URBAN SOS

TOWARDS A TRANS-DISCIPLINARY, INCLUSIVE, SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

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Urban SOS framework
for value-based social work in an urban environment

Abstract: When examining urbanization we immediately meet the core aspects of social work. While urbanization fosters economic growth, diversity, and social development, it also produces social issues such as inequality, poverty, urban sprawl, discrimination, and segregation. In this article we present a framework for a holistic and phronetic analysis of urban issues in social work. The framework has been used in Erasmus+ funded project Urban SOS. We argue that this framework will contribute to the educating of future social workers and social services professionals to meet the challenges of urbanization.

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1. Introduction

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). Urbanization has far-reaching consequences for much 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 urbanization fosters economic growth, diversity, and social development, it also produces social issues such as inequality, poverty, urban sprawl, discrimination, and segregation (Sassen 2018). 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 urbanization. In this article we present a framework for a holistic and phronetic analysis of urban issues in social work. It is our hope that this framework will be used to educate social workers and social services professionals to meet the challenges of urbanization.

The article is the result of a collaboration between four schools of social work and their practice partners in a three-year Erasmus+ collaborative partnership titled Urban SOS. The origin of the Urban SOS partnership dates back to 2015, when four European Universities of Applied Sciences developed a 30 ECTS joint semester program "Social Work in Urban Areas" (SWUA). These partners are Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences (NL), University College Copenhagen (DK), Metropolia University of Applied Sciences Helsinki (FI) and Artevelde University College, Ghent (BE). In the Urban SOS project these higher education institutions were joined by six work field organizations: Arkin and Combiwel (NL), Kofoeds School and the Homeless Unit, Social Services, Municipality of Copenhagen (DK), Kalliola Settlement (FI) and CAW Oost-Vlaanderen (BE). Finally, several associated partners from the work field have been involved in the project: The Men's Home (DK), Miitti ry. and Familia ry. (FI),

One aim of our partnership has been to 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 socially sustainable cities. Urban SOS brings together educational institutions and organizations who work in the cities with social issues caused by life in the city. From the beginning, it has been important to us that the practical reality should inform our research and not the other way around (cf. section 3). As a part of the project, we have carried out different types of fieldwork in the four different cities. Between late 2019 and mid 2021 we have done observations, participant observations, conversations, different kinds of interviews, and workshops in our partner organizations. Our fieldwork has involved frontline social workers, case managers, representatives from management, and service users. The diverse empirical materials have been turned into written cases; narrated stories available as audio; podcasts; graphic illustrations; and an analogue collaborative game. These materials, all available at our online learning platform, have been constructed and analyzed through the framework that we present in this article.

The article consists of 4 sections. In section 2 and 3 we present the theoretical background of the framework and link it to the social work profession, ethics, and education. Finally in section 4 we introduce a model that can facilitate a holistic analysis of urban issues.

2. Theoretical and methodological principles and the links to other disciplines

In this section, we clarify the perspectives and methodological principles that we have adapted in the Urban SOS project. We link them to the principles of the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) and The International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW).

The framework developed in this project rests on the roots of emancipatory and critical social work (e.g., Addams, Freire, Ledwith, Fook). In addition, the framework draws on components from multiple academic disciplines:

- geography (e.g., Massey, Harvey, and Lefebvre)

- sociology/economics/political science (e.g., Flyvbjerg, Arendt, Wacquant)

- anthropology (e.g., Geertz, Graeber).

None of these disciplines are fully realized in the project. Rather, we have been eclectic and singled out the perspectives and methodological principles that we find most useful to identify and analyze the challenges and changes caused by current processes of urbanization. Our interest is directed specifically towards the effects of these processes on the social work profession and vulnerable citizens. We share this interest with colleagues around the world. Within the field of social work, educators and professionals have devoted attention to urban themes both historically (e.g., Addams 1892, 1909, Freire 1970) and more recently (e.g., Ledwith 2005, Shaw 2011, Williams 2016).

