Hochschule Bremen
City University of Applied Sciences

HSB

Green Social Work, the Social Pedagogy of Sustainability and the Current Corona Crisis

Impulse lecture at webinar: Sustainable Welfare, Green Social Work and the Impacts of the Corona Crisis – An International Comparison

Hochschule Bremen, University of Pisa, Universidad Nacional de Lanús
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Social Work

IFSW/IASSW: Global Definition of Social Work

"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 knowledges, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing."

IFSW – International Federation of Social Workers , 2014

Social Work – The German understanding

Social Work Theories in Germany – two traditions

Social Work (Sozialarbeit)	Social Pedagogy (Sozialpädagogik)
Focus: poverty reduction	Focus: education/inclusion of children/youth
Help	Social Education
Women‘s, social and peace movements	Youth movements, progressive education
Convergence: Social Work (Soziale Arbeit) Prevention and coping of social problems	

Changing Contexts for Social Work

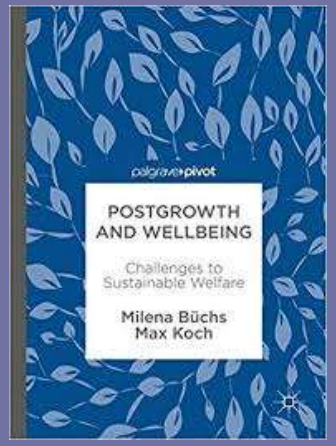
Shifts in Society: The Limits of Growth → New Contexts

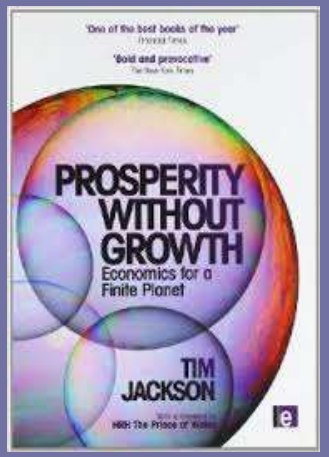
Ecologial limits:
- Climate Change
- Peak Everything
- Extinction of Species / Pollution and Acidification / Global Crises

Sustainable Welfare:
- Welfare has always been connected to growth
- How can welfare be organised in steady state societies?

Post-Growth / Degrowth:
- Less is more / Easterlin Paradox
- Sufficiency (N. Paech) and prosperity without growth (T. Jackson)

→ New political frameworks for social work?





Social Work in Post-Growth Contexts:

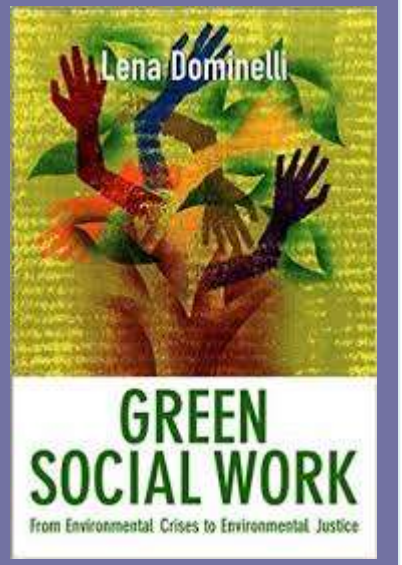
In Search for Alternative Models

Green Social Work

- Ecology as impact *and* potential for marginalised people

- Natural disasters and catastrophes as field for social work

- Human rights *and* the rights of plants, animals, ecosystems



- Well-being: Socio-cultural, economic *and* physic impacts
- Egalitarian frameworks of equal distribution
- Western and indigenous perspectives

→ Social problems and ecological problems need to be reflected together
→ Integration of socio-ecological perspectives in social work

Environmental Justice

- Fair treatment and involvement

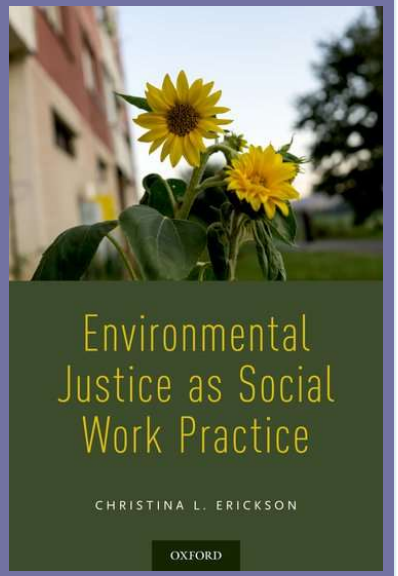
- No group (race/ethnic/gender/age/socioeconomic) to bear a disproportionate share of negative environmental consequences

