

Overview of Structural Social Work

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Slides are based on a
presentation given to english
sosionomi students in 2022

What structural social work?

Two main perspectives

1. Structural work and client work as separate things and processes.
2. Structural and client work as parts of a same connected process.

This presentations argument

There is no social work that isn't connected to larger structures of society.

But

How do we define structures?
What do we mean with transformational social work?
What about critical social work?



A quick look into the theoretical background of structural social work.

Why Theory?

Social work practice is affected by theoretical, political and religious views – even if we don't separately acknowledge it.

Theoretical background of structural social work



- Structural social work has been in the Finnish discussion in some capacity for a long time, with 1980s being the first time of active discourse and 2010s being time of re-emergence of the subject.
- There have been several rival terms used, but the term structural social work (rakenteellinen sosiaalityö) has become established during the 2010s.
- No single unifying theory, **but** there are features connecting structural social work theories:
 - View that personal social problems are connected with societal circumstances, power and resources.
 - Critical perspective and seeking new or alternative ways of doing things.
 - Taking into account peoples history, situation, surroundings and people as part of a complex web of structures.
 - Concept of oppression.
- Finnish structural social work has been more connected to theories of community social work, while the international discussion has been more connected with radical social work theories.

Definitions of Finnish structural social work by Anneli Pohjola

- Reading recommendation: Sosiaalityön tutkimuksen vuosikirja 2014.
- The term “structure” in social work is hard to define clearly.
- Attitude towards structural work has also been polarized in Finnish discourse.
- What can help is comparing structural social work ideas and the concept of structures to basic values and goals of social work.
- Classic definition of social work is that it’s a two-way transformative work with focus on both client work and aim for larger societal changes.
 - Social work happens both in micro and macro levels – and in-between.
 - In this context, what does it mean to do social work when the client work is overworked and highly challenging?



picture: Arto Liiti
(from university of
Lapland website)

International structural social work and Bob Mullaly

- Reading recommendation: The New Structural Social Work.
- Mullaly looks at structural social work from perspectives of six paradigms and aims to define “The New Structural Social Work”.
- Radical perspectives of social work criticize, that conventional theory can’t deal with many people's social reality and has failed in critical self-awareness.
- Marxist or other leftist theories connect most of radical social work theories and approaches → “Focus on individual is blaming the victim”.
- Mullaly argues that lack of theory is sloppy practice.
- Dialectic approach to social work:
 - Not a question of whether personal or political come first: both must occur conjointly.