It is our intention to develop a framework for analysis, based on Bent Flyvbjerg's ideas on Phronesis, or practical wisdom, that can be used as a lens, an analytical tool, through which professionals can analyze—and respond to—the challenges and changes in current urban development. Thus, our purpose is not to develop new theories or methods. Rather, it is our hope that a new analytical lens, a framework, can facilitate a re-invigoration of already existing theory and collective methods; theories and methods, which historically have proven themselves useful in the struggle for creating more socially just cities in any given national or local context. For this, we have developed a four-quadrant model (described in section 3), which can be used to guide an analysis of the ways in which local urban challenges are interconnected with national, regional, international, and global processes. We maintain that alternative consciousness and praxis (i.e., phronesis) are central in dealing with urban inequality, thus, the analytical lens is intended to support the development of alternative ways of understanding and acting upon unwanted urban developments. However, as the lens also deals with the structural determinants of urban inequality, it offers a chance to understand local urban issues as situated "… between the macro-level of global markets and institutions and the micro-world of everyday social reality." (Williams 2016: 32). In other words, place-sensitivity involves attentiveness towards the interconnected nature of geographical and social dimensions.

In this sense, the analytical framework developed in our project resonates with the Global Definition of the Social Work Profession, which was approved by the IFSW General Meeting and the IASSW General Assembly in July 2014:

"Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing. The above definition may be amplified at national and/or regional levels."

Moreover, the analytical framework is developed in accordance with the Global Standards for the Education and Training of the Social Work Profession adapted by IASSW in 2020. We have especially focused on those standards formulated in section 4 "Core Curricula" under the headline "Social Work In Context:"

In relation to Social Work in Context, education programmes must include the following:

1. Critical understanding of how socio-structural inadequacies, discrimination, oppression, and social, political, environmental and economic injustices impact human development at all levels, including the global must be considered.

2. Knowledge of how traditions, culture, beliefs, religions and customs influence human development across the lifespan, including how these might constitute resources and/or obstacles to growth.

3. Knowledge of theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledges.

4. Critical understanding of social work's origins and purposes.

5. Critical understanding of historical injustices affecting service user communities and the role of social workers in addressing those.

6. Sufficient knowledge of related occupations and professions to facilitate interprofessional collaboration and teamwork.

7. Knowledge of social welfare policies (or lack thereof), services and laws at local, national and/or regional/international levels

8. Understanding of the roles of social work in policy planning, implementation, evaluation and in social change processes.

9. Knowledge of - human rights, social movements and their interconnectedness with class, gender and ethnic/race-related issues.

10. Knowledge of relevant international treaties, laws and regulations, and global standards such as the Social Development Goals.

11. Critical understanding of the impact of environmental degradation on the well-being of our communities and the promotion of Environmental Justice.

12. A focus on gender equity.

13. An understanding of structural causes and impact of gender-based violence.

14. An emphasis on structural issues affecting marginalised, vulnerable and minority populations.

15. The assumption, identification and recognition of strengths and potential of all human beings.

16. Social Work contribution to promoting sustainable peace and justice in communities affected by political/ethnic conflict and violence.

Finally, we see many points of resonance between IFSW and IASSWs formulations and the academic discipline of geography, especially its more critical elements. Since Henri Lefebvre's Marxist inspired introduction of the idea of the 'right to the city,' which illuminates the struggles and tensions over resources in urban environments, geographers have discussed urban inequality from a rights-based perspective. Such discussions must be of interest to the social work profession where social justice and equality are core values. According to geographer David Harvey:

"The question of what kind of city we want cannot be divorced from that of what kind of social ties, relationship to nature, lifestyles, technologies and aesthetic values we desire. The right to the city is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city. It is, moreover, a common rather than an individual right since this transformation inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization. The freedom to make and remake our cities and ourselves is, I want to argue, one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights." (2008: 23).

As described in this section, the Urban SOS project aims at reinvigorating the historical roots of the social work profession, while at the same time suggesting that the historical roots can fruitfully be combined with a phronetic approach to social science, research, and analysis. With the Urban SOS project, we wish to contribute to this work by developing a framework for analysis that brings together existing perspectives and thereby will enable social workers to become more place-sensitive. The application of the framework, we hope, will lead to social work professionals better understanding the relational character of places, especially the ways in which places are always material, imagined, lived, affected by rhythms, connected across scales from the global to the individual level, contested and saturated with power (cf. Lefebvre 1991, Harvey 2008, Massey 1996, 2005).

3. On Phronesis, values and ethics in the Urban- SOS project

Danish geographer and economist Bent Flyvbjerg (2001) proposed a phronetic approach. Flyvbjerg draws on Aristotle and his deliberation on the status of different kinds of knowledge and experience in order to develop a new—and socially relevant—theory on phronesis.

