of market and family dependence

Welfare regimes are not static – dynamics influence social work practice

- Sweden is traditionally seen as a social democratic welfare regime with universal rights and benefits and far-reaching services, but has undergone changes towards a mixed or hybrid welfare model with a more liberal logic:
 - Increased use of means-testing in certain areas
 - Stronger emphasis on individual responsibility, f.e. activation and work-first approach
 - Greater reliance on market-based solutions (e.g., privatisation, choice systems)
 - New Public Management influences (measurements, routines, digitalization) in public sector – more experienced sw are doing administration (managers, developers, coordinators)

Welfare regimes are not static – dynamics influence social work practice

- Germany is considered a conservative corporatist welfare regime, but also show influence of a neoliberal agenda, f.e. privatization, “an activating welfare state”, self-responsibility, guiding-to-self-guiding.
- Italy could be seen more as a mix, with a hold in a liberal and a conservative welfare model accentuating family; “familism” in a Southern Europe/Mediterranean welfare (SE/M) regime (as Spain, Greece, Portugal).
- All three contexts are influenced by a neoliberal agenda – what does this mean for the social work profession in these contexts?

Sui generis of the social work profession?

- Engaged in moral work at different levels in politicized areas; towards wellbeing, inclusion, social justice and more – see the global definition (approved by IFSW and IASSW in 2014)
- Context-dependent and varies across welfare regimes
- The interplay between individual and society
- Casework, groupwork, community work, administration.
- Psychosocial investigations, assessments and interventions (formally or informally) are central
- Social change- and process-thinking are central as well as integrating other forms of abstract knowledge and practice
- Interaction and conversation are some important tools and means
- Combines support and control – more or less of each in different professional roles (Svensson, Johnsson & Laanemets, 2021)

Social work as a profession in Sweden, Italy & Germany – core attributes (Bengtsson, 2020; Bertotti, 2021; Laging, Schäfer & Lorenz, 2021)

	Sweden	Italy	Germany
Education	<p>Since 1921</p> <p>At university since late 70s</p> <p>Governed by the state</p> <p>210 ects</p> <p>Field</p>	<p>Since 1945</p> <p>Fully at university since 2001 (but from 80s)</p> <p>Governed by the state</p> <p>180 ects</p> <p>Field placement 18 ects (+10 ects at advanced level)</p>	<p>Since 1908 (1930–1945?)</p> <p>At universities of applied science (different from university in Germany) and other facilitators</p> <p>Governed at local level, but Qualifikationsrahmen Soziale Arbeit and DGSA</p> <p>180–210 ects</p>
Monopoly/state leg./registration	No (yes, for counsellors in health care since 2019)	Yes, self-regulated (prof appointed by Ministry of Justice).	No
Professional organizations	Yes, f.e. Akademikerförbundet SSR	Yes, f.e. Consiglio Nazionale Assistenti Sociali (CNOAS)	Yes, f.e. Deutscher Berufsverband für Soziale Arbeit (DGSA), Berufsverband der Sozialpädagogen /Sozialarbeiter und Heilarbeiter (BSH)
Ehtical standars	Yes	Yes	Yes
Autonomy	State-dependent & highly organization dependent	State shelter (legitimation)	Subsidiarity. Market- and organization dependent?



Figure 2. Number of work-active "socionomer" and social workers in Sweden, (Source: Number for 2017 comes from SCB, Bengtsson, 2020) Italy & Germany (Bertotti, 2021; Laging, Schäfer & Lorenz 2021)

Social work as a profession in Sweden, Italy & Germany – core attributes (Bengtsson, 2020; Bertotti, 2021; Laging, Schäfer & Lorenz, 2021)

	Sweden (Social democratic model with liberal influences, "universalism")	Italy (Liberal-conservative model or SE/M-model, "familism")	Germany (Conservative model, subsidiarity)
Work field, employer	Decrease of SW in Public sector to 85%, social services as entrance area (65% in municipalities; 11% in regions' health care, 10% in state)	Decrease in public sector to 45% (26 % in municipalities, 15 % in health services)	A vast and deeply entrenched 3rd sector/voluntary sector, which are the largest employer of SW (50%). (what the state thinks civil society can do better should be done by civil society with funding.) Municipalities and state 30–35%? Private companies 15%?
	Increase of SW (14%) in private sector (companies, low number in NGOs)	Increase of SW in private sector (29% in 3rd sector NGOs and other org.)	Increase of SW in third sector
Work field, area of practice	Social services child protection/welfare, economic assistance, addiction, social psychiatry. Health care (councillors in primary care, hospitals, psychiatry),	Social services Health related sw 3rd sector support	Children's services General and economic assistance Health related assistance Older people services Function variation services Family support School social work

Some notes

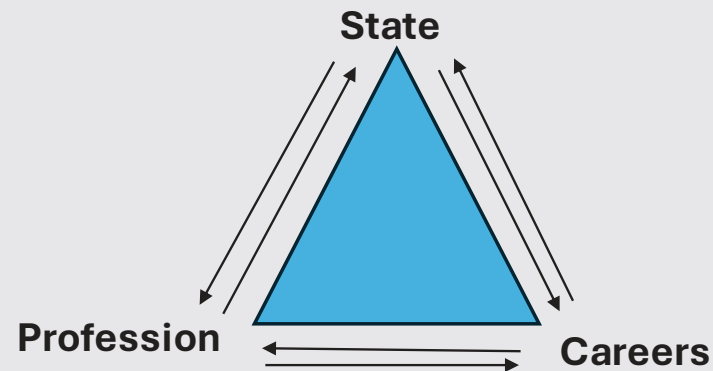
- In Sweden, the social worker is often a public official in a municipality with strong statutory backing (street-level bureaucrats with significant administrative and gatekeeping functions and administrators/managers) Support and increased control?
- In Germany, social workers are often employed by a faith-based or non-profit organization within the 3rd sector. Emphasis on support but without influence on structures?
- In Italy, social workers often function as a coordinator within a system (social services, health related, 3rd sector) that to great extent relies on the family and private solutions. A distanced casework?

