The view of green social work among Danish social work students and practitioners.

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Abstract

Green social work is a framework that aims to include the natural environment in social work theory and practice. It focuses on the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation on people's lives, and views environmental justice as part of social justice. This thesis investigates the view of Danish social work students and practitioners on green social work, and how their perspectives connect to the global discussion of the subject. 146 participants responded to an online survey. Their answers showed limited previous knowledge about green social work, but the majority thought it to be important, and reported that they would like to learn more about it. More participants thought green social work was important globally, compared to those who thought that it was important in Denmark, which might be due to climate change impacts being felt less severely in Denmark than other parts of the world. The findings connect to the global discussion of green social work by illustrating that the framework has not made its way into mainstream social work education and practice in Denmark yet, which is what green social work academics are calling for.

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Introduction

Setting the scene

In 2014 the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published their *fifth assessment report on climate change*, covering "Observed changes and their causes; Future climate change, risks and impacts; Future pathways for adaptation, mitigation and sustainable development; Adaptation and mitigation" (IPCC, 2014, p.2). They reported clear evidence of human influence on climate change and reciprocally the changing climate has an impact "on human and natural systems" (IPCC, 2014, p.2). The changes that had been observed are obvious and had not been seen to this extent before. Both the atmosphere and the oceans are increasingly becoming warmer, there is less snow, the ice is melting and consequently sea levels are rising (IPCC, 2014). Evidence suggests that it is "extremely likely that more than half of the observed increase in global average surface temperature from 1951 to 2010" (p.5) was due to the increased greenhouse gas emissions caused by humans in one way or another. The impacts of the changing climate are becoming more severe and are felt by an increasing number of people across the globe, e.g. longer droughts, more floods, more and larger wildfires, negative impacts on food production and thus food security (IPCC, 2014). The report points out that climate change is increasing the negative effects of other burdens, e.g. poverty, especially on vulnerable groups, and that policies related to climate change should include adaptation as well as mitigation. Further, it states that if mitigation efforts are being delayed it will reduce possibilities for building resilience and adaptation (IPCC, 2014).

These predictions were presented again in the IPCC's *Special Report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C* (IPCC, 2018). This time the consequences of our planet warming by

1.5°C were contrasted with consequences at a higher rate of warming with a call to stay on the

pathway of the Paris agreement and limit global warming to 1.5°C pre-industrial levels (IPCC,

2018). Fueled by, among other things, these IPCC reports, the call for sustainable development is

becoming louder across the globe. In 2015 the United Nations (UN) presented *The 2030 Agenda*

for Sustainable Development and presented the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and

169 targets with which they were "*setting out a supremely ambitious and transformational vision*

[and] envisage a world free of poverty, hunger, disease and want, where all life can thrive" (UN,

2015, p.5). And while only SDG 13 directly calls for Climate Action, all goals have some

potential to drive climate mitigation forward (IPCC, 2018, p.20), and that greater successes can

be achieved when addressing some of them simultaneously (Islam & Winkel, 2017). Other

international bodies, national governments, (international) non-governmental organizations

((I)NGOs) and citizens are following suit and demanding action to reduce greenhouse gas

emissions and lower the risk of the planet warming beyond the aforementioned 1.5°C. The

European Commission published *The European Green Deal* in December of 2019 (European

Commission, 2019). While the Conference of the Parties (COP) 25 was happening in Madrid,

Denmark passed the *Klimaloven* (Klimarådet, 2020), one of the most ambitious climate laws in

the world. The name Greta Thunberg has echoed around the globe and thousands are following

her example and have been going out to protest for stricter regulations and climate justice (e.g.

fridaysforfuture.org). But what does social work have to do with climate change? And what do

words like *adaptation*, *mitigation,* and *sustainability* mean?

       In this paper, I will first present the definitions of some concepts that I am using in my

thesis, then I will introduce the link between climate change and social work by elaborating what

green social work theory is on the basis of the *Global Definition of Social Work* and current literature about the subject. I will then present my research question, methodology and findings, and conclude with discussing the thesis' implications and limitations.

Important concepts

These are definitions of a few concepts as they are used in green social work, and as I am using them in my thesis. The conceptualization of these might differ in other contexts.

Adaptation.

Adaptation means to adapt one's life to the impacts of climate change by trying to reduce one's vulnerability to the changes. This can be e.g. rising sea levels, droughts, floods, food scarcity or (hu)man made and natural disasters (Lewis, 2018). The IPCC (2014) points out that while adaptation can reduce vulnerabilities to climate change, it also has its limits, especially with climate change impacts becoming more severe. However, early adaptation strategies can also have benefits further down the line, e.g. "improved energy efficiency and cleaner energy sources, leading to reduced emissions of health-damaging, climate-altering air pollutants" (IPCC, 2014: 20).

Mitigation.

Mitigation is reducing or preventing greenhouse gases being emitted into the atmosphere to lower future impacts of climate change. This can happen e.g. by burning fewer or no fossil fuels or developing and enhancing technology that captures or stores these gases (Lewis, 2018). The IPCC (2014) acknowledges that "[i]mplementing such reductions poses substantial technological, economic, social and institutional challenges" (p.20), but it is also emphasized

that, the longer mitigation is delayed the more challenging it will be to limit global warming to a couple degrees celsius and with it the growing impact of climate change.

Natural and (hu)man made disasters.

"Disasters, by definition, are events that exceed the ability of the affected community to cope using its own resources" (Murray et al., 2018: 35). These disasters can be *natural*, e.g. volcanoes, earthquakes (Dominelli, 2015), or *(hu)man-made* –linked to human activity– , e.g. oil spills, toxic chemical releases, armed conflict (Dominelli, 2015; Taylor, 2018). But the line between these two types is becoming more and more blurred as human activities exacerbate natural disasters (e.g. climate change leading to longer droughts, heavier rainfall or stronger storms), and natural disasters trigger some (hu)man-made ones (e.g. the 2011 earthquake and tsunami in Japan causing radiation leakage at the Fukoshima nuclear power plant) (Dominelli, 2012). These interactions can cause what Dominelli (2012) calls 'multiple hazard situations'.

Sustainability.

Sustainability is a way of thinking that has at its core the idea of perpetually maintaining a state of being. In environmental terms it refers to the capability of the planet to support all life (plant, animal and human) on Earth for all time (Lewis, 2018). A widely cited definition comes from the Brundtland Report and states that sustainable development is "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (World Commission on Environment Development (WCED), 1987 as cited in Alston, 2015, p.359). Lewis (2018) describes "environmental, social, and economic needs" as the "three mutually reinforcing pillars of sustainability" (p.257).

Social work and the (natural) environment

Social work's engagement with environmental concerns is not a new idea. In the early days of social work, Jane Addams already advocated to improve the environment of poor urban communities, e.g. clean drinking water, safe garbage disposal (Nesmith and Smyth, 2015). Dominelli (2018) points out that historically there was a conceptualization of the importance of people in their physical environments. It was important for social workers to look into the places where people lived and how that influenced their wellbeing (Dominelli, 2018). Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory brought a shift by defining the environment as something perceived by an individual and focusing on social structures as a person's environment (Alston, 2013). While one's social structures are definitely a very important element in one's development, the call for the physical environment to regain awareness in social work theory has been getting louder (Dominelli, 2018). Lucas-Darby (2011) states that this person-in-environment thinking that already exists in social work actually makes including (natural) environmental concerns "a natural fit" (p.113) for the profession. A paradigm shift toward inclusion of the natural environment into social work is said to be inevitable if the profession wants to continuously be relevant at a time where the climate crisis is escalating (Lucas-Darby, 2011; Kennedy, 2018). But there are concerns that the profession is responding too slowly (Dominelli, 2014), and might be "missing a critical opportunity to be actively engaged in fighting for equality and human rights" (Nesmith and Smyth, 2015, p.485). National and international associations of social work, for example the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW), and the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), have started to include the natural environment in their codes of ethics and calls for action (Bowles et al., 2018).