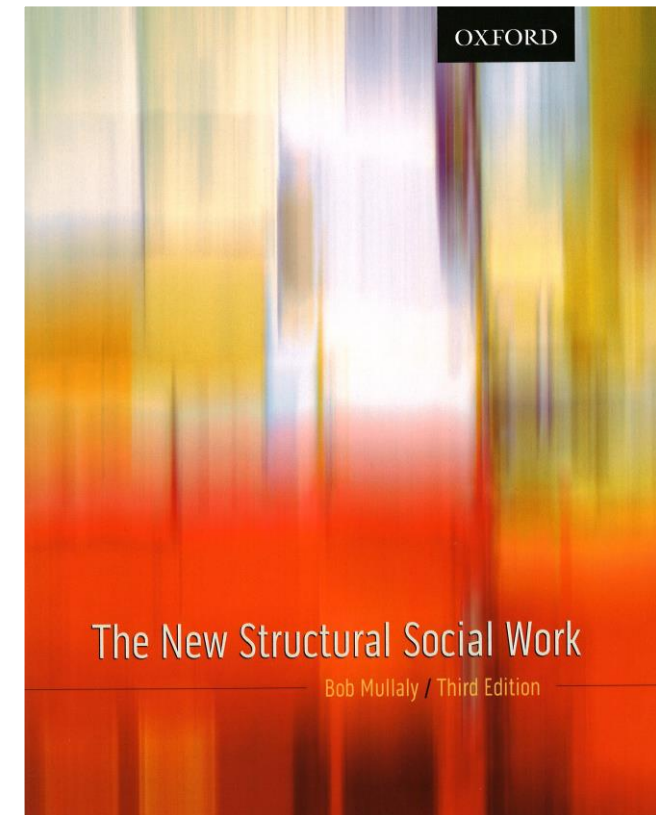
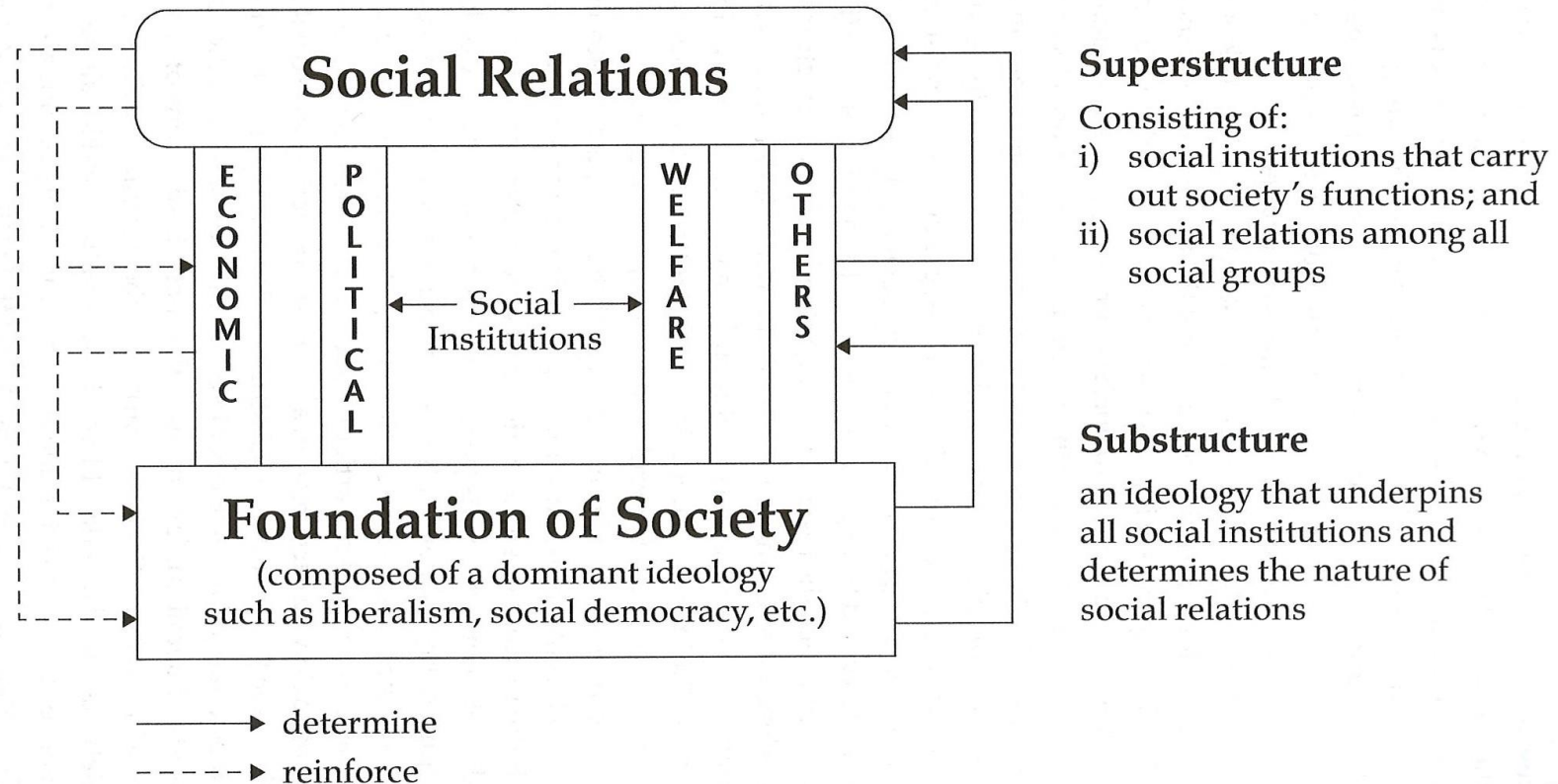


Figure from The New Structural Social Work (2007), page 246)

FIGURE 9.1 STRUCTURAL VIEW OF SOCIETY



Structural approach to social work

(based on Mullaly 2007)

- **Approach:** social work as working simultaneously on personal and structural change in connection with conventional client work.
 - Dialogical relationships – horizontal exchange
- **Empowerment:** feeling of being able to control one's destiny to a reasonable extent is essential psychological component of all aspects of life.
- **Consciousness-raising:** increasing awareness with both individuals and a larger society.
- **Collectivism:** People as social beings and depending on one another, shared experience of problems, peer support.