Originally, Aristotle distinguished between three types of knowledge and experience:

- epistemé (= scientific and a-contextual knowledge),

- techné (= art, or the art of being able to produce things directed by a goal, for example to build a house that can provide shelter in a specific ecological context)

- and phronesis (= practical wisdom).

Whereas scholars, especially in the natural sciences, have long considered epistemé to be 'objective' (in the sense that it is both neutral and a-contextual), phronesis always involves judgements (i.e., ethical deliberations) upon which people can make decisions. Therefore, scholars have traditionally viewed phronetic knowledge as 'un-academic,' inferior and subordinate to epistemic knowledge (theory). But from the perspective of professions that are interested in social change, phronesis is essential when moving towards a more equal and just world. Phronesis involves thinking through, and/or with, our values, norms, and practical experience when acting and planning responses to social and societal problems.

In his book Making Social Science Matter. Why social inquiry fails and how it can succeed again (2001), the agenda of Flyvbjerg is (at least) threefold:

I

First, he is arguing that social science should always involve at least episteme (i.e., abstract theory and concepts) and phronesis (analysis of values and concrete practices)—the combination is what makes 'it' matter. Social science must produce value-based deliberations with clear and relevant references to practice. Only by doing so will we ensure that we push our societies in an ethically articulated direction when making decisions and implementing projects, methods, solutions etc. The alternative is that we blindly follow a societal development that we find unjust or even unethical. Inherent to this argument is an ethical responsibility and a political (or at least normative) motivation of supporting social change through research and education—thus, as phronetic researchers and practitioners, we willingly give up on the idea that our actions, research, and even education, is, or should be, neutral or objective. Instead, it must be transparent, responsible, and developed through dialogue. This resonates very well with the formulations of IFSW and IASSWs as quoted in section 1.

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Second, Flyvbjerg argues that, as reality and society cannot be considered as mere 'social facts' upon which we have no real influence (although they might be experienced as such), they must be understood as something, which we negotiate and co-produce every day. Consequently, Flyvbjerg needed to reformulate Aristotles' original concept of phronesis to include a theory on power and an analytic framework for power analysis. In this matter, he draws on, among others, philosophers Friedrich Nietzsche and Michel Foucault and to some extent sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. In their view, power is not an entity or a thing, but a contingent social relation—power is something we do; power works on people; power works between people; power is productive in the sense that it changes us and our realities. These conceptualizations of power correspond with the view on space and place introduced by Lefebvre (1991).

III

Third, Flyvbjerg argues that phronetic research must take its point of departure in a 'how' and a 'why' question. Thus, in a project like Urban SOS, we must ask; how do the cases/organisations we identify work and why were they established (description)? Why do the cases/organisations work in this way (analysis)? In this sense, phronetic research always focuses on values and power.

Another important perspective on phronesis can be found in the work of political theorist Hannah Arendt. Like Flyvbjerg, Arendt was inspired by Aristotle. She argued that if academia was ever to produce anything meaningful it should be through conversation with others and through political engagement. Arendt distinguished between 'the active life' (often associated with political activity) and 'the contemplative life' (often associated with academia). According to Arendt, it is the obligation of 'the people' to produce phronesis, i.e., knowledge about the human condition, in a conversing community (1963: 213). Our purpose in linking the Urban SOS analytical framework to conceptualisations of phronesis, is to support students, educators, and practitioners alike to make conscientious and deliberate decisions based on the core values of the social work profession; to become a conversing community and return to the core values of social work and reaffirm the collective responsibility for social justice.

Many scholars have examined the ways in which bureaucracy has replaced collective responsibility and deliberate decision making (e.g., Flyvbjerg 2001, Fook 2016, Rosa 2013, Graeber 2015). According to anthropologist David Graeber, bureaucracies appear to be:

> *"... organized in such a way as to guarantee that a significant proportion of actors will not be able to perform their tasks as expected. It's in this sense that I've said one can fairly say that bureaucracies are utopian forms of organization. After all, is this not what we always say of utopians: that they have a naïve faith in the perfectibility of human nature and refuse to deal with humans as they actually are? Which is, are we not also told, what leads them to set impossible standards and then blame the individuals for not living up to them? But in fact all bureaucracies do this, insofar as they set demands they insist are reasonable, and then, on discovering that they are not reasonable (since a significant number of people will always be unable to perform as expected), conclude that the problem is not with the demands themselves but with the individual inadequacy of each particular human being who fails to live up to them." (2016: 48-49).*

Exactly this kind of irresolvable contradiction and its ability to hinder meaningful collective collaboration, inside as well as between organisations and actors, is a topic that all partners in the Urban SOS project can recognize as a main obstacle for collaboration, taking collective responsibility and making deliberate decisions. With the linking of urban social work, critical theory and phronesis, we have created a common starting point for identifying and analysing the challenges and changes caused by current processes of urbanization.