Some responses to this call for a paradigm shift have been *environmental social work* (Gray et al., 2013), *eco-social work* (Boetto & Bell, 2015) and *green social work* (Dominelli, 2012, 2018). All point out that the physical consequences of climate change such as droughts, floods, wildfires, severe weather events etc. (IPCC, 2014, 2018) lead to social changes and social problems, e.g. the spreading of tropical diseases, food insecurity and malnutrition, forced migration, disaster relief work, and changes in work opportunities and job securities (Aston, 2013; Gray et al., 2013). These changes will consequently change the kind of work social workers are doing and the challenges they face (Dominelli, 2012; Gray et al., 2013). These ways of thinking about social work also include environmental justice as a part of social justice. "Environmental justice highlights the linkage between environmental degradation and power imbalances" (Powers et al., 2018, p.74). These power imbalances show up on all levels of society, globally –between countries– it can be seen that smaller and/or *less developed, low-income* nations, that are more vulnerable and due to historic circumstances and geographical location have been slower in their development in the first place, are also in parts of the world that are more likely to suffer from environmental degradation and natural disasters and have fewer resources to recover (Cox & Pawar, 2006; Dominelli, 2013; Islam & Winkel, 2017). On a national level –within countries– it is often the already vulnerable groups, e.g. the poor, people of color, women, the elderly, that are suffering from the consequences of environmental degradation (e.g. Gray & Coates, 2015; Lucas-Darby, 2011). These frameworks propose a holistic and integrated approach to social work (Papadopoulos, 2019) and consider environmental sustainability as part of theory and practice, and also as an ethical issue (Bowles

et al., 2018). In this thesis I will mainly focus on green social work theory as conceptualized by Dominelli (2012).

<div align="center">**Literature Review**</div>

What is green social work?

The number of academic texts published about green social work, environmental justice and social work's relationship with the natural environment are increasing.I am going to use the IFSW's definition of Green social work, as it provides a common understanding within the social work community. The IFSW (2014) defines social work as:

> "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" (IFSW, 2014).

Green social work theory is anchored in this definition.

Promotes social change and development.

The social changes and developments that green social work focuses on are connected to climate change and people's interconnectedness with the natural environment.

The disaster cycle.

One of these changes is the rising frequency and severity of natural disasters and the subsequent rise of frequency and severity of the aftermath disaster-stricken communities have to combat, i.e. loss of livelihoods, damage to infrastructure, food and housing insecurity etc.

(Dominelli, 2012). The change that green social work seeks is throughout the whole disaster cycle. Green social workers can help a community with adaptation before disasters strike. This can be advocating for early warning systems, educating and raising awareness about the threat of natural disasters, bringing experts from within and outside the community together to identify weak spots in protection systems, and working on mending these (Dominelli, 2012). The second part of the cycle, the immediate relief efforts, is the part most familiar to traditional social work. Help with relocating, sheltering and feeding people, and carrying out psycho-social support for traumatized survivors; but also helping with clearing and disposing of debris (Dominelli, 2014). After this, comes the final stage that closes the cycle, rebuilding a community and creating resilience and preparedness in said community (Murray et al., 2018), being involved in policy making and disaster risk reduction, which is where social work is still "less visible" (Alston, 2015, p.358). Social workers can take on many different roles throughout the cycle (Dominelli, 2011), such as coordinating different parts of a system that can work together. For example, social workers can establish a collaboration and bring in an architect who can draw up plans for new buildings in the community, while at the same time incorporating local people's knowledge about their community, such as identifying what the community's needs are. What kind of buildings do they want? Where can materials be obtained and what are traditional ways of building in the area (for an example see Bun Ku & Dominelli, 2018)? All of this should be done with the whole cycle in mind. Disasters create vulnerabilities –mentally, emotionally and physically– on individual people and the community they live in, but they also exacerbate existing vulnerabilities (Dominelli, 2018).

The impact of disasters is also not distributed fairly. Poorer communities have to use the land where they can afford to live, even though this land might be more dangerous for residents (e.g. floodplains), and due to their constrained (financial) capacity, they have a harder time adapting to new challenges; they cannot simply move to new places, or develop new ways of making a living (Alston, 2015). They might not have the access to the education and tools that are needed to build resilience to potential disasters, i.e. the first stage of the disaster cycle (Dominelli, 2012). If disaster strikes, vulnerable communities suffer the most because they are ill-prepared –i.e. the second stage of the disaster cycle. Lastly, they will also have a more difficult time rebuilding their lives as they might not have the financial means to move or rebuild, and are less likely to have had insurance (Islam & Winkel, 2017).

This leads to vicious cycles of vulnerable communities being overly exposed to climate change impacts, more likely to suffer more severe damage, and to have a weakened ability to recover (Islam & Winkel, 2017).

Environmental deterioration.

Environmental deterioration can have different causes. Climate change can lead to droughts or strong rainfalls that change the ability of the Earth's surface to grow crops or provide a safe foundation for natural and human-made structures. Other deterioration might be more obviously linked to human activity, e.g. deforestation, chemical or nuclear accidents or waste disposal (Dominelli, 2012). These changes in the physical environment also bring social changes with them. People might live in places that are detrimental for their health because the water or air are polluted and toxic (Dominelli, 2012). People might have to move from the homes they know and change the way they have been living for generations, e.g. indigenous tribes in the Amazon

rainforest or the populations of small island nations.

As mentioned above, these changes are also intersectional and disproportionately impact vulnerable communities–i.e. poor communities, people of color, women and girls–which are exactly the groups that social workers are often already working with (e.g. Alston, 2013, 2015; Bhuyan et al. 2019; Gray & Coates, 2015; Lucas-Darby, 2011). Green social work stresses the importance of transdisciplinary work and close cooperation with the community affected (Dominelli, 2012, 2018; Boetto, 2019; Kennedy, 2018). A social worker could get involved by moderating meetings in which the community discussed what the problems are and what ways there are to solve them (Dominelli, 2011). They could bring experts from different fields to the table, such as medical or public health professionals, who can assess the negative effects of the deteriorating or polluted environment on the wellbeing of the community, which can then be taken to government officials to demand action.

Urbanization

Another social development that is in the focus of green social work is the global trend of people moving to urban areas and the rise of so-called "megacities", which are defined by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), Population Division, as "urban agglomerations [...] with 10 million inhabitants or more" (UN DESA, 2019, p.55). Dominelli (2012) traces this trend back to industrialization and with it the centralization of employment opportunities. People typically move to cities to find a job, which leads to rural communities lacking skilled workers and urban areas being unable to cope with the masses of people and their needs for housing, employment, social and cultural offerings, and participation in politics. Again, it is clearly mostly the poor who suffer. They are forced to take jobs at very

low wages to compete with other people who rely on selling their labor. Governments and employers fail to provide adequate living accommodations for their citizens/employees, but due to power inequalities there is no way for poor communities to hold those in charge accountable (Dominelli, 2012). Cities also create environmental degradation because natural spaces are used to construct buildings, roads and other infrastructure and thus biodiversity is declining (Dominelli, 2012). Further, most megacities are located in coastal areas and are thus more exposed to natural disasters such as tornadoes or flooding. The masses of concrete create an additional problem as it makes it harder for water to drain (Dominelli, 2012). In urban areas green social workers can e.g. help communities issue complaints and monitor progress when the complaints are dealt with (Dominelli, 2012).

Promotes social cohesion.

Social cohesion is promoted in green social work through the idea of the community as a pool for knowledge and skills (Boetto, 2019), and by empowering communities to find strength in their members (Dominelli, 2012). Generally, green social work advocates to step away from individualism and promotes a focus on the interconnectedness of people, as well as a reciprocal connection of people with the natural environment (Dominelli, 2018). Green social workers unite people who live in the same neighborhood or close proximity to one another. They build community across professions by working transdisciplinary and getting people from different backgrounds together to work on solving a problem (Alston, 2013).