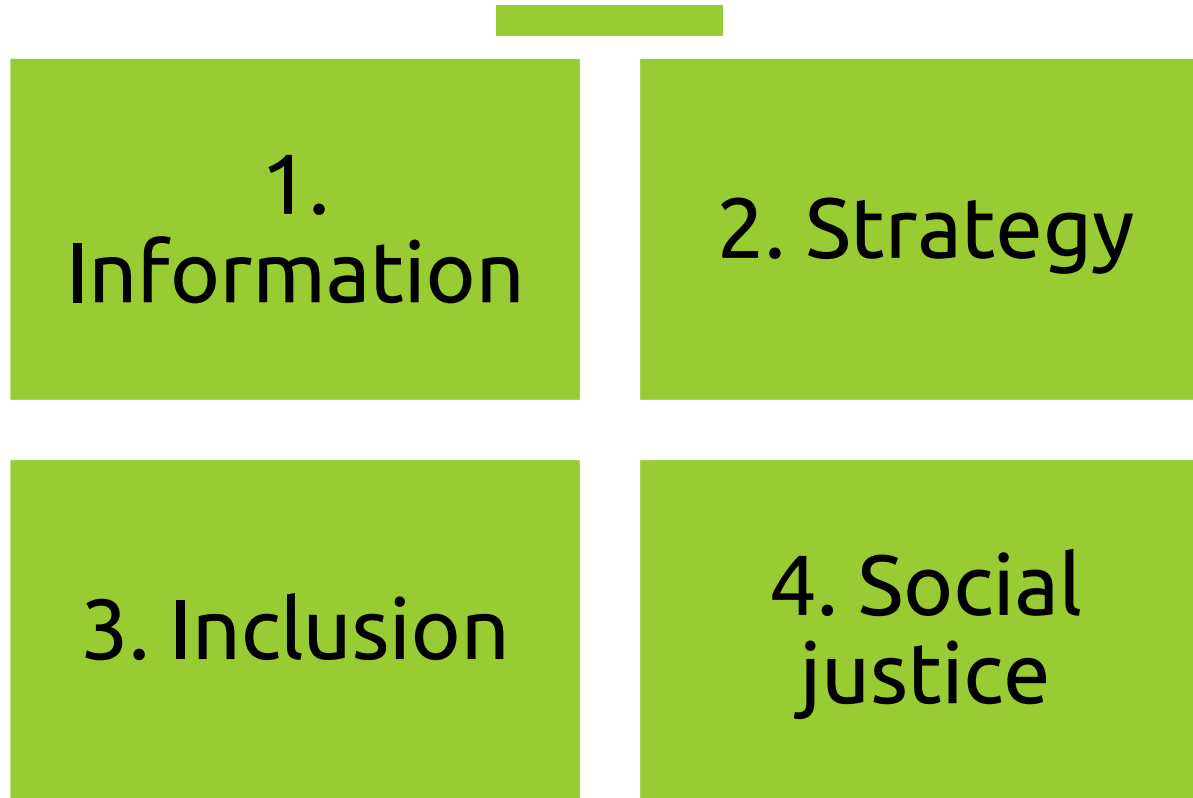
Structural social work in Finnish context

Structural social work in Finland



- Finnish social work is strongly connected to the public social and health welfare sector .
 - third sector has much less of a role, but is still important to the whole.
 - This allows doing structural social work within and along the official welfare system.
- How do social work professionals understand and define themselves as part of the welfare system?
 - Is the system seen as something monolithic and bureaucratic - opposite to clients?
 - Or is it seen as a combination of people's ambitions, interests and co-operation?
- Current social welfare discussion highlights the importance of working across sectors and bringing social work expertise to a stronger role.
- Structural work rises from comprehensive knowledge from client work.
 - Acknowledging the voice and knowledge of clients, service users and locals.

Basic areas of structural social work



Classic social work orientation: securing human rights, working towards increasing social justice, facilitating participation and inclusion, and empowerment.
All of these have a structural element.

How Finnish law defines structural social work?



Finnish social welfare act gives a definition of structural social work in it's 7th § . It's definition:

- Structural social work is done to provide information of social problems and phenomenon's and using social work expertise to promote wellbeing and health.