Some possible common grounds & challenges (analysis of Bengtsson, 2020; Bertotti, 2021; Laging et al., 2021)

- Psychosocial investigation, assessment & intervention (formally or informally) are central (interplay between structure and individual; process-knowledge)
- Moral work in politicized areas and questions
- Ambition towards social change; social justice, equality, inclusion & wellbeing, but mediator of "context-dominant values", culture (colonization?)
- Discretion – "room for manouver"
- Influenced by a neoliberal agenda since mid 90s (colonized?);
 - Public sector → increased privatization of services
 - Female dominated profession in a male dominated bureaucracy
 - The more "activating" welfare state – "active" citizenship, where "help to selfhelp" may have become "guidance to self-guidance"
 - Citizenship and permit of residence gatekept and gatekeepers in new ways
 - Digitalization – new forms of structures, interaction and inclusion/exclusion
 - New forms of steering, control & productivity measures
 - Professional social worker → Welfare officer in an organization
 - Professionalism is under threat in parts of the work field

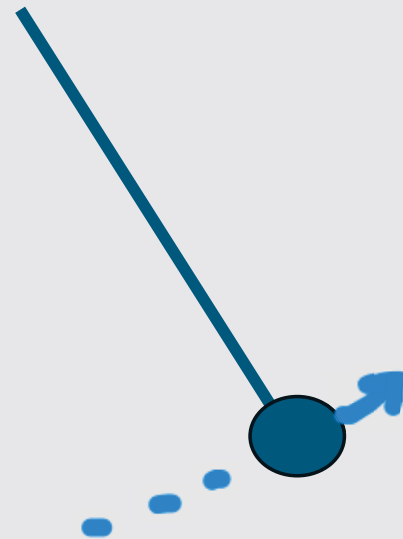
To sum up

- Professions develop in the division of labour and changing contexts, and by an interplay between external and internal processes
- Professions can contribute with stability for society and individuals, not least in times of turbulence
- Professional careers, profession and state are mutually influencing



An old conflict in new clothes *or* an irreversible development? – see f.e. Lawler & Hage (1973) Professional-bureaucratic conflict and intra-organizational powerlessness among social workers; Freidson (2001) Professionalism – The third logic

Professionalism – based in the professional logic; abstract knowledge professional ethics and standards, for how to get things done



Bureaucracy with **managerialism** as guiding principles for how to get things done and market-orientation

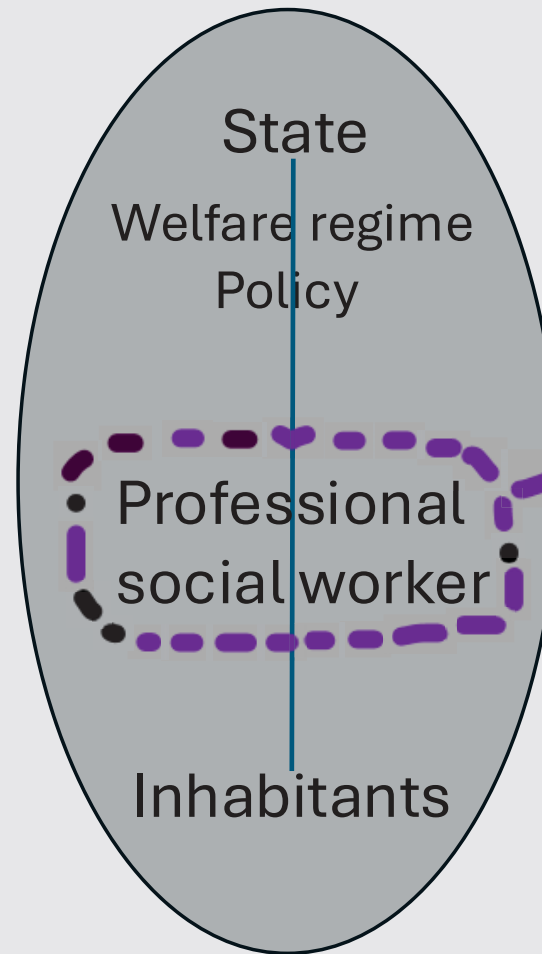
When policy leaves ambiguity and complexity – a call for discretion and to do a professional role

Problematizing discretion:

State needs to be in contact with its inhabitants to fulfill its policies and obligations – professionals with discretion are necessary.

Professionals are mediators of dominant values/culture in context?

Professional discretion is "a black hole of democracy" (Rothstein, 2001)



"doin' psychosocial"

A contact- or access-point between state and its inhabitants

Discretion=Freedom to interpret, assess, decide and act based on ones professional judgement

Need to decide: Who should have what of which resources? How? When?