Our argument for asserting that the analytical framework can be configured as 'a generic approach,' is linked to our understanding of urbanisation as inherently linked to modernisation, the industrial revolution and the consequent development of urban areas that are mismanaged. Mismanaged in the sense that they are socially unjust because social infrastructure (schools, proper and affordable housing, access to leisure activities, parks and recreational areas, cultural institutions, commercial life etc.) is distributed unevenly throughout most cities leaving some areas extremely marginalised (Wacquant 2008). In our framework, phronesis is a means, not an end.

While we are experiencing new waves of urbanization on a global scale, it could be argued that many of the current processes of urbanization are variations of 'old' and familiar social challenges such as clustering of socially and economically vulnerable populations in areas with little or no social infrastructure (Ibid.). The social and environmental changes caused by urbanisation are immense. According to journalist Doug Saunders, "We will end this century as a wholly urban species." (2011: 1). Historically, the rural population who migrated to cities during the industrial revolution to work in factories ended up in worn-down or poorly developed areas in which a transition from poverty to the middle class was difficult (see also Addams 1892). The transition has not become easier over time, and even though it is certainly possible to identify urban development where marginalised places become creative and innovative hubs for the next economic and cultural boom with a thriving social infrastructure, they become gentrified. We also often see that socially vulnerable people, migrants and refugees are contained in very few square meters in these areas; and most often without a voice in debates on what kind of cities we want.

3.1 Ethical dimensions within Urban SOS

Making ethical decisions can never be entirely simple but as society becomes more complex, they have become even more challenging. As stated previously, the Global Agenda for Social Work (IFSW, 2012) compels social workers to work in ways which promote economic and social equality, support the dignity and worth of individuals and which strengthen human relationships and sustainable outcomes. A wealth of arguments can be found in the literature, which maintain that to achieve these goals a re-examination of the interaction between ethics of care and ethics of justice must be considered (Banks, 2011, Juujärvi et. al., 2020, Jönsson, 2014). According to Juujärvi et. al., the ethic of care—the ethic of the private sphere—focuses on maintaining relationships between individuals by responding to the needs of others while minimizing injury. The ethic of justice—the public sphere—focuses on fairness, equity and upholding obligations by applying standard, laws and moral principles equitably. These are two distinctive modes of moral reasoning, the latter looking for universal solutions and the former, examining full descriptions of concrete cases set within a particular context (place, space, resources, structural barriers, individual strengths, and values). The choice made in any situation goes back to the values espoused. Are humans seen as autonomous, detached moral decision-makers or as interdependent and vulnerable to forces outside themselves?

Kuhn (as cited in Barnard, 2008), spoke of 'paradigm' as a way to explain a 'constellation of beliefs, assumptions and techniques' that dominate at a given point in time. He stated that we are socialized into a 'paradigm' until it becomes a 'world view' within a particular community. This paradigm is then used to solve puzzles, or ethical dilemmas in our case, without raising any challenging or difficult questions regarding exceptions to the paradigm itself. This continues until we enter a period of crisis where the exceptions to the rule become so common or intolerable that we seek for other answers to address the problems which the current paradigm or worldview are not responding to (Kuhn, 1970).