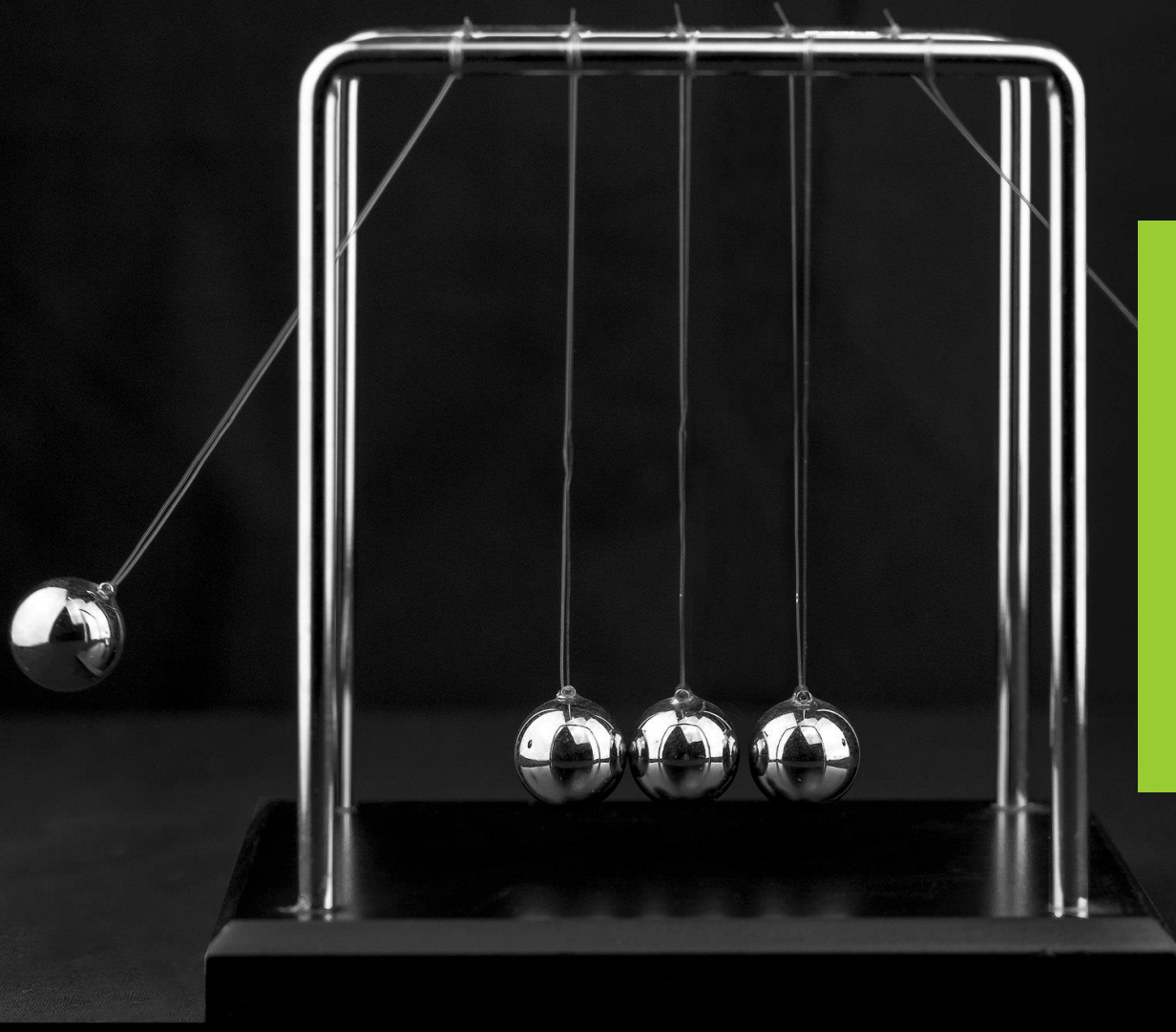
Structural social work is defined as:

1. Producing information about customers needs and their societal context from client work, and impact of social services.
2. Procedures and procedure-suggestions to prevent and fix social problems and developing the local environment.
3. Bringing social work expertise to be part of planning and cooperation by wellbeing services counties, municipalities, private sector and third sector to develop local social work and social services.

What's behind the law?