Promotes the empowerment and liberation of people.

As mentioned above, green social work seeks to empower and liberate people by including them in decision making processes and actionable stages; for example, by fighting for a green

economy (Dominelli, 2012, 2018; Lucas-Darby, 2011). Dominelli (2012) also points to the liberation of people from unjust work and living conditions.

Principles of social justice.

Social justice is conceptualized by Buettner-Schmidt and Lobo (2011) as "full participation in society and the balancing of benefits and burdens by all citizens, resulting in equitable living and a just ordering of society" (p.955) with attributes such as fair distribution of power and resources, just policies, and adequate wellbeing. Green social work calls for the profession to add environmental justice into the social justice construct (Dominelli, 2012, 2014, 2018). There are many different understandings of environmental justice, but Nesmith and Smyth (2015) identify two recurring ideas among them: one, sharing "the burden of environmental hazards or degradation" (p.485) equally; and two, including everybody equally in the process of creating policies and activities that are related to the environment. As an overall holistic approach, green social work includes the physical environment and all living beings (animate and inanimate) into its justice lens. Green social work argues for a fair distribution of the Earth's limited resources and a fair sharing of the consequences that climate change and environmental degradation bring (Dominelli, 2013). It points out the power imbalance of the nations and people who pollute the Earth and the nations and people who suffer from this pollution and its consequences. Small island nations suffer due to rising sea levels (Hayward & Joseph, 2018) and less developed, low-income countries carry the better part of the burdens of climate change (Dominelli, 2013), including long dry seasons and droughts on one hand, heavy rain and floods on the other (Islam & Winkler, 2017). These nations often lag behind in their development due to disadvantageous geographic locations and an unfortunately unfavorable history (i.e. colonization) which makes

them less resilient to crises from the start (Cox & Pawar, 2005). Democratic, governmental structures might be weaker in developing countries so that appropriate disaster response is harder to achieve (Hong & Wong, 2010). The inequalities within the population of a country have already been discussed above.

Access to education and clean, renewable energy sources should also be equitable. Again, it is the families who cannot afford to send their children to school who consequently suffer because they have to "jeopardiz[e] their future education outcomes" (Islam & Winkel, 2017, p.20). In rural villages or poor communities people have no access to renewable energy because they cannot afford the initial cost or do not know about the possibilities (Dominelli, 2012). Instead, they produce electricity with diesel generators–if they are lucky–and cook over open fires, while the fumes and exhaust seriously damage their health. To improve health and wellbeing in a community like that, a green social worker can advocate funding for renewable energy sources such as solar panels and then arrange for an expert to come in to help with their installation and to conduct training for maintenance. This will lessen the smoke emitted and thus enhance wellbeing while also needing less wood and thus limiting deforestation. Dominelli (2011) gives a case study example of an indigenous tribe in Argentina, that teamed up with a local foundation to bring solar power into their village. This lowered the amount of firewood consumption which had led to deforestation and erosions of the soil and was threatening livelihoods.

But environmental injustice does not only surface in less developed countries. It also appears in the global North (Dominelli, 2013). For example, less affluent neighborhoods that house people from lower socio-economic backgrounds have less access to urban green space

(Mitchell et al., 2011), are located closer to landfills, and are exposed to more pollution (Nesmith & Smyth, 2015). Interacting with the natural environment has proven to have benefits for people's emotional, mental, spiritual, physical, and social well being (Heinsch, 2012). Heinsch's (2012) literature review compounded multiple studies that show that even seemingly small interactions with nature (i.e. touching a house plant, looking at a picture of clouds etc.) can have health benefits, such as lowered stress levels or blood pressure.

Here a green social worker could help educate people on the importance of being outside and in nature. Then they could moderate a community meeting to discuss what the community thinks would be important to enhance their quality of life. This could be access to outdoor activities or more fresh food. The green social worker could support the community with achieving their goal by helping them identify pieces of land or areas in their neighborhood that are currently underused (the community will know best), and then help them with the process of creating a community garden. Last, they can help by sourcing people from the community who are interested in gardening and might have experience in growing food. There could be a contract with a local farm or nursery or a more established community garden in the city to help get the project up and running. See Mama (2018) for an example of how cooperation between a university and the community which it is in, created a community garden.

Human rights.

Human rights are one of the foundations for social work. Dominelli (2012, 2013, 2014) repeatedly points to Articles 22-27 of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which refer to people's health and overall wellbeing (including food, shelter, and clothing), social security by the state in a moment of crisis, a right to work, access to education, and the right to

develop to their fullest potential (UN, 2015). These, and other rights (e.g. the right to life, access to clean water, freedom) are jeopardized by the negative impacts of climate change, environmental degradation, and urbanization as discussed before, and are thus a vital part of green social work (Dominelli, 2012). While the importance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is undisputed, some scholars identify social work's preoccupation with it –along with human centered social justice– as too anthropocenic and view it as a reason that humankind and nature are seen as disconnected, separate entities, which leads to the exploitation of natural resources (e.g. Boetto, 2019).

Collective responsibility.

As it has been written before, humankind is collectively responsible for contributing to global warming and its consequences–even though some parts of the world are contributing disproportionately more than others (Dominelli, 2013). But subsequently, the responsibility for the wellbeing of all people has to be shared as well, and there is a collective responsibility for the planet we all live on (Dominelli, 2011). This idea of collective responsibility can be seen in collective activism and grassroots movements, e.g. indigenous tribes protecting their land from mining, pipelines or land grabbing (Noble, 2018). Social workers need to build alliances and networks with and among groups of citizens that partake in these movements (Noble, 2018). Green social work calls for the profession to be politically active in order to challenge the individualistic mindset of capitalism and neoliberal thinking which is centered around economic growth made possible by exploiting the Earth's resources, in favor of a more collectivistic mindset because climate change will affect all of us (Dominelli, 2013; Noble, 2018).

Respect for diversities.

Just as in traditional social work, respect for diversity includes a respect for people from diverse backgrounds, different genders, religious beliefs, races, sexuality etc. Green social work adds a respect for the diversity of all life on Earth. This includes the flora and fauna as the animals and plants that surround us, shape the environment that we live in. A healthy flourishing environment with a thriving ecosystem can better support the people that live within it. So it can be within the realms of social work to protect natural habitats and ecosystems and help form a bond between environmental organizations and a community that lives near such a habitat. The community can learn how to care for and protect that part of nature and in the process gain a feeling of ownership and empowerment (Boetto, 2019; Dominelli, 2012).

Theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge.

"Green social work is embedded in critical theory and reflective practice" (Dominelli, 2019, p.234). But beyond the localization of green social work in those traditions of social work theory and practice, this part of the definition to me also points to transdisciplinary work which is emphasized in green social theory. Dominelli (2011) points out that "[t]o respond appropriately, social workers ought to understand the science of climate change" (p.431). But while gaining this knowledge is important, cooperating with experts from other disciplines is almost inevitable (Alston, 2013). As Ward and their colleagues (2016) point out, "[a]fter all, sustainability problems do not manifest themselves according to the distinct disciplinary boundaries that human societies have constructed, and their solutions will be similarly transdisciplinary" (p.431). According to Dominelli (2018) working in a transdisciplinary way is one of the basic building blocks of green social work theory. A lot of the case studies presented in her 2012 and 2018

books include transdisciplinary approaches. A social worker should accept the limitations of their knowledge and skills, but also be confident in what they can bring to the table, and be able to spark that confidence in others–often service users or community members. This also ties back to empowering and liberating people. Green social work also treats the knowledge a local community has about the environment that they live in as an asset (Boetto, 2019). Especially indigenous people have accumulated knowledge about the natural surroundings they live in that can be very useful when trying to work out sustainable solutions for a problem. Collén (2019) points out that there is a need to bridge the gap between expert and experience-based knowledge. When accepting that the knowledge and skills already exist in various places and forms, a green social worker's main role could be organizing for a community and experts to come together to work jointly on a project (see e.g. Bun Ku & Dominelli, 2018), or support in lobbying and advocacy activities, as was the case with the indigenous tribe and the foundation in Argentina which brought together modern technology and traditional indigenous knowledge and practices to install solar power in the traditional village (Dominelli, 2011).