Within the Urban SOS project, we see that the current way of resolving 'wicked' problems and ethical dilemmas in an urban context does not resonate with accepted and long-held social work values. Problems such as homelessness, joblessness, inequality, and lack of access to resources such as financial support, education and healthcare cannot be solved by an either/or mentality. Now is the time to challenge old ways of thinking and working such as New Public Management and commodification, which do not address social justice or care issues. As Jönsson (2014) eloquently argues:

> *"...social work needs to be a part of...structural changes (which) constitute the national basis of social work practices, which are the basis for the inclusion of those who are defined as citizens and therefore entitled to help and protection and the exclusion of non-citizens living in the same country. Social work should not accept the fact that nationalist values of the national codes of ethics of social work in a country legitimise the exclusion of certain marginalized groups, such as undocumented immigrants, from all social service and human rights reserved for citizens. It needs to go beyond the obligations of a state for its citizens...towards more embedded and situated approaches... "*

To achieve what Jönsson (2014), and others, suggest, we need to radically rethink and revisit how our values are manifesting in our ethical decisions and policies. Sarah Banks (2011) suggests that we reclaim and reframe ethics in social work; that we see it as both personal and political. She proposes the idea of a 'situated ethics of social justice' where the knowledge and shared understanding that ethical issues are embedded in everyday practice and in people's lives is uncontested. Ethical decisions, which influence people's lives, cannot be made by using only rational deduction from abstract principles or from legal or business constructs. To attain a socially just society, we must utilize sensitivity when looking at the unique situations occurring in people's lives and relationships. As Addams formulated by Addams in the earliest days of social work, it is necessary to "at least see the size of each other's burdens" to have a democratic society (Addams 1903). We must employ empathy, care, and compassion as well as reason. According to Banks (2011), the situated ethics of social justice takes social justice as its starting point and grounds it in the 'situated' context.

As described in this section, the values of social justice and care are at the very root of social work. Flyvbjerg (2012) states that phronesis, which includes an analysis of values and concrete practices, must be combined with episteme, which focuses on abstract theory and concept. With our analytical framework and approach to urban social work, we wish to emphasize, we could, and do, argue that phronesis is at the root of social work as a way of situating our values into our ethical analyses of particular situations which occur in urban contexts. We must continually deliberate, re-affirm, and revise our values in order to remember their importance and reclaim them from being diluted or co-opted by negative trends in society (Banks, 2011, IFSW, 2012).

3.2 What is a context? Connecting context with spaciality and the understanding of place

Flyvbjerg is interested in asking: what role does 'the context' play for knowledge and skills? How can the context inform research instead of merely the other way around? For this, he has worked extensively in two intertwined directions.

First, he is arguing that 'the case' should have its scientific relevance reinstalled. As research objects, cases have been deemed obsolete, problematic, and ill-suited for generating knowledge that moves from the specific to the general. Someone constructs cases for someone and for a traditional positivistic researcher this is a problem per se. It means that the case is 'polluted' by the constructor. For a phronetic researcher the case is 'a dream come true.' The collaboration between the 'someones' in both the construction and analysis of cases is what renders the case socially, societally and politically relevant. Perhaps we could go as far as to claim that the construction of cases in projects such as the Urban SOS project are in fact examples of ethical articulations concerned with socially just cities.

Second, he draws on anthropology as a social science discipline, and especially anthropologist Clifford Geertz's, methods of asking the so-called 'small (or banal) questions and producing so-called 'thick description' through fieldwork (often using methods such as observation, participant observation and conversations). Case studies involve extensive narrative elements where the thick description becomes an illustration of reality's complexity and contradictive nature. In the Urban SOS project, these methodological principles have supported us in developing cases that illuminate the interconnected nature of individual, collective, local, national, regional and global contexts and narratives, and, thus, they also help us to work according to the principles of IFSW and IASSW as described in section 2.

In the Urban SOS project, we consider local urban problems to influence, and be influenced by, global problems and issues (Sassen 2018). We are interested in understanding how people perceive, produce and appropriate different urban spaces and places. Thus, 'the context' is considered in a broad sense of the word.

To describe and analyze the different cases/examples in their context, we draw on theoretical perspectives from social geography, especially critical perspectives that consider the social dimension of place and place making. This includes the meaning and significance of our sense of place in a globalized world, i.e., our sense of belonging and identity and our mobility and immobility (e.g., Lefebvre 1991, Massey 2005, Sennett 2018). In such perspectives, places and examples of practice are more than just 'a context' or a location. Rather, they are a way for people—policymakers, planners, social workers, and beneficiaries alike—to understand, know and be in the world. Thus, we cannot take place and context, nor the ways in which they are planned and organized, for granted. Instead, we must examine the ways in which places are linked with politics, policy, and planning through discussions about who gets to define the meaning and proper use of places, including who moves freely between or are contained in places. Places and social spaces are often assumed to be neutral, and we tend to forget that there is a spatial dimension to all social relations (Lefebvre 1991).