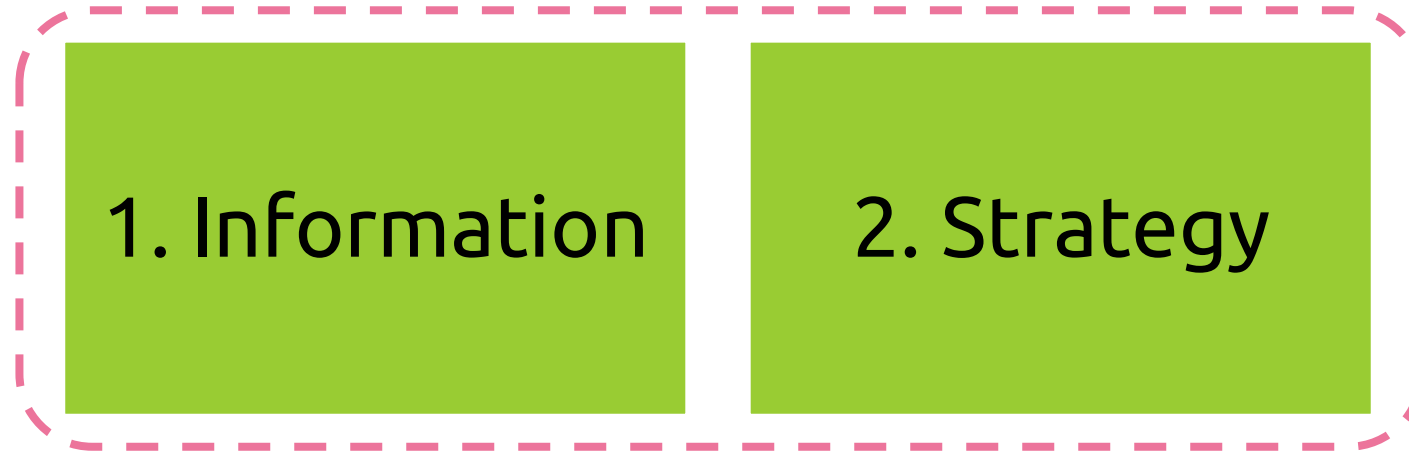


- Earlier social welfare act was from the year 1982, and the 2015 Finnish social welfare act had been in the works for a long time.
- The goal was to clarify various definitions and the law's status, with focus on:
 - Prevention, welfare services, equality and cooperation.
 - Highlighting structural social work as improving effectiveness of social work and its legitimacy.
 - Gathering and using information from client work.
 - Policy and procedure suggestions.
 - Cooperation across sectors to promote health and wellbeing.



Structural social work applied

Picking focus from the perspective of Finnish social and welfare organisations:



Structural social work as both way of observing and working plus various tools and techniques.


Reminder from the Finnish social welfare act:

Structural social work is defined as:

1. Producing information about customers needs and their societal context from client work, and impact of social services.
2. Procedures and procedure-suggestions to prevent and fix social problems and developing the local environment.
3. Bringing social work expertise to be part of planning and cooperation by wellbeing services counties, municipalities, private sector and third sector to develop local social work and social services.

Let's go through these one by one!

1. Producing information about customers needs and their societal context from client work, and impact of social services.

- 
- Diverse sources of information: local & national levels
 - Local: more detailed and actively updated
 - National: statistics, trends, comparisons, registry information
 - Social work databases: how information is written and formalized
 - Quantitative and qualitative information – together?
 - Is collecting information lead by systems needs or clients needs?

1. Producing information about customers needs and their societal context from client work, and impact of social services.



From where?

Social work databases
Client work
Tacit knowledge
Questionnaires
Co-creation
Social care assessments
Tools of measuring client work
Social reports
Statistics
Databases...

2. Procedures and procedure-suggestions to prevent and fix social problems and developing the local environment.

Research and research oriented work

- Legibility of information gathered
- Phenomenon and observations
- Assessing social services effectiveness
- Changes, effects & efficiency
 - Reporting, proposing solutions & follow-up

But where and how?

- Data driven management
- Political decision making processes
- Health and wellbeing action plans

Municipalities and wellbeing service counties both create their own health and wellbeing action plans, and they need to cooperate in the process.

3. Bringing social work expertise to be part of planning and cooperation by wellbeing services counties, municipalities, private sector and third sector to develop local social work and social services.

- Structural social work need structures and cooperation to function.
- Bringing social problems and phenomenon to discussion and attention, raising (public) awareness.
- Providing information, participating in service or policy development and decision making.
- Communication: both within service systems and public discussion.

Pekka Puustinen:
three questions of promoting welfare

1. Direction: how are things going?
2. Methods: what is effective?
3. Structures: how are various methods used purposefully?

3. Bringing social work expertise to be part of planning and cooperation by wellbeing services counties, municipalities, private sector and third sector to develop local social work and social services.

Data driven
management and
political decision making

Health and welfare work across sectors
Gathering and using information
Using social work expertise and networking

Welfare work

Gathering information from client work
Social reports
Possible teams or people specialized in structural social work

Co-development

Involving social work clients with providing information and
procedure suggestions
Knowledge of peoples everyday life and life-situation

Communication



- Without communication social work information and expertise cannot be used or even known.
 - management and decision-making need information.
- Communication and raising public and/or organizational awareness is a powerful tool of structural social work.
- Communication also as a part of breaking the culture of silence in social work.
- Working towards co-operation and co-development requires knowledge and information about our own work in social welfare and work of other professionals.
- Communication can be done in many ways, as you see in the coming slides.