Engages people and structures.

As a lot of these points are intertwined, I have also touched on this part before. Social work should not be something that passively washes over people. If it does, it is not sustainable–and not just environmentally. Instead of viewing a person or a community as a passive recipient of help or services and trying to fix their problem, it is important to engage people and view their knowledge as a resource that they are bringing to the table (Boetto, 2019; Dominelli, 2012, Gray & Coates, 2015)). Green social work operates with a participatory approach that includes marginalized communities in decision making processes and the resulting actions (Powers et al.,

2018). That way, a social worker can help ensure they understand what needs to be changed and what outcome a person or community hopes for, and try to approach the issue with the people who it concerns the most (see e.g. Bun Ku & Dominelli, 2018; Powers et al., 2018). The social structures that need to be engaged, including politicians and policy makers, also need to be engaged when working with green social work approaches, and building alliances among different social groups is also important (Noble, 2018). Beyond the social structures, green social work also views physical structures–both natural and (hu)man-made–as essential to include in the picture as they can enhance, as well as impair, people's wellbeing (see below).

Address life challenges.

The life challenges that green social work seeks to address are challenges related to climate change, environmental degradation, and urbanization. What these challenges entail has been explained in detail in the *social change and development* section.

Enhance wellbeing.

Clean and healthy (natural) surroundings enhance the health and wellbeing of the people who live there. This includes both physical and mental health. Reducing pollution, like in-home pollution due to dirty energy sources like a woodfired stove and more widespread pollution like smog, reduces the risk level for respiratory diseases (Dominelli, 2013); air and water that has been contaminated by farming practices using herbicides and pesticides can potentially cause damage to the cardiovascular system (Nesmith & Smyth, 2015), and in poorly ventilated housing, mold is more likely to develop, endangering people's health (Dominelli, 2014). Access to fresh fruit and vegetables reduces the risk of obesity and diabetes and overall health. But impacts of climate change, such as droughts or heavy rainfalls, as well as environmentally

degrading practices in the food industry, can lead to fewer (healthy) foods being produced and what is being produced is more expensive because it is in higher demand (Molle, 2018; Powers et al., 2018). This leads to food insecurity, and consequently negative mental and physical health outcomes, such as malnutrition–especially among vulnerable communities (Molle, 2018). Extreme weather events can cause damages to social and health care systems infrastructure. The wellbeing of people who are dependent on continuous care will especially be adversely affected (Oven et al., 2012).

Living through natural disasters can be a severely traumatic experience. The knowledge of living in a place that is prone to disasters or polluted by exhausts or chemical waste, and the loss of livelihoods due to disasters, can add to people's mental stress, as well as "feelings of generalized anxiety, hopelessness, and helplessness" (Hayward & Joseph, 2018, p.194). Which climate conditions are more likely to pose a risk to people's health depends on their duration and intensity, and can change depending on the geographic locality and population group. For example, lasting temperatures above 30 degrees Celsius might be normal in some climate zones while being considered a heat wave in others. And younger people might be more tolerant of these conditions than the elderly (Oven et al., 2012).

By and large, the impacts of climate change and natural disaster have numerous negative health impacts and can potentially create "critical levels of mortality and morbidity" (Médecins Sans Frontières/Doctors without Borders (MSF), 2018, p.6). Green social workers can enhance people's wellbeing on different levels, from mental health counseling to participation in policymaking that seek to improve detrimental living conditions, or are directed at general mitigation of climate change.

Amplified at national and/or regional levels.

All the parts of the global definition of social work presented above may be amplified at national and/or regional levels which indicates that there are aspects of social work that might have diverse and diverging impacts on social work in different countries or regions. These differences need to be taken into account when planning projects and interventions. The focus of social work in a developed country of the global North might be one-on-one counseling with service users while less developed and developing countries in the global South emphasize community work and the building of social work structures (Marlow & van Rooyen, 2001). Dominelli (2012) points out that a common international definition and similarities in values help people find common ground and shape a common context so people from different backgrounds can discuss social work issues together with a joint frame of reference even though there might be different local or national implications of a global issue. Islam and Winkel (2017) identify that interventions depend on the concrete situation of a country or locality, and that there is no uniform, standardized process that helps in all circumstances. This is where green social work theory intersects with international social work.

International social work theory

Our world has become increasingly connected and interdependent. The current coronavirus outbreak across the globe is a very tangible and impressive example of this. Social development, the social professions and social work are no exception (Huegler, Lyons & Pawar, 2012). Social work practice worldwide is influenced by economic and political changes and follows international statements and conventions, such as the International Association of

Schools of Social Work's (IASSW) Global Social Work Statement of Ethical Principles and the

United Nations' (UN) Universal Declaration of Human Rights. However while globalization has

led to overarching patterns and shared values that can be observed in many places, international

social work also uses this global lens to compare and contrast how these patterns and values are

interpreted differently and adapted to national and local contexts (Huegler, Lyons & Pawar,

2012).

Cox and Pawar (2006) define international social work as:

> "(...) the promotion of social work education and practice globally and locally,
> with the purpose of building a truly integrated international profession that
> reflects social work's capacity to respond appropriately and effectively, in
> education and practice terms, to the various global challenges that are having a
> significant impact on the well-being of large sections of the world's population.
> This global and local promotion of social work education and practice is based on
> an integrated-perspectives approach that synthesizes global, human rights,
> ecological, and social development perspectives of international situations and
> responses to them." (p.20)

This international perspective plays an important role in green social work. As pointed out

before, global warming affects the entire Earth and thus it affects all its people.

Hong and Song (2010) identify a "lack of accountability" as "[t]he major social justice

concern" (p.657) when addressing global social needs and attribute this–at least partially–to

globalization. They suggest that social work needs to respond by being global in its thinking but

local in its acting (Hong & Song, 2010). They propose two potential ways of responding to

consequences of globalization through this global-local interaction, one bottom-up which

includes empowering citizens on both the local and the global level, and the other one being

top-down with the idea to create "a global social measure to give a boost to those that lag behind

in the global system" (Hong & Song, 2010; p.667). These measures can improve welfare locally

and help challenge social problems that are experienced globally (Hong & Song, 2010).

But more often than not, global problems have different local implications and specific

needs to be responded to (Dominelli, 2012, 2018). This leads to differences in the (perceived)

impact or importance a global process or problem has on different localities (Roudometof, 2016).

Collaboration on a global level is needed to challenge global environmental injustices and the

systems that perpetuate them (Powers et al., 2018). Increasingly, social workers are asked to

participate in these collaborations. But because a disproportionate amount of environmental

injustices can be found in developing countries that sometimes lack an established national social

work system, social workers from developed nations, who might have experience fighting

environmental injustice, are asked to step in and practice or do research in international and cross

cultural contexts (Powers et al., 2018). This international context brings with it the challenges

that are unique to working across national and cultural settings –for example, language and

cultural barriers, building relationships across insider/outsider dynamics (Powers et al., 2018)–

and green social workers have to be mindful of these (Dominelli, 2012).