(Molander, 2016)

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Social Work during
Crises and Wartime

Prof. Dr. Kathrin F. Beck

What comes to your mind first when you hear ,Social Work during Crises and Wartime‘?



<https://answergarden.ch/5151661>

Structure

1. Relevance
2. What is a conflict, an international conflict, war?
3. Social work during wartime
4. Group discussion



Relevance

- Global conflicts are increasing in intensity and represent a significant challenge to human rights and social justice
- The Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) is the world's main provider of data on organised violence, with a history of more than 40 years.
- UCDP differentiates between **state-based** (the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, e.g., Government of Iran – Government of Israel), **non-state-based** (in which none of the warring parties is a government, e.g., drug cartels) and **one-sided violence** (e.g., Government of Russia against civilians).
- 'In 2024, the Uppsala Conflict Data Programme recorded the highest number of state-based conflicts since 1946 [...]. In fact, 2024 ranks as the fourth most violent year since 1989' (Rustad, 2024, p.7).
- Two conflicts were primarily responsible for this toll:
 - 'Russia's ongoing invasion of Ukraine has resulted in approximately 250,000 battle-related deaths over the past three years (2022–2024). [...] the war in Gaza caused an estimated 50,000 deaths in 2023 and 2024. Both the Ukraine and Gaza conflicts remain active, suggesting continued high levels of violence in 2025' (Rustad, 2024, p. 10).

Relevance

- It is now estimated that the death tolls in both wars are significantly higher; however, estimates vary considerably (for example, whether they include only soldiers or also civilians, whether indirect deaths are counted, and the fact that many people are still listed as missing).
- UCDP does not include fatalities from disease and/or epidemics and only events which are reported publicly.
- <https://ucdp.uu.se/encyclopedia>

Relevance

- Children and young people today are faced with a wide range of complex challenges and are increasingly concerned about global crises.
- A survey conducted by the Robert Bosch Foundation of 1,530 children and young people aged 8 to 17 (2024, p. 24) shows that they are **most frequently worried about wars** worldwide, for example in Afghanistan, Syria, Ukraine, Israel, and Palestine (39% often or very often, 32% occasionally).
- The second most common concern reported by children and young people relates to **school performance**, with 26% indicating this often or very often, and 33% occasionally.
- In third place, 8- to 17-year-olds cite **climate change** as a worry, with 25% often or very often and 36% occasionally affected. Furthermore, it is evident that children and young people are experiencing a high level of psychological stress (ibid., p. 10).
- One in five (21%) show signs of **psychological difficulties**. Those particularly affected include children and young people with special educational needs (28%) and those from families experiencing financial worries (18%).

What is a conflict?

- A **conflict** (Jiranek, & Edmüller, 2021) arises when ...
 - different, seemingly incompatible needs, interests or values clash,
 - at least one party to the conflict is under significant emotional strain,
 - those involved feel that they are hindering one another, and
 - tensions can no longer be resolved constructively.
 - The solution, if there is one, is seen as requiring the other person to change themselves or something about their situation.
- **Different interpersonal tensions:** squabbling, disagreement, argumentative dispute
- ‘**Conflict** is as old as the human experience; in the relations between individuals and within, between, and among families, clans, tribes and nation-states [...]’ (Brecher, 2008, p. 6).

What is an international conflict?

- ‘**International conflict** is the segment of conflict that relates to **disputes between or among independent members of the global system**, that is, legally sovereign states, and among non-state actors’ (such as religious organisations and movements).
- ‘It comprises **the widest possible range of hostile behaviour**, from physical or verbal threat, through diplomatic, political, and/or economic boycott, to psychological warfare and violence, whether minor incidents, serious clashes, or full-scale **war**’ (Brecher, 2008, p. 6).
- While this definition may sound quite broad, that is precisely the point. International conflict is not limited to war itself.
- In **social work**, adopting a broader understanding is crucial, since issues like displacement, poverty, trauma, and social fragmentation extend far beyond moments of direct armed conflict.

What is war?

- Scientific definitions of war fall into **quantitative and qualitative categories**.
- According to the bpb, a conflict is considered a 'war' under quantitative definitions only if **the number of direct or indirect deaths surpasses a specific threshold**.
- The Uppsala Conflict Data Program defines war as a 'state-based conflict or dyad which reaches at least 1000 battle-related deaths in a specific calendar year.'
- The threshold is set at exactly 1,000 war-related deaths, meaning that a violent conflict resulting in 999 fatalities in a year would not be classified as a war (bpb).
- **However, can a war be identified solely based on fatalities resulting from physical violence?**

What is war?

- In doing so, the social, economic, and cultural impacts of armed conflicts, as well as victims of, for example, epidemics or famines caused directly by war-damaged infrastructure, are not considered (bpb).
- Thus, what we **see** are often the most visible and immediate consequences.
 - Displacement & forced migration
 - Family separation
 - Loss of education
 - Increased violence in society



What is war?