Sosiaalityön monet roolit

Sosiaalityön asiakkailla on kaikilla erilaiset lähtökohdat. Osa asiakaista ei pysty sitoutumaan työskentelyyn, jolloin työn vaikutuksetkin jäävät vähäisiksi. Vaikutukset voivat näkyä myös tilanteen pysymisenä ennallaan. Osalla asiakaista työskentely on muutosta tukevaa ja vaikutukset näkyvät asiakkaan itsenäisyyden lisääntymisenä.

1 Negatiivisten muutosten torjunta

Satunnainen asiakas-kontakti.

Työskentely on akuuttiin tilanteeseen reagoimista.

Sosiaalityön rooli:

tukea asiakasta asioissa, joihin hän hakee apua.

2 Ylläpitävä työskentely

Asiakas on sitoutunut, mutta tuen tarve runsas.

Tavoitellaan nykytilan säilyttämistä.

Sosiaalityön rooli:
tukea ja ylläpitää elämän perusrakenteita ja torjua negatiivisia muutoksia.

3 Hitaat positiiviset muutosprosessit

Ohjaus on pitkäjänteistä, pienin askelin etenevää.



Asiakas edistyy pikku hiljaa omissa tavoitteissaan.

Sosiaalityön rooli:
perusasioiden sujumiseen keskittyvää, asiakkaan oman vastuun kasvattamista.

4 Sitoutunut muutostyöskentely

Asiakas on motivoitunut muutostyöskentelyyn ja hänellä on riittävästi toimintakykyä kuntoutua.

Sosiaalityön rooli:
tukea ja etsiä ratkaisuja yhdessä asiakkaan kanssa.

Lopulta asiakas selviytyy itsenäisesti.

Aikuissosiaalityön tunnistetut PALVELUAUKOT

Jos oikeanlaista apua ei ole, hakeudutaan palveluihin, joista asiakas ei hyödy.



Jos palvelu ei kohtaa asiakkaan tarvetta, asiakas voi pudota palvelujen piiristä.



Jos tukea ei ole riittävästi, asiakas on vaarassa syrjäytyä ja jäädä näkymättömäksi.



Asiakas tarvitsee ammattilaisen lisäksi vertaistukea päästäkseen mukaan yhteiskuntaan.



ALUEELTA PUUTTUVAT PALVELUT

Vaikeassa elämäntilanteessa oleville kohdennetut palvelut auttavat haittojen minimoimisissa.



Kriisasunto



Ensisuoja



Työikäisten kotihoito



Työikäisten tuettu asuminen



Kynnyksetön kohtaamispaikka



Sosiaalinen isännöinti



Kynnyksetön kohtaamispaikka



Sosiaalinen kuntoutus



Vertaistuki



Sosiaalinen kuntoutus



Tilapäisesti rajoittunut toimintakyky



Työikäisten tuettu asuminen



Tukehenkilöt



Digiryhmät



Vertaistuki

Itsenäinen selviytyminen



Vipuvoimaa EU:lta 2014–2020



<https://bit.ly/essoteinfo3>

Visual communication examples


<https://bit.ly/essoteinfo2>

Video communication examples


Aikuissosiaalipalvelut Kainuussa

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Kajijaaanista 🌲
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Katoppa video-opastus Kajaanin
Linnankadun toimistolle 🌲
17 weeks ago · 798 views
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Kurkkaa videosta, mistä löytyy neuvonta
Kajaanissa 🌲
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19



