

## Urban-SOS

Partnerne bag semestret *Social Work in Urban Areas* (Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences, Københavns Professionshøjskole, Metropolia University of Applied Sciences Helsinki og Artevelde University College Ghent) har sammen med 4 praksispartnere (Arkin and Combiwel (NL), Kofoeds Skole (DK), Kalliola (FI) and CAW Oost-Vlaanderen (BE)) modtaget en Erasmus+ grundbevilling på godt 3,5 millioner kroner til et treårigt projekt under overskriften *Urban-SOS*.

Urban-SOS projektet bringer uddannelsesinstitutioner og praksis sammen i et forpligtende partnerskab, hvor fokus er på udviklingen af grund-, efter-, og videreuddannelsesaktiviteter af høj kvalitet og samfundsmæssig relevans. Målet er, at bidrage til transnational og tværprofessionel innovation af såvel professionen som uddannelserne. Urban-SOS rummer ud over de 8 kernepartnere, som modtager finansiering, fem øvrige partneruniversiteter (Ljubljana, Bukarest, Warszawa, Padova, Madrid og Melbourne) samt mere end 20 praksispartnere og deres brugere fordelt på de fire partnerbyer. De praksispartnere, som indgår i projektet arbejder alle med udsatte voksne (fx hjemløse, stofbrugere, migranter og flygtninge).

Fra København deltager bl.a. DIGNITY, Hjemløsheden i Københavns Kommune samt Mændenes Hjem. Hvor Kofoeds Skole får en del af bevillingen (og skal lægge arbejdstimer i projektet), får de øvrige partnere dækket rejseomkostninger i forbindelse med deltagelse i møder, workshops og konferencer.

I projektperioden udvikler vi fire 'produkter':

- En fælles praksis- og forskningsbaseret analytisk og metodologisk tilgang til social arbejde i urbane områder, inklusive en ramme for, hvordan denne tilgang kan implementeres i lokale grunduddannelsesaktiviteter.
- Et uddannelses- og træningsmateriale til undervisere udviklet på baggrund af empiri fra vores mere end 20 praksispartnere. Fokus er transfer af viden og praksis fra de direkte involverede ansatte til andre undervisere i organisationerne. Materialet anvendes til kompetenceløft samt adjunktuddannelse.
- Et e-læringsforløb rettet mod praksis.
- Et open-source online læringsfællesskab bestående af en række materialer og interaktionsmuligheder mellem studerende, undervisere og professionelle fra praksis. Den bærende del af platformen består af fire simulationsdrevne scenarier, der designes som interaktive og scene-baserede simulationer, der følger en 'real-life storyline'. Der arbejdes med gamification som en metode til at øge studerendes engagement, motivation og vidensudbytte.

### Project summary:

An increasingly urgent social issue is the rise of inequalities amongst inhabitants of European cities. Due to processes of migration, urbanization and the unequal accumulation of economic growth in many urban areas, cities have become intersections of social stratification. Social workers deal with the challenges of these inequalities every day.

On a European level, social workers tend to take the urban context for granted. While social work in urban areas has long been a topic of interest to researchers, very few social workers are educated to relate to and meet the challenges of the 'Urban Age'. Yet, if we wish to generate opportunities for socially sustainable lives, there is an urgency to educate social workers to be knowledgeable about the ways in which cities create, and are created by, social issues and inequality. In short, there is a

need for a paradigm shift in urban social work.

Urban SOS brings together educational institutions and work place organizations—who work in the cities with social issues caused by life in the City. The objective of the Urban SOS partnership is to contribute to the transnational and transdisciplinary innovation of European social work and social work education.

The origin of the Urban SOS partnership dates back to 2015, when 4 European Universities of Applied Sciences developed the 30 ECTS joint semester program ‘Social Work in Urban Areas’ (SWUA). These partners are Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences, University College Copenhagen, Metropolia University of Applied Sciences Helsinki and Artevelde University College Ghent. They are joined by 5 work field organisations: Arkin and Combiwel (NL), Kofoeds Skole (DK), Kalliola (FI) and CAW Oost-Vlaanderen (BE). Our partnership will create a closer collaboration between professional practice and higher education to support the objective of educating social work educators and (future) professionals who are competent in creating innovative responses to urban social issues and, thus, contribute to the development of more socially inclusive and sustainable cities.