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Social norms, values and interests define spatial practices and vice versa. According to Lefebvre, space is a social product that "masks the contradictions of its production" (Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003: 30). Lefebvre's evocative view on space as a social product that cloaks the contradictions of its productions can help us to consider the ways in which different global, national, and local actors (from all sectors) use spaces and places to obscure power relations. This includes the ways in which contexts, localities and places play a role in defining, contesting, and subverting power relations.

4. A model for a holistic and phronetic analysis— the context in action

We believe that a well-trained social worker, sensitized to the dimensions of phronetic analysis pictured in the model below will be able to respond to phenomenon appearing in communities in the urban context in a more critical and measured manner. We wish to reiterate that model is a tool that ensures that we work holistically and combine all three types of knowledge (epistemic, phronetic and techne) when we look at a case, problem, issue, or dilemma—the model is a means to an end; it allows us to look at the same phenomena from different perspectives. As cases and contexts have different elements and are located in different national contexts (geographically, politically, economically, welfare-wise, and legislatively), there is no 'one-size' fits all, so we offer this model as a 'guide'.
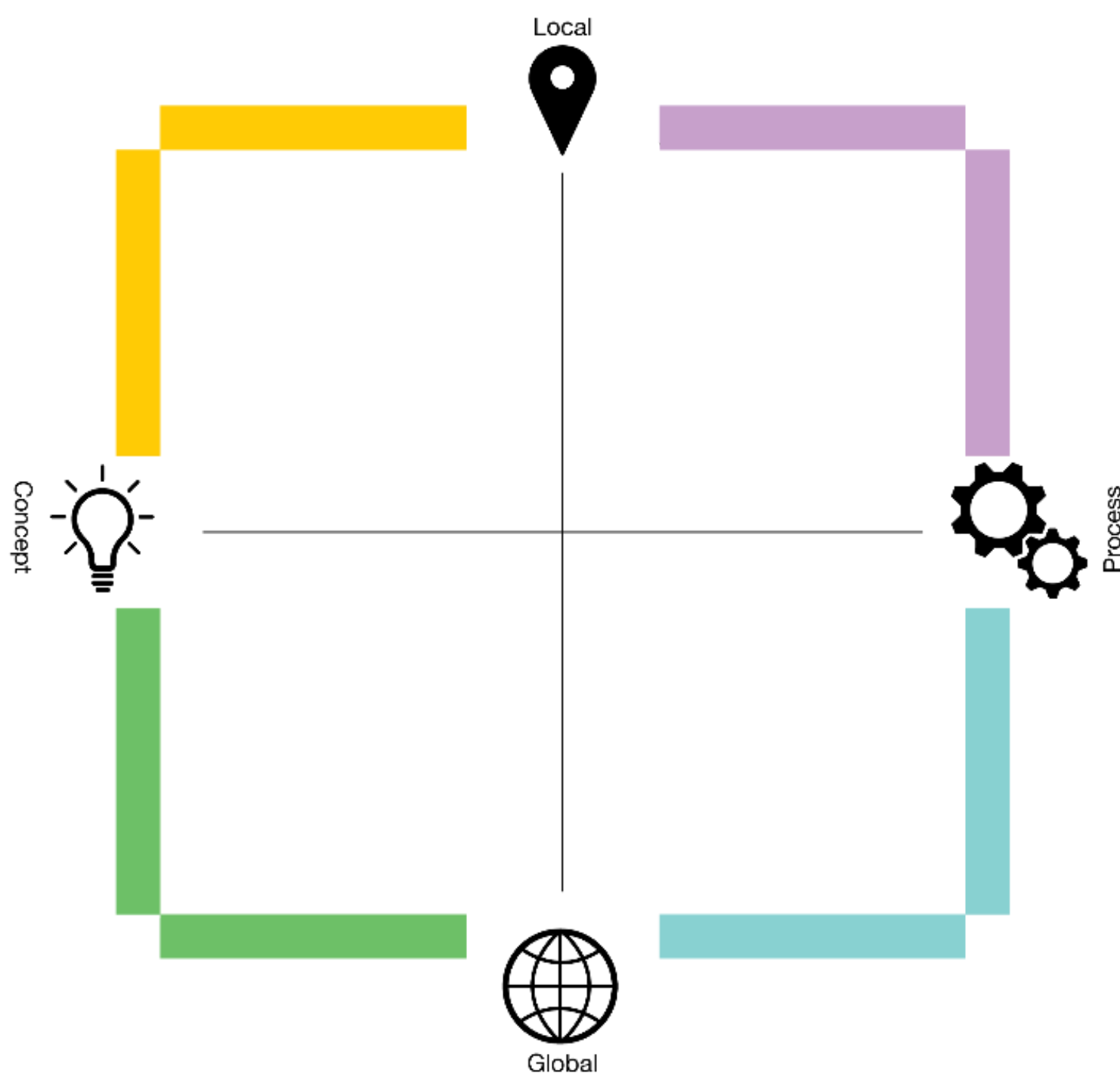
The purple quadrant represents the *local processes* that are being analyzed. This quadrant examines organizational challenges, conflicting interests, and problems caused by, for example, gentrification, discrimination, segregation, individualization etc.   In this quadrant, we are concerned with:
- Places.
    - The location (where),
    - Locale (what and how, i.e., the layout, infrastructure, design, architecture) and
    - The sense of place (who, why, and with which consequences are examined).
- As a part of the analysis, we are also concerned with the actions and behavior of collective entities, institutions, and individuals.
- Finally, we are concerned with the behavior and effects of local systems and structures,
    - Such as policy making and the production of spatial norms.