Overall, green social work serves as additional tools that aim to include environmental

issues with traditional social work and call for a holistic rethinking of the entire profession rather

than striving to be a specialized form of social work (Boetto, 2019; Papadopoulos, 2019). The

challenge is to bring this call from academic journals and books into practice. This development

is dependent on a reform in social work education (Lucas-Darby, 2011), which needs to include

environmental justice and green social work practices in its curriculum to give students the

substantial education they need before entering the field as practitioners where they will face the dynamic and ever changing challenges of the globalized world (Beltrán et al., 2016).

Green social work in practice and education

Many scholars argue that social workers already have the necessary skills and are well positioned to take on the new challenges green social work identifies (Alston, 2013; Dominelli, 2012, 2018; Hayward & Joseph, 2018; Kemp, 2011). But a general change in social work curricular standards is needed to put the natural environment back into the focus of social work (Dominelli, 2011), so that it is not only the personal interest of some individuals that is driving the topic forward (Nesmith & Smyth, 2015).

Authors such as Boetto and Bell (2015) point out 'that social work education should directly address the interrelationship between human beings and the natural environment (p.449) since it is already being included in codes of ethics and recommendations for social work practice by national boards and international associations such as the IFSW (Bowles et al., 2018). Social work education is still in the beginning stages of integrating an awareness of the natural environment into the curriculum, but this integration is vital to equip social work students with the knowledge and skills needed to respond to climate change's impacts, to protect the environment, and potentially prevent further degradation (Boetto & Bell, 2015).

Previous studies that included environmental justice (Nesmith & Smyth, 2015) and evaluations of pioneering courses in green (Beltrán et al., 2016; Boetto & Bell, 2015; Drolet et al., 2015) or eco-social work field practices (Crawford et al., 2015) showed mixed results on how practitioners and students rate the importance and applicability of green social work topics.

Nesmith and Smyth (2015) found that the majority of practitioners thought environmental justice was important in social work in general but not necessarily applicable to their work with service users. Crawford et al. (2015) evaluated a field placement project in what they call "eco-social work" at a university in rural Australia. They found that some students and supervisors thought that they learned a lot and it was easy for them to see the connection between the natural environment and social work, whereas for others it did not come easily, they had a harder time connecting the dots, and it was hard for them to look beyond tangible efforts such as recycling, and saving energy. Some students also reported that they felt like their supervisors–who were social work practitioners–could not support them effectively because they had limited knowledge about the subject (Crawford et al., 2015). Learning opportunities about green social work need to be offered to practitioners and students, as students are the practitioners of the future, and practitioners will be the employers of current students (Nesmith & Smyth, 2015).

The challenge with transforming education and practice is to critique current and previous ways of thinking and doing, while at the same time using them as building blocks and common ground for developing new ideas (Gray & Coates, 2015). Perspective shifts often move slowly, especially when they are challenging core values of (Western) society (Gray et al., 2013). But these shifts can lead to a change in collective thinking and in turn be supported by them (Gray & Coates, 2015). Gray and Coates (2015) point to feminist and decolonization movements as examples of such collective shifts in thinking, even though they might still not be universally accepted. For green social work this might mean that the growing general awareness of sustainability can bring support for a perspective shift in the social work profession, while at the

same time green social workers can educate people on the matter to create a perpetuating cycle of awareness.

Problem statement and research question

Overall, the body of literature on the subject of green social work is growing. Many argue that a shift toward green social work theory and practice is inevitable if the profession wants to stay relevant and shape the debate around climate change and sustainability from a social work point of view, and that this shift should be happening sooner rather than later (Boetto & Bell, 2015; Dominelli 2012, 2014; Kemp, 2011; Lucas-Darby, 2011; McKinnon, 2013; Nesmith & Smyth, 2015). Yet, little research has been done on whether green social work theory is making its way into the consciousness of "mainstream" social work students and practitioners, or if it is a conversation happening in journals removed from practice. Previous studies have mainly focussed on surveying practitioners on their view on environmental justice (McKinnon, 2013; Nesmith & Smyth, 2015) and the evaluation of classes that included thinking about the interaction between people and the natural environment (e.g. Beltrán et al., 2016; Boetto & Bell, 2015; Crawford et al., 2015; Drolet et al., 2015). But no direct inquiry has been made about what social work practitioners and students think about the concept of green social work.

This thesis aims to investigate whether Danish social work students and practitioners have heard about green social work, if they find it important, if their studies or jobs already include it and what ideas they might have on how it could be implemented in the future. Then I will discuss how the findings fit in with the paradigm shift that academia has been calling for for at least a decade, and what influence location–globally versus in Denmark–might have on their

answers. This leads to the following research question: what is the view of green social work among Danish social work students and practitioners, and how do their perspectives connect to the global discussion among green social work academics?

Methodology

Methodological approach

Data in this thesis is based on a mixed method approach. A structured questionnaire was created with a combination of nominal forced-response and open-ended questions. Participants were asked to answer six demographic questions and ten or eleven topical questions. Five of the topical questions were open-ended and five or six were nominal. Whether participants responded to 16 or 17 questions total was based on one of the nominal questions leading to a follow-up question if participants responded positively, this question was skipped if the initial response was negative (for more details, see *Survey* paragraph below). The software used for collecting responses was SurveyXact.

A mixed method approach was chosen because green social work is a relatively new field and not a lot of research has been done on how many people have heard about it and how important they perceive it to be and why. Thus my aim was to explore some baseline statistics, and explain where these trends might stem from. Either quantitative or qualitative research alone would not have been able to provide satisfactory answers to my research questions. As Bronstein and Kovacs (2013) point out, both of these reasons are essential when choosing a mixed-methods approach. Quantitative and qualitative data can benefit from each other in multiple ways. The

three fundamental reasons for doing mixed-method research are triangulation, being complementary, and elaboration or expansion (Bronstein & Kovacs, 2013; Dudley, 2011).

Triangulation means that quantitative data and qualitative data can be cross checked for coherence and validation (Bronstein & Kovacs, 2013; Dudley, 2011). In this case, if people respond to the question whether they think green social work is important, but are not able to respond to the follow-up questions (i.e. *What aspects of green social work do you find important [...]?* or *Why do you not think green social work is important [...]?*), this might be inconsistent with their answer and should be explored more.

Being complementary refers to the possibility of quantitative and qualitative data enhancing each other or one type clarifying findings in the other type (Bronstein & Kovacs, 2013; Dudley, 2011). In my thesis, this might be responses to the question about what aspects of green social work people would like to learn more about being an explanation of the forced response question if people want to learn more about green social work–thus bringing more detailed findings.

Elaboration (Dudley, 2011) or *expansion* (Bronstein & Kovacs, 2013) means that a more complete understanding of the findings can be gained by including both types of data. In my thesis, some of the forced response questions had the category "*other, please specify"* with the possibility for respondents to write, in their own words, something that had been left out, (such as the question where people had heard about green social work before had three response options which were those I had deemed as most likely). By giving respondents the open ended option in addition, I could glean data that might have been missed when limiting people to choose one of the given categories.

Survey

The questionnaire was made up of a mix of demographic and topical questions, some of which were forced-response and others open-ended. After some words of introduction, participants answered questions about themselves–including their status (whether they were a student or practitioner of social work etc.), age, gender, and native language. Then they saw a graphic with a quick overview of what green social work is. After that they were asked to answer questions about their previous experience with green social work (e.g. "Had you heard the term *Green Social Work* prior to this survey?" and as a follow-up question, "Where did you come across it?"), questions about whether they perceive green social work to be important in Denmark and/or globally and why or why not.Finally, they answered some questions about the implementation of green social work in [their] social work education and practice (e.g. "In which ways does your education/work already include Green Social Work approaches?") and the potential future of green social work (i.e. "Are you interested in learning more about Green Social Work?" with a follow-up question about which aspects of green social work they would like to learn more about, or if they did not, why they did not want to learn more about it, and "How do you think Green Social Work could become part of the social work education curriculum/part of your job?"). This set-up was chosen for a couple of reasons, the mode of surveying–i.e. using a questionnaire–was chosen over a face-to-face interviews because (electronic) questionnaires take little time to distribute and do not need an interviewer present to conduct them, and can thus generate a bigger sample size (Dudley, 2011). The introduction was presented to explain what the aim of the survey was, and to inform participants how much time their participation was going to take. Demographic data was collected to identify the composition

and variety of the sample. Alternating forced-response and open-ended questions were chosen due to the mixed-method approach of the study. Additionally, this alternation was intended to keep people engaged in the survey. The forced-response questions are quick to fill out and provide relief from the more time demanding open-ended ones, as too many open questions discourage participation, and lead to a higher dropout rate (Dudley, 2011).