To enhance the scope of the project and support its transnational perspectives, we collaborate with several associated partners from different professional contexts at local/national level. The partnership also involves 5 associated universities from Eastern and Southern Europe. They are ‘critical friends’ in the development of the outputs and will host a multiplier event to enhance the international scope of the project. We are also joined by our expert partner professor Charlotte Williams, one of the leading scholars on urban social work from RMIT Australia. We include the needs and voice of the citizens (clients) by connecting to them during progress meetings and group discussions.

We use phronetic analysis, an approach developed in social sciences, as a lens to develop a new paradigm for urban social work. It is helpful in analyses of the interrelated nature of the urban context, policy development and professional norms and values. In the Urban SOS partnership, our objective of applying the phronetic approach is to contribute to improving professionals’ capacity for valuerational deliberation and action. As a partnership, we are committed to contributing to a paradigm shift within urban social work practice through a combination of phronetic analysis, transnational education, collaboration and knowledge transfer.

In the project, there are 7 project meetings, 10 ‘multiplier events’ in 9 different European countries, 3 pilots and a total of 24 ‘progress meetings’.

The outputs:

- O1: A framework for phronetic urban social work;
- O2: Train the educators program;
- O3: Online training course for professionals;
- O4: Online learning platform;

Impact and results of the project:

The current inability of social workers to respond to the challenges of the ‘Urban Age’ from a citizenbased perspective has led to a need for a new paradigm in urban social work. The desired impact of the Urban SOS project is to contribute to this change, creating **place sensitive social work professionals and social work educators** through developing training programs and -materials. By contributing to the (re)-education of both social work educators and (future) social work professionals, the project will result in the development of a more socially inclusive practice within urban social work. The long-term benefit is the improvement of the quality of life in urban areas for citizens in Europe.

After the project:

The open source availability of the project outputs, especially the training programs and the online learning platform, will make the project outputs available to social work educators, professionals and students throughout Europe for at least 5 years after the project. This availability is partly guaranteed by making the outcomes available on the platform, and integrating all the relevant project results in the national curricula and the international SWUA program.

### Background, context and relation to EUs priorities for higher education

In 2006, our planet crossed a remarkable threshold, with more than half of the world's population residing in urban areas, compared with just 30% by 1950. The UN expects the number to rise above 75% by 2050, with more than two billion more people moving to cities (UN, 2014). Urbanisation has far-reaching consequences for the majority of the European population. Thus, since urban areas resonate with local and global social relations, problems, and solutions, they are core to the social work profession.

Cities are "...socio-cultural, economic and physical environments that give context to welfare relations" (Williams 2016). While urbanisation fosters economic growth, super-diversity (Geldof 2016), and social development, it also produces social issues such as inequality, poverty, urban sprawl, discrimination and segregation. Social work professionals deal with such issues as they unfold in the everyday life in urban areas. Nevertheless, social workers tend to take the urban context for granted. In fact, while social work in urban areas has long been an area of interest to researchers, very few social workers are educated to relate to and meet the challenges of the 'Urban age' (Gleeson 2012). Yet, if we wish to generate opportunities for socially sustainable lives in the urban age, there is an urgency to educate social workers to be knowledgeable about the ways in which cities create, and are created by, social issues.

### Horizontal priority: social inclusion (connection to EUs priorities for higher education)

This project contributes to enhancing social inclusion in Europe. The complexity of cities and urbanisation/globalisation processes have shown themselves to be too multi-faceted to be addressed by a singular and linear approach. Therefore, a transdisciplinary and narrative-based analytical approach to social work in urban areas is called for. We use a phronetic approach (Flyvbjerg 2012) as a way of producing intimate knowledge of a community's understanding of subjective human relationships and values. Phronetic analysis has been developed for social science research and is the glue that holds together the different perspectives on urban areas. It is a way of looking at the context, creating a narrative that supports communality and creation of identity within urban spaces and places that can help people address common issues manifesting in their urban contexts. Thus, as partners we are committed to contributing to a paradigm shift within urban social work practice through phronetic analysis, transnational education, collaboration and knowledge transfer. By improving the training of faculty members as well as future and current social work professionals, we promote shared understandings, equality and social inclusion supported by a dialogical method of interaction. Our ambition is to influence European urban contexts to become more socially just; to enhance social inclusion through education, dialogue and close collaboration with work place partners. Finally, to communicate our efforts and experience to a broader European context through the intellectual outputs.