- Destruction of infrastructure (hospitals, schools, energy)
- Psychological trauma (PTSD, anxiety, depression)
- Erosion of trust (towards institutions, communities)
- Marginalisation of vulnerable groups (children, elderly)
- Poverty increase and economic instability
- Food insecurity & famine (due to disrupted agriculture)
- Rising costs of living



Social work

- '[...] social work as a profession and discipline, has a great deal to offer to research and practice with war-affected populations - **within war and conflict settings, as well as following forced migration and resettlement**' (Denov & Shevell, p. 5).
- **Refugees and internally displaced persons:** Social workers assist displaced persons by providing access to emergency shelter, food, and healthcare. They also help navigate asylum procedures, legal documentation, and resettlement programs. Psychosocial support is crucial to address trauma and uncertainty caused by displacement.
 - As of the end of June 2025, **117.3 million people** had been forced to flee their homes globally due to persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations or events seriously disturbing public order. Among them were
 - **nearly 42.5 million refugees**
 - **67.8 million people displaced within the borders of their own countries (IDPs)**
 - **and 8.42 million asylum-seekers (UNHCR, 2025).**
- **Children and unaccompanied minors:** Children and unaccompanied minors are highly vulnerable during war, facing risks of exploitation, neglect, and recruitment into armed groups. Social workers ensure their protection by arranging safe housing, education, and access to psychological support. They also work to reunite children with family members.

Social work

- **Families separated by war:** War often fragments families, leaving members in different locations or countries. Social workers support family reunification processes, facilitate communication, and help manage the emotional stress of separation. They also provide guidance on accessing social and legal resources across borders.
- **Elderly people and persons with disabilities:** Elderly individuals and those with disabilities are particularly at risk during conflict due to limited mobility and access to services. Social workers ensure they receive healthcare, nutritional support, and protective accommodations.
- **Survivors of violence and trauma:** Survivors of physical, sexual, or psychological violence need comprehensive care to recover from trauma. Social workers provide counseling, connect survivors with medical and legal services, and help them rebuild a sense of safety. Support often includes both individual therapy and community-based interventions.

Social work

- **Women affected by gender-based violence:** Women often face increased risks of sexual violence and exploitation during conflicts. Social workers support them by offering safe spaces, counseling, legal assistance, and access to healthcare. Empowerment programs and advocacy help address systemic inequalities and protect their rights.
- **(Former) soldiers:** Former soldiers and combatants may struggle with reintegration, trauma, and social stigma. Social workers provide mental health support, vocational training, and counseling to help them transition back into civilian life. Programs often focus on preventing cycles of violence and promoting reconciliation.

Group work

- 'The international literature on social work education and research has addressed some of its consequences, mostly displacement and trauma, but **social work standpoints on war and peace** are almost not discussed' (Zaviršek, 2025, p.1).
- ,Ultimately, **wars include everything that social work opposes and fights against** from its very beginning: inequality, injustice, and human suffering; transgenerational destruction; and trauma inflicted by one group on another. War destroys equality, the good life, individual liberation, and all other principles that are celebrated in the international definition of social work (Zaviršek, 2024b). It redefines humanity in which some lives become more important to save than others; some deaths are praised, and some are despised; some people are turned into nonhumans and objectified as bodies of no importance' (Zaviršek, 2025, p. 2).

Group work

1. Read the quotes and briefly think about it
2. Discuss in groups (Sweden, Italy and Germany)
 - How are war and conflict publicly debated in your country? (e.g., political discourse, public opinion)
 - Do you see social work perspectives represented in these debates? Why / why not?
 - Završek argues that war contradicts core social work values.
 - Do you agree?
 - Should social work take a clearer political stance on war and peace?
3. What could a stronger social work standpoint on war and peace look like in practice?

Thank you very much for your attention.

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Social Work in the Context of Social Division and Migration

Lecture Manuscript – Barzoo Eliassi

Introduction

Welcome everyone. It is a pleasure to speak with students from Italy, Germany, and Sweden about a topic that is central to contemporary European welfare societies: **how social work operates within the realities of social division, inequality, and migration.**

Across Europe, social workers meet families whose lives are shaped by economic precarity, mobility across borders, cultural diversity, and unequal access to rights. This lecture weaves together several perspectives to illuminate the complex conditions that shape this field of practice:

- A theoretical understanding of the family as an object of social-policy governance, inspired by Jacques Donzelot.
- Intersectionality as a tool for understanding how inequalities interact.
- Postcolonial and decolonial perspectives that reveal how colonial histories and global power relations shape migration and welfare encounters.
- Empirical insights into how marginalized families face greater risks of state intervention.
- Practical principles such as procedural justice and cultural humility.

The point of departure is that social work is not only about making correct decisions, but about **legitimacy, comprehensibility, and fairness** in the relationships where it operates. These relational qualities are essential for interventions to be effective and for social work to remain both professionally and ethically sustainable.

Donzelot – The Family as an Object of Governance

To understand how family life—often perceived as private and intimate—is interwoven with broader societal power structures, we turn to Jacques Donzelot’s *The Policing of Families* (1977/1979). Donzelot shows how the state and various institutions monitor, shape, and sometimes intervene in the everyday lives of families, not primarily through overt coercion, but through fine-meshed networks of norms, knowledge, and professional authority.

What may appear to be personal choices about child-rearing and family dynamics are, upon closer inspection, deeply political and historically conditioned.

Donzelot’s analysis is situated within the intellectual context of the 1970s, shaped by critical theory and poststructuralism, particularly Michel Foucault’s concepts of power, discipline, and discourse. Foucault describes how modern power operates through surveillance, normalization, and examination—panopticism—rather than through visible coercion. Donzelot applies this to the family, showing how social services, child welfare, schools, and healthcare gradually entered the family sphere and reshaped what is considered normal, healthy, and legitimate parenthood.