- Right to have positive connection to environment

- Suitable environmental laws, regulations, and policies

- Relation to nature without exploitation

→ A balance between human rights and Earth's rights
→ Human rights cannot be granted and secured without the Earth



A Social Pedagogy of Sustainability

Lothar Böhnisch
- Social sustainability in the Anthropocene
- Paradise-lost situation / helplessness
- Climate change / peak everything / global crises

Social Sustainability
- Overcoming externalisation and consumerism
- Gender perspective
- Integration of milieus / cultures of participation
- Social justice and social security

→ Sustainability as learning field for education, social development and social policy

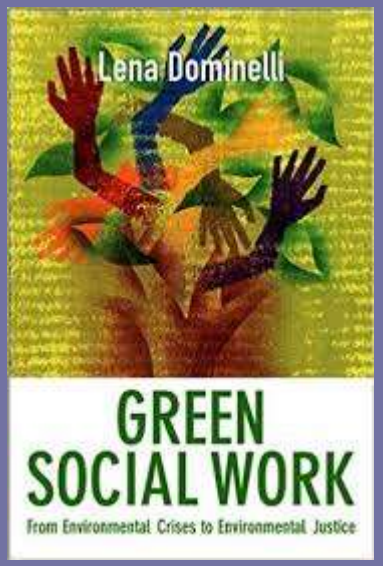
Corona Crisis:
The Covid-19 pandemic

How to regard the Covid-19 pandemic?

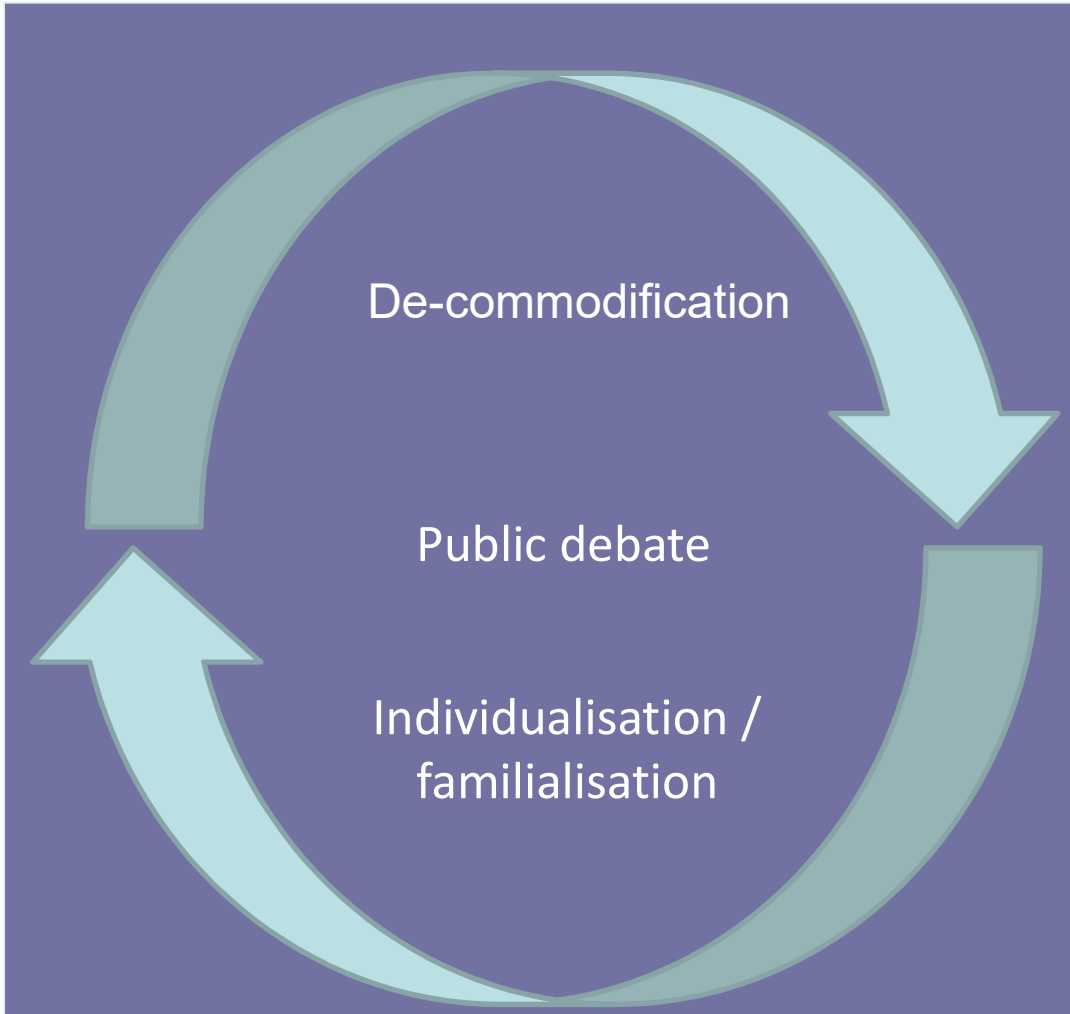
A (rather) unexpected pandemic that reminds us of:

- Vulnerability
- Global interdependence
- Effects of human intervention on ecosystems
- Relevance of societal interventions and resilient societies
- Science and democracy

→ Dealing with multiple socio-ecological problems



Effects of the Covid-19 shutdowns: Ambivalent counter currents



Temporary exceptional state
- De-celleration
- State protection
- Worker's rights
- Renter's rights
- Medical rights
- Solidarity

- High economic risks
- Loss of compensational public systems of care, education, support, protection, mental health
- Loss of freedom
- Loss of security

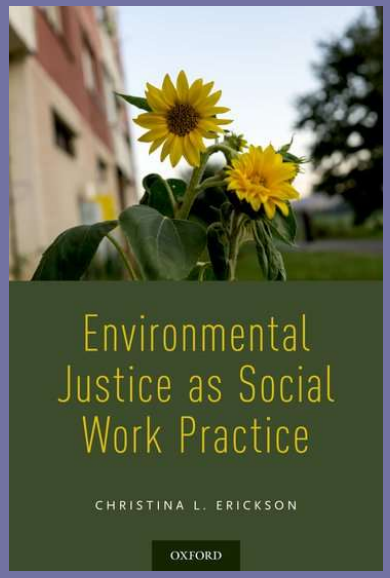
Green Social Work – Forms of Intervention

Green social work practice: Intervention levels (C. Erikson)

Individuals and families
- Assessment
- Planning
- Interventions

Groups and communities
- Collectivisation / Assemblies
- Identification
- Organizing

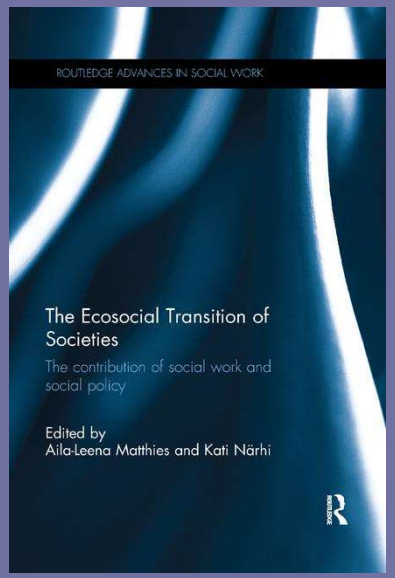
Organisations and policy level
- Identification
- Vision
- Change



Green social work practice – Ecosocial transformation

Phases (C. Erikson)
- Telling and exploring a story / Analysing the problem
- Describing a preferred reality
- Realizing plans and dreams
- Evaluating outcomes and creating transitions