### Promoting and rewarding excellence in teaching and skills development in higher education priority (connection to EUs priorities for higher education)

The project contributes to a paradigm shift towards a more place-sensitive and narrative-based social work approach. Key to this priority is the inclusion of a more reflective, dialogical style of interaction. A collaboration between the spaces and places where the stakeholders live and work

and the academic spaces and places where educators and students learn how to think and co-create from multiple perspectives, levels of abstraction and scales (local to global). To achieve this, we will develop training programs for both social work educators and professionals (O2 and O3), which are recognised in their local life-long learning requirements.

Open education and innovative practices in a digital era priority (connection to EUs priorities for higher education)

The project creates two innovative digital intellectual outputs: an online training course for professionals (O3) and an online learning platform with case-based simulation scenarios, texts and theories as open source material (O4). The material is available for local educators, students and professionals to support the process of phronetic analysis and dialogue, to illuminate assumptions and power discrepancies that are otherwise taken for granted in the local context. In this project, the professionals and citizens who face the challenges of the 'Urban Age' on a daily basis are directly involved in producing the digital outputs, thus ensuring not merely their relevance and citizens perspective, but also their transferability potential and impact from education to practice.

## CONTEXT

Historically, social work and urban sociology were closely associated, allowing social work professionals to address the political, social and economic structures in which individuals and families were embedded. However, during the last decades, individual and family casework has become the dominant approach in many European countries. Yet, the multi-faceted aspects of cities, urbanisation and globalisation have shown themselves as too complex to be addressed by this approach to social work alone. The project is rooted in the context of the Social Work in Urban Areas joint program designed and implemented in 2015 by the four HEI partners, which began to address this lack in the local curriculums.

## PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The overall development objective is to contribute to a paradigm shift in urban social work. We link this paradigm shift to the observation that “the battle for a more sustainable future will be won or lost in cities” (UN, 2014). In the future we will need social workers who are knowledgeable about the ways in which processes of globalisation as well as personal narratives shape urban lives, and—through transdisciplinary collaboration and transnational education—are competent in co-creating a sustainable, equitable, socially just life in cities.

*Immediate objectives developed in close collaboration with work place and associated partners:*

- To map and analyse the intersections between urbanisation, lived experiences and social issues in the partner cities (O1).
- To produce a program to train social work educators to understand and teach the new paradigm for urban social work (O2).
- To produce innovative education methods, professional approaches and a learning platform (O3 and O4).

## NEEDS AND TARGETGROUPS

The target groups of the project are students, educators, professionals and, through the professionals, citizens. To prepare this application, we conducted interviews with the workplace and associated partners in the partner cities to provide a needs analysis. In this process, three needs have dominated, regardless of the national and urban contexts:

First, a need to create sustainable networks and collaboration between social work education and social work organisations dealing with urban social issues. Representatives of social work

organisations point to a need for inspiration from other cities, to challenge ‘business as usual’-practices and bring professionals together to develop new approaches by sharing collective knowledge and experience. This is realised through the transnational project meetings and online resources developed in the project (O3 and O4).

Second, a need for a more coordinated effort to collect and review the generic and context specific knowledge and experience concerning social work in urban areas (O1). The current access to field specific knowledge is too disjointed, and European social work education has yet to develop a systematic approach to educating social workers with the knowledge, skills, and competences to meet the challenges of the Urban Age (O2, O3, and O4).

Third, a need for professionals to become better at analysing the urban context of their target groups’ everyday lives; to become more ‘place-sensitive’ in their practice (O3 and O4). Interviewees, including citizens (service users, experts by experience, client representatives), addressed the need to become more knowledgeable of and responsive to ways in which socially isolated/vulnerable people experience, and often safeguard themselves from, the urban context of their lives.