The blue quadrant represents the *global processes* that are being analyzed. This quadrant is about analyzing the global and supranational dimensions of processes that are changing our cities, for example, gentrification because of global financialization and the commodification of cities, migration, and environmental issues. In this quadrant, we are concerned with:

- The interconnections between large global developments and structures and concrete places.
- The actions, trends, and behavior of supranational actors are examined to become better at understanding their local effects, consequences, and expressions.

The green quadrant represents the *global concepts* that are being analyzed. Here, the term 'concepts' refers to lived and practiced widespread ideas, theories, isms, and ideologies. This quadrant is about:

- Analyzing the ways in which ideas, isms, and ideologies affect local development and events.
- All global concepts, the hegemonic, commonsensical, or competing ones alike,
    - For example, capitalism and solidarity, communalism and individualism etc. are examined. often such concepts are implicit or unarticulated in our empirical cases.
    - Therefore, we must ask which global concepts can help us explain why our empirical example (an event, a problem, an institution etc.) unfolds the way it does.

The yellow quadrant represents the *local concepts* that are being analyzed. Here, the term 'concept' refers to the lived and practiced values, worldviews, thoughts, ideas, and motivations of collective entities, institutions, and individuals. In this quadrant, we are also concerned with:

- The sense of place.
- Different actors' subjective and experienced constructions of meaning and significance are examined to better understand the negotiation of spatial norms and values.

5. Places of Tension in social work

A special interest of the Urban SOS project has been to examine so-called 'places of tension;' (Beckett & Maynard, 2005) that is places, contexts, and practices that are prone to:
- Recognize suspicious practices in policy and social action
- Undermine these practices through problematization
- Constructively help to develop new and better practices

In our analysis of places of tension, we have been guided by value rational questions (cf. the phronetic approach, Flyvbjerg 2001) and in our analysis of empirical material we have asked:
- Where are we going?
- Is this development desirable?
- What, if anything should we do about it?
- Who gains and who loses and by which mechanisms of power?

The objective of our analysis of empirical material is to help professionals and students to develop an attitude of analysis and the skills to problematize the larger situation, considering power and the ways in which structures contribute to, and reify, power in a marginalizing way by:
- Making the resource/structural issue visible.
- Asking how we, not reform, but revolutionize our structures to support the needs of socially vulnerable people in cities; preferably by using the skills gained during education and experience in a way that does not overburden already busy professionals.