Social workers, physicians, and educators become key actors in defining “the good family.” Language, guidelines, and practice create and reinforce standards for adequate care, parental capacity, and acceptable discipline. The family becomes an object of social control, legitimized through discourses of protection, children’s best interests, and risk prevention.

Intersectionality

In this context, intersectionality becomes essential. Donzelot's reasoning gains particular sharpness when we see how class, gender, and ethnicity do not function as separate variables but interact and reinforce one another—a perspective developed within Black feminist legal theory by Kimberlé Crenshaw.

- Low socioeconomic position increases exposure to control.
- Gendered expectations often direct moral demands toward mothers.
- Cultural and ethnic differences risk being misunderstood if assessments rely on implicitly Western norms of “normal” family life.

The question becomes how social work can acknowledge this complexity while acting with legal certainty, care, and respect.

Postcolonial and Decolonial Perspectives

Before turning to contemporary challenges, it is crucial to widen our analytical lens by incorporating **postcolonial and decolonial perspectives**. These perspectives help us understand how historical and global power relations continue to shape the conditions under which families live, migrate, and encounter welfare institutions today.

While intersectionality highlights how social categories interact in the present, postcolonial theory reminds us that these categories themselves were historically produced through colonial expansion, racial hierarchies, and imperial governance.

Postcolonial scholars such as Edward Said, Frantz Fanon, and Gayatri Spivak have shown how European colonialism reorganized global economic and political structures and produced enduring cultural narratives about civilization, modernity, gender, and family life. These narratives continue to influence how Western societies perceive and evaluate “the Other.” In social work, this means that professional assessments may unconsciously draw on historically embedded assumptions about what constitutes a “modern,” “rational,” or “proper” family.

Decolonial thinkers argue that coloniality persists even after formal colonial rule has ended. Western knowledge systems—legal frameworks, psychological theories, pedagogical models, and welfare institutions—continue to present themselves as universal, while marginalizing other epistemologies and ways of life. In social work, this can manifest in expectations that migrant families must adapt to dominant norms, rather than institutions adapting their practices to diverse cultural and historical contexts.

These perspectives matter profoundly for social work in the context of migration. Many families arriving in Europe today come from regions shaped by colonial histories, forced displacement, and global inequalities. Their encounters with welfare institutions cannot be understood solely through the lens of individual behavior or cultural difference; they must also be situated within broader geopolitical relations.

A postcolonial and decolonial approach challenges social workers to critically examine their own positionality and the institutional frameworks within which they operate. It encourages a shift from viewing migrant families as objects of intervention to recognizing them as subjects with histories, knowledge, and agency. It also highlights the importance of humility: acknowledging that professional expertise is shaped by specific cultural and historical contexts, and that alternative

forms of knowledge—community practices, intergenerational wisdom, spiritual traditions—may offer valuable insights into family life and well-being.

By integrating these perspectives, social work becomes better equipped to understand the structural forces that shape families' lives and to avoid reproducing the very inequalities it seeks to address.

Contemporary Challenges and Surveillance

If we move from historical analysis to present-day conditions, it is reasonable to ask whether Donzelot's perspective is outdated or, on the contrary, more relevant than ever. Much suggests the latter.

We live in an era of increasing datafication and debates about privacy, where the digital traces of everyday life influence how families are monitored, evaluated, and targeted by both public and private actors. Social services and child protection remain deeply involved in family life, often with the intention of providing protection and support, yet still with the risk of normalizing and standardizing parenthood.

It is also clear that the fine-meshed net of power does not affect everyone equally. Families in marginalized positions—migrants, low-income households, single parents, people with insecure housing or employment—are more frequently exposed to scrutiny and intervention.

This raises questions of justice and proportionality: **What assessments are made, on what grounds, with what cultural understanding, and how are the costs and consequences of interventions distributed?**

In Sweden, this question is particularly acute given the legal anchoring of the best interests of the child in both the Social Services Act and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Differences That May Constitute a Risk of Discrimination

A Swedish report by Grim and Persdotter (2021) examines how discrimination can arise within child and youth social care through the interaction of individual, organizational, and structural factors. Their findings show that:

- experience, time pressure, and workload
- interpretation of guidelines
- implicit norms

all shape assessments in ways that create risks of inequality.

When ideas of the “good parent” and the “normal family” function as benchmarks without reflection on context and culture, the risk increases that families in socioeconomic hardship or with minority backgrounds are judged more harshly.

The report highlights the need for reflective supervision, competence development on intersectionality and implicit bias, and strengthened structures for follow-up and review of decisions.

Migrant Families and the Need for Cultural Humility

Social work in a multicultural context requires cultural humility rather than a checklist of cultural competence. Language and interpreter barriers must be understood as rights issues, and cultural

practices that deviate from majority norms should be assessed in relation to children's rights and the quality of care—not against stereotypes.

Legal frameworks such as the Care of Young Persons Act (LVU) must remain clear and proportionate. Intersectionally oriented work with migrant families must pay attention to how migration's conditions—legal status, housing, labor market access, trauma, and transnational ties—interact with class, gender, and age.

Risk assessments cannot be standardized in ways that ignore context; the same indicators may mean different things in different families.

Procedural Justice and Cultural Humility

Tom Tyler's concept of procedural justice shows that people's experience of legitimacy depends not only on outcomes but on how the process is experienced. Being listened to, treated with respect, and receiving understandable explanations are crucial.