The process of developing the questionnaire happened in consultation with my supervisor. The entire survey was originally written in English, but in the beginning of the questionnaire and with each open-ended question participants were told that they could also answer in Danish to lower the threshold of the potential language barrier. As I have taken classes in Norwegian for over three years, my understanding of written Danish is proficient. Between this and the help of translation software, answers written in Danish would not be a barrier to thorough analysis.

All questions were then imported into the SurveyXact survey tool and published online. Data collection for the survey in English was enabled for 24 days. Data collection for the survey in Danish was enabled for one week.

Data collection

Outreach

The link to the survey was sent out to representatives of six universities and university colleges respectively that offer social work education at bachelor and/or masters levels with some explanatory information and the request to distribute the survey amongst their students. Two people responded to the outreach by saying they had uploaded my announcement on their

respective learning platforms. Two others responded and told me they were not the right people to contact about something like this but that they had forwarded my email to somebody else. The rest I did not hear back from. I had also emailed the same request to the secretariat of the Dansk Socialrådgiverforening, but did not hear back from them either. Additionally, I posted the survey multiple times over the course of a few weeks in various Facebook groups for social work students and practitioners in Denmark. Initially, I had planned to also visit some lectures and seminars in social work education at Aalborg University to do some in person outreach but due to the coronavirus outbreak all on campus teaching was suspended.

After the response rate remained low over the course of almost three weeks (only 26 people had completed the survey), I decided to also publish the survey in Danish. While my understanding of written Danish is good, I am not as confident in producing written text. Thus, I translated the survey with the help of Google Translate. To double check the output I asked a friend who is a native Danish speaker and works at Aalborg University's *Danish Center for Healthcare Improvements* and is therefore familiar with research methods and academic writing, to read through and correct the translation. I then imported the Danish version into SurveyXact and published it again through all the aforementioned channels.

Sample

All participants were recruited through a mix of *convenience* and *criterion* or *purposive sampling* (Dudley, 2011). Participants were selected for convenience through channels where they were most accessible and it was also easy for them to directly fill out the survey (i.e. when they read about the survey either on social media or on an online learning platform they are already using a device with internet connection and it is easy for them to simply follow the link).

The criterion for participation was an affiliation with social work, either as a social work student, a social work practitioner or a social work teacher. This was to make sure that the subject had a certain basic knowledge and some vested interest in the survey topic. A preselection of participants was made by reaching out through social work specific platforms. Another way of making sure this criterion was met was by asking subjects whether they were a part of one of the three target groups. Only if they were, were they able to fill out the rest of the survey. The final sample of subjects who completed the survey was *n*=146 (133 female, 11 male, 2 other), of which 25 filled out the English survey and 121 completed the Danish survey. Of the sample that completed the survey, 88 (~60.3%) were students of social work, 55 (~37.7%) were social work practitioners, and 3 (~2.1%) were social work educators. The average age of the participants was 34 years.

The participants were not directly compensated for answering the survey. However, as an incentive for participation they were informed that I would donate 5 DKK to Danmarks Naturfredningsforening for every completed survey.

Analysis

Quantitative Data

For statistical analysis RStudio Cloud (currently in its beta version) software was used.

Data clean up.

First, some irregularities in the age variable dataset of the Danish survey had to be addressed. Two respondents had added *år* (years) to their response which was deleted in order to keep the variable numeric. One person had given their age as "3&" which was changed to "36" as "6" and

"&" are on the same key on a Danish computer keyboard. Two peoples' responses were set to missing value ("NA") as their answers (i.e. "4" and "unnti" respectively) could not be assigned an age with full confidence.

Then the datasets of the English and Danish survey responses were merged for further analysis. SurveyXact creates data entries for every time the survey is opened via the distribution link in order to gather additional information (e.g. about the response rate of the survey). Consequently, when exporting the data from SurveyXact the data frame also included rows for every person who had followed the link but had not filled out the survey. All variables for these cases showed missing value *NA*. These cases (*n*=252) were removed as they provided no relevant information.

Additionally, six cases were removed because they were not part of the target group (neither a social work student, practitioner or educator). Finally, partially completed surveys (*n*=136) were removed from the dataset so that statistical analysis could be run with all variables showing the same number of responses. This left a data frame with responses to 146 completed surveys.

Descriptive statistics were calculated on all forced response variables. A Fisher's exact test was calculated to test for a change in proportions of two 2x2 contingency tables. One included the variables of the number of students and practitioners who perceived green social work to be important in Denmark and globally. The other included the variables *perceived importance of green social work in Denmark* and *perceived importance of green social work globally*. The null hypothesis for Fisher's exact test assumes independence (Agresti, 2013)**.**

Qualitative Data

Qualitative data was analyzed using thematic analysis inspired by Braun and Clarke (2006). With this method the researcher identifies, analyzes and interprets patterns in their qualitative data (Clarke & Braun, 2017) by going through a six phase process (Braun & Clarke, 2006). First, you familiarize yourself with the data you have, then you generate first basic codes, these codes are clustered into potential themes. and then reviewed before the final themes are clearly defined and named. As the sixth and final phase, a report about the data is written. The authors point out that this process is circular rather than linear and as moving back and forth between the phases might be needed, the researcher should maintain flexibility and an open mind (Braun & Clarke, 2006). There will be both a description and analysis of important themes of the whole data set, as Braun and Clarke (2006) point out that this approach is beneficial when, for example, researching in an area which has not been investigated a lot before–green social work in the case of this thesis–as well as a more detailed analysis of some selected aspects, because that will help gain a deeper understanding about the phenomenon.

Open-ended questions that had been responded to in Danish were translated using Google Translate and my knowledge of written Danish. The extra translating step also helped in the first phase of thematic analysis, *familiarizing oneself with the data*.

Findings

Because I have shown the demographic data before, this section will mostly focus on topical data[1,2].

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[1] Unless otherwise noted all data has been sourced from the sample of completed surveys, N=146.

[2] Some respondents answered the open-ended questions in English (n<10). Most answers were in Danish and then translated to English by me with help of Google Translate. In this thesis I will only present the English versions.

A Notable Observation: Previous Encounters with Green Social Work

First, participants were asked whether they had heard about green social work prior to this survey, which 18 people (12.3%) responded "yes" to. Of these, six had heard about it from other people in the profession (e.g. a professor or co-worker), four had come across it when doing research about social work, four when doing research about climate change, and another four had learned about it through other means (e.g. work with the student organization of the Danish Association of Social Workers). That only a little over one out of ten respondents had heard about green social work before their participation in this survey had an effect on the quality of some answers and will be taken into account when discussing the findings.

Quantitative findings

Summary of distributions

In response to the question whether they thought green social work was important in Denmark 89 (61%) participants responded with "yes", and 57 (39%) said "no". There were 116 (79%) who thought green social work was important globally while 30 (21%) did not think so (for more details on the perceived importance of green social work, see Table 1). The status of the participants did not influence the perceived importance of green social work (Fisher's exact test: p=1). Of the subjects (n=18) who had heard about green social work before, 14 (78%) and 16 (89%) thought that green social work was important in Denmark or globally, respectively. That corresponds to percentages 16% and 10% higher than that of the total sample. Due to the small size of the subsample these numbers could not reliably be tested for statistical significance.