Moi! Tervetuloa mukaan seuraamaan
sosiaaliohjaajan seikkailuja 🌲...
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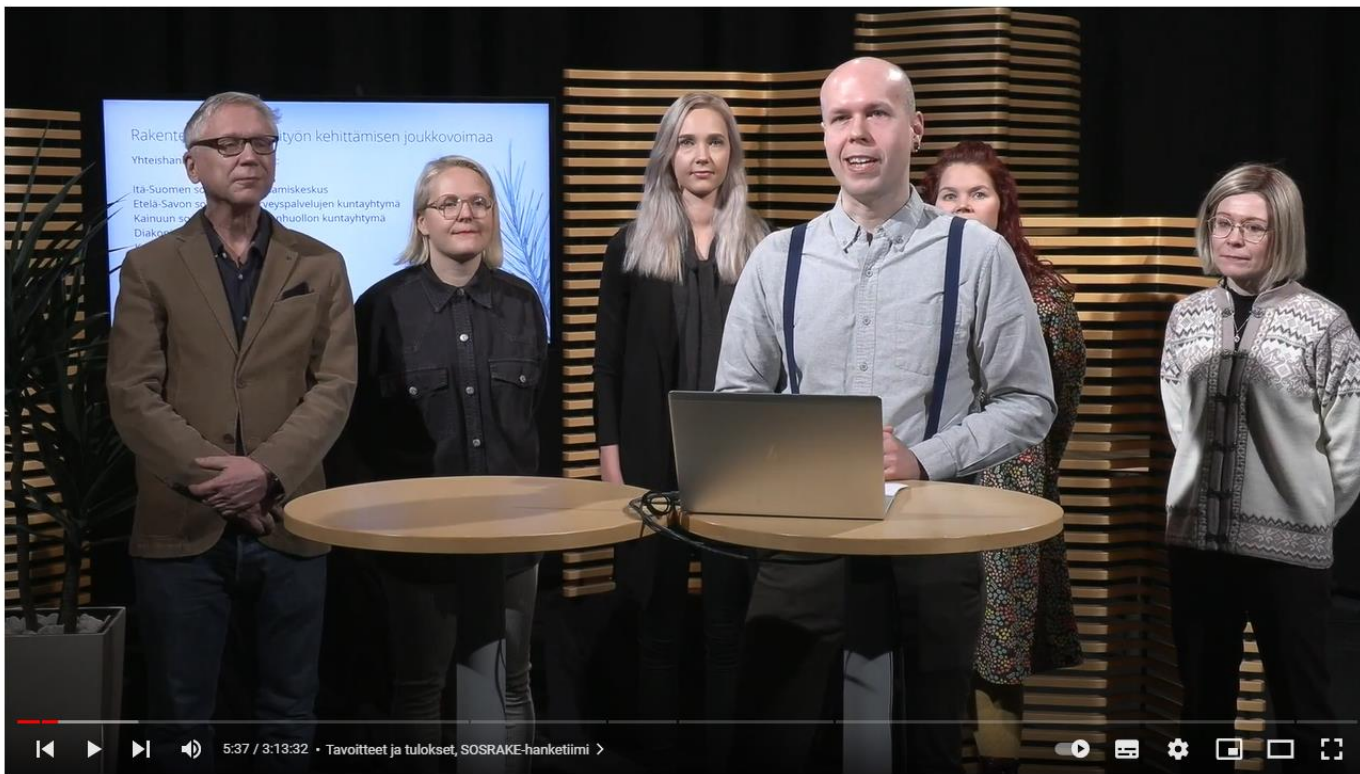


Kuhmon Piilolankankaan lähiötuvalla suora
radiolähetys valtakunnallisesta...
2 years ago · 168 views
4



Kainuun TYP
3 years ago · 399 views
27

<https://bit.ly/3lq5wVL>



SOSRAKE-osaamisverkosto-hankkeen loppuseminaari 1.12.

ISO-yhdistys ry Kuopio 27 tilaajaa

Tilastot Muokkaa videota

1 Jaa Lataa Klippi Tallenna

<https://youtu.be/f0vm8iC4css>

Summary



- Core of social work has always been understanding of people as part of their life situation, environment and as a part of complex web of structures.
- The basic viewpoints of structural social work are critical understanding and solution orientation.
- Goal is to increase and facilitate equality, social justice, participation and inclusion.
- Working towards change requires cooperation across professions and sectors + hopefully involving clients and locals.
- Structural social work needs to be lead and it needs structures.
 - Otherwise there is a risk of structural social work staying or becoming fragmented.
- Despite focus on structures, conventional client work with individuals and families is still fundamental.

Structural social work can't be done alone!

What separates social worker from researcher is that their priority is not on gathering information but using it toward positive change.

From lecture by Ylisosiaalineuvos Aulikki Kananoja
6.4.2022



Further information

SOSRAKE-project (2020-2022)

- Structural social work project managed by Itä-Suomen sosiaalialan osaamiskeskus during 2020-2022
- Name comes from Finnish words for social and structural (sosiaalinen and rakenteellinen).
- The project created and facilitated a network of social welfare professionals.
- The focus is on information: collecting, formulating and using structural information.
- Using said information towards change in policy and social service procedure.
- Developing skills of social welfare professionals and how structural methods are applied.
- Find projects publications and more information from the projects [homepage](#)!



SOSRAKE-osaamisverkosto -hankkeen esittelyvideo

606 katselukertaa • 9.6.2020

3 EN TYKKÄÄ JAA TALLENNNA ...

ISO ISO-yhdistys ry Kuopio
12 tilaajaa

TILATTU

Videossa esitellään SOSRAKE-osaamisverkosto -hanke ja sen toteuttajat. SOSRAKE -hankkeessa kehitetään sosiaalialan rakenteellista työtä Itä-Suomessa. Hanketta hallinnoi Itä-Suomen sosiaalialan osaamiskeskus ja osatoteuttajina toimivat Essote, Kainuun sote, Diak ja Xamk.