Social work is tested not in the clarity of principles, but in the intersections of relationships. Legitimacy becomes relational, procedural, and situational.

Cultural humility, as described by Tervalon and Murray-García, emphasizes lifelong reflexivity, attention to power imbalances, and respect for clients' own understandings of their lives. It avoids reducing complexity to stereotypes.

Practical Reflection

Students are encouraged to reflect on:

- How do I assess? Whose norms do I rely on?
- How do I explain decisions and ensure understanding?
- How do I create genuine participation?
- How do I adapt interventions without reproducing stereotypes?
- How can my practice be more transparent, fair, and accountable?

Social work becomes effective not only when decisions are correct, but when they are legitimate, comprehensible, and fair.

Conclusion

In the context of social division, migration, and postcolonial power, social work carries a dual responsibility:

- 1. To protect and support children and families.**
- 2. To critically examine its own norms, assumptions, and institutional practices.**

When we combine structural awareness, intersectional analysis, procedural justice, cultural humility, and postcolonial/decolonial thinking, we create conditions for trust—and trust is the foundation of meaningful social work.

Thank you for your attention.

Social Work in Third Sector Organizations

Stefano Chessa

Marked interest in the **centrality of the social professions** within the welfare system for over a decade in Italy

(Facchini, 2010; Facchini and Ruggeri, 2012; Casadei, 2012; Tousijn and Dellavalle, 2017, Busacca and Da Roit, 2021; Salmieri, 2022; Pasquinelli and Pozzoli, 2022).

Social professions in the Third Sector: an area that, in many respects, remains **to be explored**, particularly in light of changes in the provision of welfare services

(Natoli e Saltanicchia, 2019)

The overall landscape of social professions in the Third Sector appears to be a **'dynamic' reality**, characterised by changes occurring both through endogenous drivers and as a result of the social transformations of contemporary society.

In addition to educational professions (Galeotti and Daddi, 2021), the role of the psychologist (Casteller, 2024) and other practitioners working in various capacities within the Third Sector, the social worker has, over time, acquired and consolidated **important and responsible roles** (Fazzi, 2013, 2016; Burgalassi and Tilli, 2023).

Despite its prevalence and its significance for the functioning of local welfare systems, the role of the social worker in the Third Sector has not, to date, attracted much **scholarly attention**.

To fill this gap the Order of Social Workers, the National Foundation of Social Workers and the Department of Education Sciences at Roma Tre University launched a **national survey** on social workers employed in the Third Sector.

- a) the **profile** of social workers in the Third Sector,
- b) the **characteristics** of social work in this context
and
- c) the level of **satisfaction** with this employment setting.

Tab. 2 - Gli enti per cui lavorano gli assistenti sociali del Terzo Settore: un confronto tra i dati OAS e i riscontri forniti dall'indagine

	Database OAS occupati nel TS (anno 2020)	Indagine "Assistenti sociali nel TS" (anno 2020)
Cooperative/Imprese Sociali	79,4	76,1
Associazioni di Promozione Sociale e Organizzazioni di Volontariato	14,4	12,7
Fondazioni	6,2	5,1
Altro	-	6,1
Totale in valore assoluto	9.965	3.061

Tab. 9 - Il motivo per cui gli assistenti sociali iniziano a lavorare nel Terzo Settore

<i>Per quale motivo prevalente hai iniziato a lavorare nel Terzo Settore?</i>	
In modo casuale, è stata la prima opportunità che ho trovato	48,2
Ho cercato lavoro in un ETS nell'attesa di partecipare a concorsi pubblici	22,3
Conoscevo ETS e ne avevo apprezzato l'aspetto relazionale	7,9
Pensavo che fosse il luogo migliore in cui esprimere i miei ideali personali e professionali	16,6
Altro	5,0

Social workers employed in services provided independently by their organisation	13.8%
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Social workers employed in services outsourced by the public administration	86.2%
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No, the practice of the profession is the same regardless of the context	23.0%
Perhaps there used to be, but not anymore	21.9%
Yes, working within a third sector organisation has its own distinctive features	47.1%
I've never really thought about it	8.0%

*Tab. 6 - Le peculiarità del Terzo Settore nell'opinione degli assistenti sociali che vi lavorano
Le peculiarità di chi lavora negli enti di Terzo Settore sono che:*

	per niente d'accordo	poco d'accordo	abbastanza d'accordo	molto d'accordo
ha motivazioni ideali che rendono più facili le relazioni con le persone/utenti	10,1	31,3	45,8	12,8
gode di maggiore autonomia nel proprio lavoro	12,0	31,3	42,7	14,0
si sente più responsabile dell'andamento generale dell'ente	4,2	15,8	47,1	32,9
sente un legame di appartenenza al proprio ente	5,5	16,2	49,2	29,1
vive relazioni tra colleghi serene e collaborative	8,4	30,7	53,8	7,1

not at all satisfied	2.4%
somewhat dissatisfied	16.1%
fairly satisfied	64.3%
very satisfied	17.2%

What does the future hold for social workers in the Third Sector?