When asked whether they were interested in learning more about green social work, 89 (67%) responded with "yes", and 48 (33%) responded "no".

Perceived Importance of Green Social Work

Table 1 shows a cross tabulation of the participants' perceived importance of green social work in social work in Denmark and globally.

Table 1

Perceived importance of green social work in Denmark and globally crosstabulation.

Variable		Do you think green social work is important in social work globally?		
		Yes	No	Total
Do you think green social work is important in social work in Denmark?	Yes	86 (96.6%)	3 (3.4%)	89 (100%)
	No	30 (52.6%)	27 (47.4%)	57 (100%)
	Total	116	30	146

Note. Percentages of columns are given in relation to the total n of the row.

Almost every participant (97%) who responded that green social work was important in Denmark also perceived green social work to be important globally. A little more than half of the participants (53%) who responded that they did not think green social work was important in Denmark, did believe it to be important on a global scale. Overall, more respondents perceived green social work to be important globally than in Denmark. The large difference was significant (Fisher's exact test: $p < .0001$).

Qualitative findings

The responses to the open ended questions could be coded into 26 codes which were grouped into four main themes. One of the themes was *nature/natural phenomena*. Responses fell into this theme when they included the natural environment such as natural and (hu-)man made disasters, or climate change. Another theme was *society/social phenomena/social structures*. This theme included codes like *globalization, justice, health and wellbeing*. The third theme was *social work practice and education*. Responses that related to the applicability of green social work or teaching were coded in this category. The last theme included all codes that were *unhelpful in regard to content analysis* but still held informative value regarding overall validity and construction of the survey.

I will begin with an overview about the last theme in general and then present the thematically relevant themes by question.

Responses that were unhelpful in regard to content analysis.

In this theme, answers such as "I don't know" or "pass" along with cases where the participant had simply typed in any letter, number or symbol to continue the survey were the most common responses. Another code included all responses that remarked that they did not have enough knowledge or information to respond to the question properly (e.g. "I have a hard time giving my opinion on the importance of something I don't know very much about"). Two more codes comprised categorical responses: one capturing all answers that comprised answers such as "all of it" or "everything", while the other one included the opposite, including "not at all" or "because I am not interested". These four codes made up the majority of answers in this theme. Additionally, people who responded that they wished there had been another option on

the previous forced-response question (e.g. "I am actually unable to answer that. Wish it had been possible in the previous question to be able to answer *don't know*"). Lastly four responses along the lines of "I have no idea what it is. If it was important, I'd probably heard about it," were coded in this category, as they are not important in regards to content but provide useful information in regards to survey construction.

Overall, between 39% and 84% of responses to each question were included in this theme.

Relevant themes by question

The most common codes in response to each question that are relevant in regards to content will be presented in the following. As the responses that are unhelpful for content analysis have already been discussed, they will not be mentioned again in this section, even if they represented the majority of the answers to a question.

What aspects of green social work do you find important in Denmark?

Between 5 - 10% ($n = 89$)[3] of responses to this question concerned sustainability, people forced to flee or migrate due to changes in their environment (i.e. "climate refugees"), or social change. Over 10% of respondents thought that climate change, disaster relief, vulnerability, or justice were important aspects of green social work in Denmark. An example, "*To help people displaced by climate change and create more equality in society, as the consequences of climate change, etc. strikes socially skewed*".

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[3] For this and other questions that were not answered by all participants–because it depended on the response of the previous question–the total of participants who did answer the question *n* will be given in parentheses.

If you do not think green social work is important in Denmark, why not?

Vulnerability and climate issues are two areas mentioned by between 5 - 10% (*n* = 57) of respondents. Over 10% of people write about natural and/or human-made disasters, deeper underlying issues that social work is facing, or that they do not think that issues related to the climate are part of social work. Over 20% think that it is not relevant in Denmark, but more important in other countries. Two thirds of the cases that write it is not relevant in Denmark talk about it in combination with climate change or disasters, saying that the impacts of these are not as severe here. An example, "*"I see that there is a greater need for help in the areas that are plagued by [...] man-made natural disasters. Are there not active relief organizations in those areas already? I advocate that we in Denmark take up the environmental debate at a political level and take a position individually, but I do not see that social work can currently help victims of man-made natural disasters locally in Denmark (immigration from disaster-affected countries is another matter - Denmark already has an integration program and legislation). Preventive work and awareness is really good - does it require a social worker or do these organizations already exist?"*

What aspects of green social work do you find important globally?

Sustainability, forced migration due to climate change, globalization, vulnerability, economy, and health are each referred to in 5-10% (*n* = 116) of responses, while disasters, the climate, disaster relief efforts, justice, social change and other countries (i.e. not Denmark) can be found in over 10% of answers respectively. E.g. "*Climate refugees are a global problem and the climate is a shared, global responsibility.*" or "*Because it fills more for people outside the affluent part of the West and I believe that sustainability can contribute to better living*

conditions for people who are exploited and carry on the social legacy of lack of education,

abuse, violence and inappropriate family growth."

If you do not think green social work is important globally, why not?

Two responses each (i.e. 7% for *n* = 30) to this question include the climate, the economy, or that

they do not think environmental issues are part of social work. Six people (i.e. 20%) believe that

there are deeper issues that should be attended to. An example, "*When it comes to socially*

vulnerable people, unfortunately, it is not the environment/ climate we can look at first…"

In what ways does your work/ education already include green social work?

Almost half (45%) of respondents said that their work or education did not include green social

work in any way. The only code of the ones that are relevant in regards to content that could be

found in more than 5% of answers was *tangible efforts*, where people reported concrete

behaviors they were doing to be more environmentally friendly, e.g. "*Basically, we don't - but*

we minimize how much we copy."

What aspects of green social work would you like to learn more about?

In response to this question almost half (45% of *n* = 98) responded that they wanted to learn

something about all aspects of green social work. The idea of educating people on environmental

issues and creating awareness are found in over 5% of cases. The wish to learn more about how

green social work could be applied in everyday practice was apparent in 16% of the answers. For

example, "*How we can all bring a green perspective into our practice in our daily work. Gaining*

a greater awareness of this perspective."

If you do not wish to learn more about green social work, why not?

Of the 48 people who had answered that they would not like to learn more about social work, 6%

said that they did not think it was relevant to their work in Denmark and 22% thought that there

were deeper, more pressing issues to attend to before. E.g. "*Because it takes up very little in my*

current working life and it is hard enough to get small benefits through to citizens in need."

How do you think green social work could become part of social work education?

A little over 5% (*n* = 66) thought that green social work should be offered as an elective in social

work education. Over 20% said that it should be included in education and that awareness about

it should be spread but did not give details on how that could happen–e.g. "*By giving us lessons*

around, so there is a greater focus." or "*Potentially include it as an elective.*"

How do you think green social work could become part of your job?

Two responses each mentioned work with vulnerable people, tangible efforts, raising awareness,

or applicability (i.e. >5%, *n* = 29). E.g. "*Projects aimed at the target group for those exposed to*

environmental change." or "*More video contact, fewer meetings.*"

Discussion

The view of green social work among students and practitioners in Denmark

Of all the people participating in the survey, only 12% had heard about green social work

prior to it. This suggests that the topic has not yet made it into mainstream social work education

and practice in Denmark. Answers to the question, "In which way does your education/your job

already include green social work?" also reflect this assumption as almost half (45%) of the

participants responded that their education/work did not include green social work, and another

35% responded "*I don't know*", "*Pass*" or similar. The lack of content relevant responses to the question "how do you think green social work could become part of the social work curriculum/your job?", echoes that the participants did not really know what green social work education or practice could look like when realized. However, both of the aforementioned questions generated responses about tangible efforts that are already implemented in peoples' work and education or could be enforced in the future, such as "*Concrete behavior: e.g. avoid bottled water*", "*Basically, we don't - but we minimize how much we copy.*", or "*E.g. electric car instead of normal car, we have bicycles available, preferably do not print things, waste sort etc.*". While these responses do not necessarily reflect green social work practices, they show a general awareness about sustainability among participants and exemplify steps that can be taken on a micro-level toward a more environmentally friendly lifestyle. This might suggest that because the participants did not have a lot of previous knowledge they resorted to their knowledge about environmentally sustainable behaviour in general, and this general awareness is one of the building blocks when working toward a holistic view that includes the natural environment in social work.