NÄYTÄ LISÄÄ

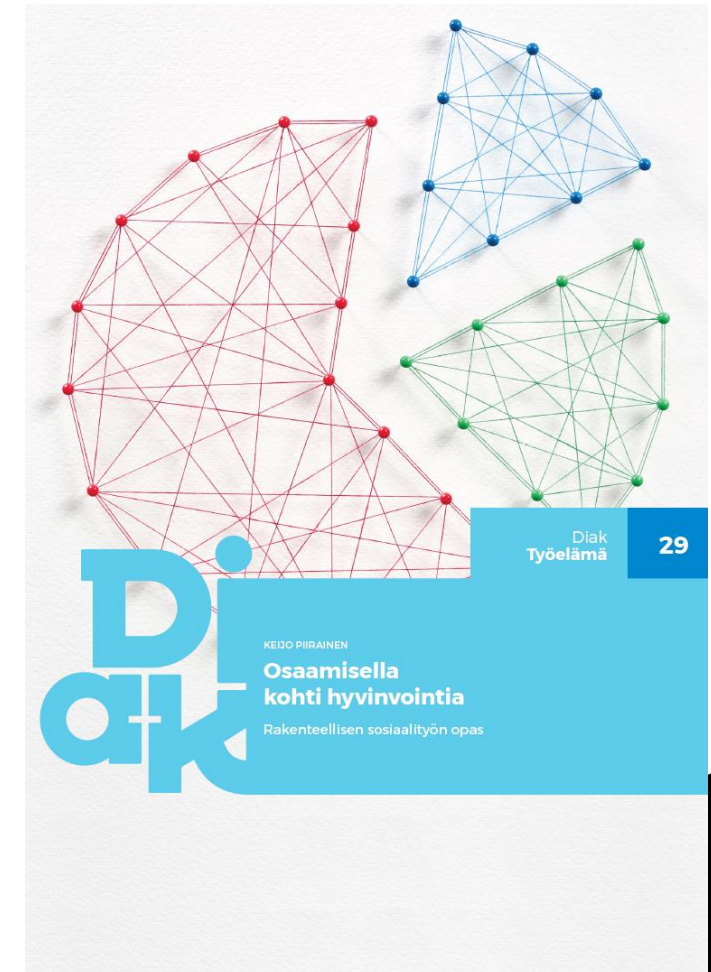
<https://youtu.be/HiP75JkA6Hc>

- <https://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-344-311-2>



Osaamisella kohti hyvinvointia - Rakenteellisen sosiaalityön opas

- Rakenteellisen sosiaalityön opas - publication supports knowhow and implementation of structural social work in the Finnish context.
- It contains casework examples that concretize structural social work application.
- <https://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-493-404-6>



Rakenteellisen sosiaalityön ideakirja

- Rakenteellisen sosiaalityön ideakirja –publication was made as a companion to Rakenteellisen sosiaalityön opas (previous slide).
- It aims to increase knowledge of different aspects of information in structural social work, and inspire the reader.
- The material is concretized by a fictional case-example used throughout the publication.
- The publication is hosted in Prezi-program and is available through web-browser.
- https://urn.fi/urn:nbn:fi:oyerfi-202212_00025926_4



Two life histories connected with structural social work

(both videos in Finnish)



Ylisosiaalineuvos Aulikki Kananoja

<https://youtu.be/hl7ycXEf2vM>



Poverty researcher Jouko Karjalainen

<https://youtu.be/UnoyUDygBmA>

THL: Vaikuttava rakenteellinen sosiaalityö

- Published by Finnish institute for health and welfare in 2022.
- Collection of short and precise articles about structural social work (26 total!).
- <https://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-343-790-6>



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- Homepage and blog: <https://www.isonet.fi/julkaisut-ja-materiaalit/isoblogi.html>



- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/itasuomensosiaalialanosaamiskeskus/>



- YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCA8rdleeqSJcmMFAgSnT59g>

Sources

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 - Anneli Pohjola: Rakenteellisen sosiaalityön paikannuksia. 16-36.

Many aspects of presentation also based on variety of work done during SOSRAKE-project.

TIETO – VAIKUTTAMINEN – HYVINVOINTI

Osaamista yhteiskunnallisten ongelmien
ratkaisemiseen ja eriarvoisuuden vähentämiseen



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Kainuun sote



Diak



Lisätietoja: www.isonet.fi/sosrake-hanke

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www.rakennerahastot.fi

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SOSRAKE-homepage:

<https://www.isonet.fi/iso-toiminta/kehittamishankkeet/paattyneet-hankkeet/sosrake.html>