- a) The expansion of the professional community within public bodies could lead to a **reversal in the trend** towards outsourcing services

- b) The recruitment program by public bodies could lead to the **transfer** of a portion of the social workers who currently work in the Third Sector **into the public sector**

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La professione di Assistente Sociale nel Terzo Settore

(open access: <https://series.francoangeli.it/index.php/oa/catalog/view/1061/920/6068>)



Students' creative assignments

Photo voice project



Abandoned vending structure



- Broken windows and lack of maintenance
- Only designed to serve the public (often ignored)
- More useful if repair and enhanced infrastructure

This structure was once used to provide food and drinks to users of a building. Today, it remains abandoned and full of maintenance. However, some in this area, it offers a different use - for example, it can be used as a public space. This structure can also be used to serve people, even when they are in a large public building.



Today we will present a visual narrative from Sassari, Italy.

Through these images, we explore the contrasts between abandonment and everyday life in the city. We focus on unused buildings, trash, neglected spaces, and ask an important question:

What could these spaces become, and how could they positively impact the community?

Abandoned vending structure



- Broken windows and trash accumulation
- Once designed to serve the public (coffee/snacks)
- Now symbol of neglect and underused infrastructure

This structure was once meant to provide food and drinks, a place of convenience. Today, it reflects abandonment and lack of maintenance. However, even in this state, it offers informal use — for example shelter from rain or temporary storage. This shows how spaces continue to serve people, even when they are no longer officially maintained.

Empty unfinished building



- Large unused structure
- Graffiti → community expression
- Potential for housing or services

This unfinished building stands empty near a main road. It represents lost economic potential. However, graffiti suggests that young people and local communities still interact with the space. This shows that even abandoned places can become informal cultural platforms.

Lively street contrast



- Maintained sidewalks and businesses
- Trees and pedestrian design
- Contrast with neglected spaces

This street shows the opposite: active businesses, public seating, and daily life. The contrast between this functioning space and the abandoned buildings highlights inequality in urban development.

What These Spaces Could Become

You can structure it as possibilities:

Potential Positive Uses:

- Affordable housing
- Shelters for homeless individuals
- Youth centers
- Community cultural spaces
- Social enterprises
- Temporary pop-up services
- Green urban projects

These buildings could be transformed into affordable housing, reducing homelessness. They could also become youth centers, community kitchens, or cultural hubs. Repurposing abandoned buildings can strengthen social cohesion and improve safety.

Link to Social Work Theory

Social Ecology Theory focuses on how individuals interact with their physical and social environments. According to this theory, the environment shapes opportunities, well-being, and social inclusion.

- Abandoned spaces → limit opportunities
- Redeveloped spaces → improve community wellbeing
- Environment influences social behavior

From a social ecological perspective, neglected environments can contribute to social exclusion. But transforming these spaces into community resources could promote inclusion, safety, and participation.

Photovoice

*Pia, Theresa, Michelle, Nancy, Dani, Erna,
Lisen, Ornella*



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DUINO-CRISTINA



description

The picture shows a courtyard with a leafless tree in the foreground. In the background, there is a multi-story building with windows and a light-colored facade. In the courtyard, there are two simple benches, and colorful chalk drawings can be seen on the ground.

interpretation

This space is designed for children's play and social interaction, but it appears empty and silent. The colors on the ground contrast with the absence of people. This image suggests how some places, even though they are meant to welcome others, are not always truly used.

discussion

How might this courtyard space be used to support social interaction and well-being in a social work context?





description

A person and a child are walking across a pedestrian crossing on a city street. Several cars are parked nearby, and buildings line the background.

interpretation

This image represents an everyday moment of crossing the street. The presence of an adult next to the child highlights the need for support when navigating urban spaces safely. This draws attention to the importance of designing accessible and safe environments for everyone, especially for more vulnerable individuals.

discussion

How can a neighborhood street influence people's sense of safety and belonging?





description

The image shows an empty outdoor sports field under a cloudy sky. Tall lights poles, fencing, and a line of trees can be seen around the field. The scene appears open and quiet.

interpretation

This picture represents an open outdoor space that belongs to a social institution. The field is not only a place for sports and recreation, but also a part of a supportive environment where social interaction, participation, and well-being can be encouraged. It highlights the importance of accessible and safe spaces within social institutions, as they can promote community, inclusion, and everyday support.

discussion

How can outdoor spaces in social institutions support inclusion and social participation.



Summary

All three images show spaces that are part of children's everyday lives and development. They illustrate that children are affected not only by individual circumstances, but also by the environments in which they grow, move, and interact with others. In this sense, the images highlight the importance of safe, accessible, and supportive environments for participation and belonging. Together, they show that space can either strengthen or limit inclusion and community.



PHOTO VOICE PROJEKT

Elisa, Lovisa, Hassan, Michaela, Marie, Nici



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Agenda

03	First Picture & Discussion
04	Second Picture & Discussion
05	Third Picture & Discussion
06	THIRD Picture & Discusssion
07	Relevance for Social Work

- The image shows different barriers that make it hard to move around in urban spaces. Uneven pavements, level changes, and obstacles reduce independence for people with disabilities.
- L'immagine mostra diverse barriere che rendono difficile muoversi negli spazi urbani. Marciapiedi irregolari, dislivelli e ostacoli riducono l'autonomia delle persone con disabilità.



Discussion

What are the differences between Sweden, Italy and Germany?

- The image shows a problem with accessibility: the traffic lights do not have sound signals. This makes it hard for people with visual impairments to know when is safe to cross the street.
- L'immagine mostra un problema di accessibilità: i semafori non dispongono di segnali acustici. Questo rende difficile per le persone con disabilità visive capire quando è sicuro attraversare la strada.



Discussion

How could a social worker help solve the problem?