6. Conclusion

We have developed a model that allow students, educators and professionals to analyse and better understand urban issues. We have done so based on the assumption that before we can act, it is necessary to understand the ways in which urban changes always profit some and trouble others. Therefore, even the most incremental and participatory processes of transformation can be disrupted by competing needs and interests. We have invited educators as well as social service professionals to investigate urbanization and gentrification; anthropological and geographical ideas around place, space, and the 'right to the city', through project collaboration and research with vulnerable individuals living in the four national contexts. As stated in the introduction our hope has been to create a new analytical lens, a framework, which might facilitate the re-invigoration of already existing theory and collective methods; theories and methods, which historically have proven themselves useful in the struggle for creating more socially just cities in any given national or local context. We hope that the model and framework presented in this article will allow the reader to become more attuned to mapping out competing needs and interests and consider them in the planning and execution of interventions. In this process we have enlarged and enriched our academic and professional networks, survived two years of a pandemic while trying to collect ethnographic data and become incredibly more aware of the multiple layers and perspectives that appear in our cities and with the people we serve. We wish to thank our project work field and associate partners, our twinning partners and our universities for supporting this work. We would also like to give a shout out to the students in the Social Work in Urban Areas joint semester held in Helsinki in the autumn of 2021. You were an amazing resource for us in thinking over these topics and challenges.

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PILOT FOR EDUCATORS
(Emancipation in the Urban Context)

Traditionally, social work has focused on social issues originating from different processes of modernity, especially those related to urbanization and industrialization. One of the main historical roots of the profession is the use of methods to help people and communities flourish as well as to question unfair structures.

Over the years, the methods of casework and community work have become central to the profession and our focus has moved away from examination of the wider social and societal structures. Our understanding of the City as a place and space that should be socially sustainable and just has disappeared from the professions' radar in three of the four national contexts. This shift is supported by an increased individualization of social problems and social policies that focus more on workfare than welfare. In the Netherlands this development has been called 'the participation state,' in Denmark 'the competition state,' in Finland 'the wellbeing state,' and in Belgium 'the active welfare state'.

We developed the Urban SOS project because we feel duty-bound to provide social work students with a theoretical and analytical framework based on solid research data; a framework that can counterbalance, and be critical of, the very individualized, neo-liberal (economic), and goal oriented/evidence-based thinking social work that has become the norm in the European welfare states. In the Urban SOS project, we have developed such a framework which is made up of theories that many of you may know already, but which have not yet been commonly used in social work. The framework rests on the roots of emancipatory and critical social work and draws from multiple academic disciplines such as geography, sociology/economics/political science and anthropology. The framework brings together perspectives from these different disciplines to enable social workers and professionals working in the social and healthcare fields to become more place-sensitive. We hope that by using the framework it will help professionals involved in social services work to have a better understanding of how places and spaces interact. A place is defined as a room or anything that can be occupied, inhabited and designed to say something about those who belong there, while space is an abstract where thoughts and ideologies interact. A place is material but space is affected by the rhythms of the place; it's connected on many levels from the global to the local and finally the individual level. Within this space social workers need to know that thoughts, ideas and knowledge here are contested and saturated with power. As social workers and professionals we understand issues of power but we rarely look at power on a more urban or structural level.

It is our ambition to revive and reinforce already existing theory and methods such as advocacy, activism and lobbyism etc., which historically have been effective in the struggle for creating more socially just cities—in any given national or local context. For this, we need more educators—colleagues—who share our vision and who are familiar with the City and urban social issues which appear "... between the macro-level of global markets and institutions and the micro-world of everyday social reality." (Williams 2016: 32).

Participation in this course will provide you with an opportunity to:

- Become familiar with a theoretical and analytical framework that can be used in any urban setting, or to address different themes related to urbanization or even to examine processes of change in any organizational or societal context.

- Become more aware of the ways in which European welfare states have evolved towards a more similar welfare system known as the social investment state, with its sub-categories 'the well-being state, 'the competition state,' the active welfare state' and 'the participation state.' As part of this course you will have the opportunity to look at your country's welfare state and social policy context from a global and inter-European perspective.

- Increase your knowledge of global and urban processes from the four participating cities (Amsterdam, Ghent, Helsinki and Copenhagen). You will be introduced to a different case from each city and together we'll explore one from the host city Ghent in more depth. You will visit the local work-field practice partners in Ghent and meet other relevant local actors who have been involved in the case. In this way you will also have rich opportunities to see how social work with target groups or themes, which you may know from your own work, unfold in the local context in Ghent.

- Exchange ideas on how educators can address urban issues in social work/healthcare practice in their teaching.

- Colleagues from the four different European cities will be joining the course, thus giving everyone an opportunity to form ties and create or expand networks. Finally, you will be presented with test examples of new and creative teaching materials and ideas developed in the Urban SOS project.