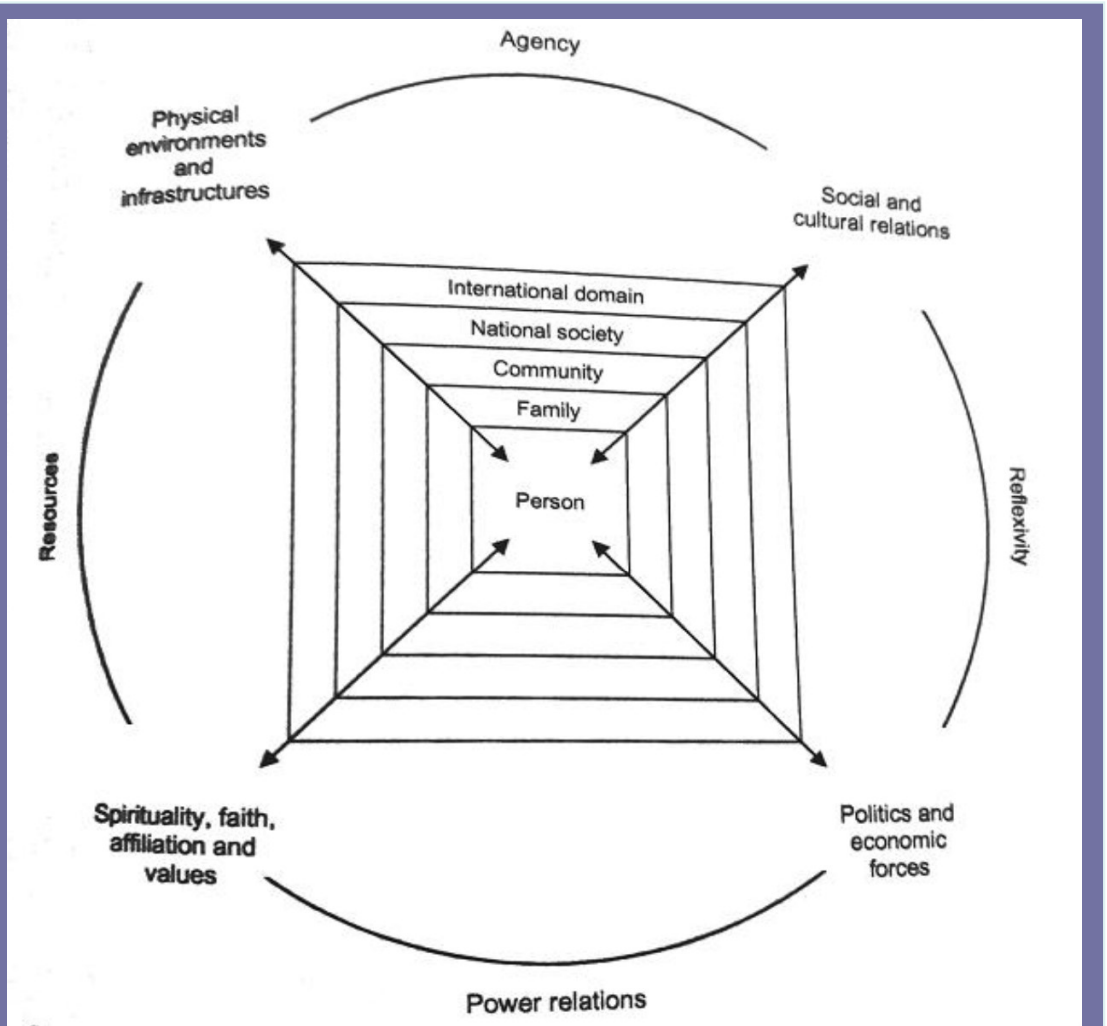
Ecosocial transformation
- Ecosocial policy making
- Collaborative problem-solving
- Social change processes
- Special role for social work



Holistic practice (Dominelli)

Holistic Approach
- Multi-level thinking
- Interdisciplinary
- Transnational
- Egalitarian / Anti-Oppressive
- Transformational

Dominelli 2012, 197



Source: adapted from Dominelli (2002)
Figure 10.1 Holistic practice chart

Outlook

Outlook: Questions for discussion

Sharing of perspectives

- What conclusions would need to be drawn from the perspectives of:
- Sustainable Welfare
- Green Social Work
- Social Pedagogy of Sustainability
- Environmental Justice

- What would be the next tasks and challenges?

Thank you for your attention

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