- The image shows a barrier to accessibility: a vehicle is blocking the sidewalk and leaving little space to pass. This makes it very hard, or even impossible, for wheelchair users and people with reduced mobility to move safely.

- L'immagine mostra una barriera all'accessibilità: un veicolo sta bloccando il marciapiede e lascia poco spazio per passare. Questo rende molto difficile, o addirittura impossibile, per le persone in sedia a rotelle e per chi ha mobilità ridotta muoversi in sicurezza.



05/09

Discussion

How can we raise awareness about this problem?



“three”

- In the photo, you can see the inside of a bus equipped with a device that helps people with disabilities, such as wheelchair users, get on and off more easily. This is a positive aspect of public transport in Sassari, showing attention to accessibility and inclusion.

- Nella foto si vede l'interno di un autobus dotato di uno strumento che facilita la salita e la discesa delle persone con disabilità, come chi usa la sedia a rotelle. Si tratta di un aspetto positivo dei trasporti di Sassari, che dimostra attenzione all'accessibilità e all'inclusione.



07/09

Discussion

Which other things do you remember about accessibility?

Relevance for Social Work

08/09

- Social workers play an important role in creating inclusive communities. They raise awareness about the challenges faced by people with disabilities and help others understand the importance of accessibility. They also work with different actors, such as police and politicians, to promote projects that remove architectural barriers and improve public spaces. Through their work, social workers help build a more equal and accessible society for everyone.
- Gli assistenti sociali svolgono un ruolo importante nella creazione di comunità inclusive. Sensibilizzano riguardo alle sfide affrontate dalle persone con disabilità e aiutano gli altri a comprendere l'importanza dell'accessibilità. Collaborano inoltre con diversi attori, come la polizia e i politici, per promuovere progetti che eliminano le barriere architettoniche e migliorano gli spazi pubblici. Attraverso il loro lavoro, gli assistenti sociali contribuiscono a costruire una società più equa e accessibile per tutti.



09/09



Thanks for Listening :)



A Photovoice Project:

GRAFFITI AND STREET ART: FROM MARGINAL EXPRESSION TO PROFESSIONAL OPPORTUNITY





The Origins of Graffiti

is often regarded as an artistic expression of
disenfranchisement, allowing young people from
inner-city neighbourhoods to make their
mark and have a voice in a society
that ignores them.



The Origins of Graffiti

Graffiti originated as an artistic expression of the marginalized, allowing young people from impoverished neighborhoods to make their voices heard and leave a mark in a society that ignores them.



Reading graffiti and street art in social work

Urban writing can reflect social distress and exclusion.

It shows a need to be heard and recognized in public space.

It also reveals social tensions and participation in political issues.

For social work, it highlights inclusion and exclusion dynamics in the community.



Street art as an opportunity

Street art can be an opportunity for people experiencing economic and social hardship.

From a spontaneous expression, it can become a creative profession.

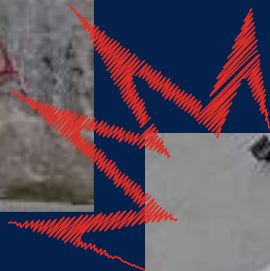
It allows artists to build a career path and improve their living conditions.

They collaborate with public institutions, companies, and social projects, helping to redevelop and enhance abandoned spaces.



1

Personal expression



2

Job opportunities

3

Social redemption through creativity



4

Art accessible to all as a tool for change





THANK YOU
thank you
SO MUCH!
so much

PHOTOVOICE

in a social work perspective

Ella

Andrea

Caroline

Cornelia

Marta

Alessia





What can we see on the picture?

- Uneven cobblestones
- Old street
- Limited space
- Symbolic sign: disabled parking

Accessibility for the disabled

- Physical barriers
- The slops
- Lack of universal design
- Sign for disabled parking

Social work perspective:

- Social exclusion, as people with disabilities may not be able to access the area.
- Independence and participation

How can this affect the individual's independence?



What can we see on the picture?

- Caritas Sassari: Community Welfare
- Closed door into the centre.

Homeless, poverty and social exclusion

- The role of civil society
- Accessibility and barriers

Social work perspective:

- Social vulnerability
- Access to support
- Balance between help and independence

Who makes use of the support offered in this facility? Could there be physical as well as emotional barriers? How can these barriers be reduced so that as many different groups of people as possible feel addressed and seen?



What can we see on the picture?

- A big building
- One talking adult and children listening.

Social inclusion and exclusion

- Community welfare
- No special schools
- Guidance

Social work perspective:

- Local support and practice
- Social prevention

Do the countries have different school systems consider children with difficulties?

Thanks for listening !

A dark blue gradient background that starts as a thin line at the bottom left and expands into a large triangular shape towards the top right, filling the lower half of the slide.



Photo study Sassari

Amanda, Maria, Arianna, Leonie,
Sarah





Playground

- Urban
- Management
- Safety
- Health & Well-being
- Sustainability



Schools and Playgrounds: Where Children Grow.



Elementary school

- School setting
- Teachers
- Rules
- Safety
- socialization agency
- Connected to social work institutionally



Playground

- Nature
- Many options
- In a public park
- Others than children
- Parents have main responsibility



Church's Basketball court

- Available
- Not school
- For all ages
- Peer groups
- Older kids, no one being the responsible one





This seminar was made possible thanks to the efforts of many people.

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See you in Kalmar/Växjö next year!