#### THE NEED FOR A TRANSNATIONAL PROJECT

Social work happens in specific places, which are more than merely passive contexts. Places are co-creators of solutions to specific social issues. The symbolic and tangible material dimensions of places affect people and their interactions; this is the case for professionals and citizens alike. Nevertheless, while social work is located in and ‘tied’ to specific places, these places are expressions of more abstract global processes. As such, there is a need for social work to analyse the various spatial dynamics that co-create place-specific social issues. Together with our workplace and associated partners, our objective is to identify potentials for development of social work practices that are acutely aware of space and place, support social coherence and liveability within cities, and contest discrimination, marginalisation, and segregation. The project allows us to broaden existing transnational collaboration to include more European partners, and to establish more longterm and sustainable ties to the practice organisations involved.

It is our ambition to impact the work of reviewing and updating the existing Global Standards for Social Work Education and Training (IFSW, IASSW), by connecting their current work to our identified need of educating social workers who are place-sensitive. See also dissemination segment (page 218/219).

A cornerstone of our partnership is that social workers must be competent to respond to the impacts of the urban age (e.g., homelessness, migration, unemployment, poverty, and crime). This involves teaching perspectives from sociology, psychology, geography, anthropology, economics, urban planning and design. Accordingly, social workers need to redefine their roles, methods, and interventions. However, research shows that before professionals are capable of participating in such transdisciplinary work, they must learn to clarify responsibilities, disciplinary assumptions, and differences (Costello & Raxworthy, 2016). In response to this, our partnership will be used to further develop and support education of social workers who can, on the one hand, think critically about the role and remit of social work in the urban context, and, on the other hand, actively participate in the transdisciplinary development of innovative and sustainable urban interventions (for example via O4). The added value of our partnership is the opportunity to be guided by, and transfer, best practices from other European contexts, while critically revisiting practices in our home contexts.

To arrive at social work that matters in urban areas, we adopt the principles explained by Flyvbjerg (2002) as ‘Phronetic Social Science Research’. It concerns values, and goes beyond analytical, scientific knowledge and technical knowledge or know-how. Phronesis is the important activity of

balancing instrumental rationality and value-rationality. This type of research is well suited to influence policy and practice, by adding a bottom up perspective. We illustrate this paradigm shift in a four-quadrant model, which can be applied in social work practice and education. The purpose is to learn to navigate from specific cases to general situations and from concrete to abstract views (see the model in Annex V).

The first quadrant contains global and abstract elements, which constitute the theoretical and methodological foundation for urban social work. Examples of theory are critical and/or poststructural theories and systems thinking theories that engage with the political, economic, social and cultural dimensions of the urban context. Examples of concepts include globalisation and urbanisation. Examples of methods are communication, interviews, mapping, observation, participatory approaches, empowerment, and community work.

The second quadrant contains global and specific processes relevant to urban social work. Examples are gentrification, migration, suburbanisation, and marginalisation.

The third quadrant contains the local and abstract concepts relevant to urban social work. Examples are place, power, community, and identity. The concepts are used to analyse urban processes independent of the specific local context.

The fourth quadrant consists of local and specific cases/experiences, challenges, and dilemmas. An example can be the ways in which local processes of gentrification or urban renewal change the livability of specific areas and push socially vulnerable people into the margins of specific places.

Phronetic analysis is used to navigate between the four quadrants.

The innovative foundation of the Urban SOS project is the development of a new paradigm, which will be translated into implementable teaching materials and curricula. None of the participating organisations are involved in projects with this purpose; nor are any other Erasmus HEI partners. In fact, a review of the European educational offers for social work students (and professionals) conducted in the winter of 2018 showed no educational offers in social work in urban areas with a transnational scope. We understand innovation as linked to our ability to navigate effectively in complex situations, from global to local and from abstract to specific. In her approach to urban social work, Charlotte Williams (2016) emphasizes the need to develop a 'co-creation by design' approach. This approach combines innovation and design from a human focused theory and practice based perspective. The purpose is to include all stakeholders (e.g. urban planners, architects, social services, authorities, policy makers, social work and health care professionals and service users) in the process of designing urban spaces. The model as proposed above can serve as a common ground during design discussions. Finally, innovation within the project relates to a paradigm shift towards socially inclusive cities and a sustainable future for all people by means of transdisciplinary co-creation. We aim to do this in the project through the effective use of digital technologies in O3 and O4.