Denmark is one of the European countries with the highest proportion of citizens who think that climate change is the most important environmental issue (Eurobarometer, 2020). In December 2019 the Danish Folketinget agreed to a new Climate Act for the country with the goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 70% compared to 1990 which is expected to pass this year (Klimarådet, 2020). So, Environmental awareness is part of the national debate and it cannot be ruled out that this, rather than the brief overview about green social work, influenced participants' responses. Future research should take this into account, e.g. by asking questions

about where people see the commonalities and distinctions between green social work and general environmentally sustainable behavior.

The overall lack of prior knowledge about green social work as a framework has to be taken into account when looking at and interpreting the rest of the data. Besides the few people that had heard about green social work before–and it was not followed up to pin down how much or what exactly they knew about it– everybody else had to solely rely on the brief overview about green social work that was presented in the survey. Thus the information people could access to answer the questions was very limited, and has also probably biased the data toward a greater usage of the concepts and terms that were presented in the summary.

Nevertheless, the majority (67%) of people are curious about the subject and said they would like to learn more about it. Generally this curiosity is directed toward the subject as a whole. Almost half of the people who want to learn more about it say they want to learn something about all aspects of green social work to gain a basic understanding, e.g. "*Everything and more detailed, so I'm sure I get the right understanding for what it is and what it can do*" or "*Just generally more, since it is completely new to me and thus difficult to decide on these issues, without prior knowledge of the subject*". Additionally, there also seems to be an interest to know how green social work could be applied in practice, e.g. "*How we can all bring a green perspective into our practice in our daily work. Gaining a greater awareness of this perspective*", "*Hands on examples, ideas and initiatives*", or "*Strategies, what green social work is, how it's important in a Danish perspective and how it is important around the world, how it's implemented and the actions*".

To summarize, while not a lot of people who participated in the survey knew about green social work before, there was a general desire to gain more insights into the subject.

The perceived importance of green social work in Denmark and globally

    Not important in Denmark or globally.

The common denominator of why people did not think green social work is important, neither in Denmark or globally, was that they felt like there were deeper underlying issues that needed to be addressed first. For example:

- *There are already so many important areas of work that are not being done properly due to lack of competence or lack of resources. Maybe we should not solve these challenges first before using resources and competencies on competing initiatives.* (Denmark)

- *There are so many more issues that are more relevant and more important to work through first.* (Globally)

These answers show that rather than being completely against including challenges of climate change in social work–there were only two respondents who explicitly said that–the respondents thought that there were more pressing or deeper underlying issues that needed to be addressed before looking at problems in the natural environment. This opens up a whole new discussion about what current and future social workers perceive to be important social problems that need to be responded to immediately. The first example above especially reflects the status of social work as a profession in the welfare state and that it might, for instance, not be deemed worthy for appropriate funding and

resources, which can be a whole thesis by itself. However, the majority of participants thought that green social work was important in Denmark and/or globally.

Important in Denmark and globally.

All aspects that people found to be important in green social work in Denmark were also thought to be important globally (i.e. climate change and sustainability, disaster relief work, climate refugees, vulnerability, and social change). This makes sense since almost all participants who thought green social work was important in Denmark, also thought that it was important globally. If they find green social work important on both a Danish and a global level, it leads me to assume that they find the topic important generally. These are some examples of reasons people who thought green social work was important in Denmark and globally gave of why they thought green social work was important:

- *To help people displaced by climate change and create more equality in society, as the consequences of climate change, etc. strikes socially skewed.* (Denmark)

- *Especially in relation to the most vulnerable, such as homeless people [...] it is important to consider climate and sustainability in general in social work.* (Denmark)

- *To me, I think, what Dominelli is talking about in her book is a paradigm shift in global social work. The corona crisis serves as a strong example of how interconnected the world is and people at risk are the ones coming to light in such a crisis being left to themselves such as the homeless. I vote for Dominellis global aid initiative!* (Denmark)

- *Climate refugees are a global problem and the climate is a shared, global responsibility.* (Globally)

- *Globally, massive climate change is seen affecting several different community groups. Often as also described, in advance, exposed/ vulnerable population groups.* (Globally)

- *The reason is really the same. Global warming often affects the poorest people. They often live in areas where there is a lot of air pollution and major changes in the climate, and they often cannot afford to move.* (Globally)

These answers reflect the aforementioned topics and also show links to general social work like they are mentioned in the IFSW's (2014) global definition of social work, e.g. social change, social justice, collective responsibility. The majority of the answers are part of the *social structures* theme: work with vulnerable groups, social justice, and involving and empowering the people who are suffering. These are also topics that can be found in the Danish Social Workers Association/Dansk Socialrådgiverforening's (DS) code of ethics (Dansk Socialrådgiverforening, 2011). These answers might be an indicator of how these documents from national associations can shape the national discourse in a profession. While the global definition of social work does not include the term environment, the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) includes references to it multiple times in their global statement of ethical principles, e.g. paragraphs 2.2 (environmental rights), 2.4 (responsibility for the environment) or 4.6 (access to clean water and pollution free environments) (IASSW, 2018). In an analysis of

three codes of ethics, Bowles and their team (2018) found that two of the documents included references explicitly related to the natural environment, and only one had the natural environment embedded as a core element. They argue that in order for concerns for the natural environment to be of influence for social work policies and practice, this concern should be fixed in national codes of ethics for social work. They go on to explain that the IASSW and IFSW should take the lead on including environmental concerns in their documents "[i]f social work is to actively participate in the international response to climate change", as national associations often turn to these when developing their statements (Bowles et al., 2018). The DS is part of the national associations that do not make any mention of the natural environment, neither implicitly nor explicitly (DS, 2011), which might be contributing to the neglect of including nature in social work practice and education.

Since the responses among people who thought green social work was either important or unimportant, both in Denmark and globally, were based around similar lines of argumentation, it is more interesting to look at the cases where people thought one was important while the other was not.

Important in Denmark, but not important globally.
The three cases where people thought green social work is important in Denmark but not globally are interesting on a different level and will be taken up in the reflections and limitations part of this chapter.

Not important in Denmark, but important globally.

Significantly more people thought that green social work is important globally than thought that it is important in Denmark. A little over half (53%) of the respondents who thought that green social work was not important in Denmark said that they believe it to be important globally. When looking at the open-ended questions, this difference is reflected in the reasons people give for their opinion. Very commonly I found answers such as these:

- *As far as I could gather from the picture, it's to help people who are in some sort of need because of the climate change. In Denmark, I haven't seen these huge problems, as we hear about from other countries. I do however think that if there are people affected by the climate changes and they're in need of help, that should get it. [...]*

This was in response to why the person thought green social work was not important in Denmark. The same respondent did think, however, that it was important globally with the following reasoning:

- *[...] I know there are other places in the world that are greatly affected by climate change and I do think it's important to help people in those areas.*

Other answers seem to mostly follow this pattern. Green social work was perceived to be important as an answer to problems that are not applicable to the work that social workers do in Denmark. Interestingly, this also lined up with the Eurobarometer's findings that –while overall they believe that climate change is the most pressing environmental issue–more Danes thought climate change was a serious problem in the European Union (EU) rather than in Denmark (Eurobarometer, 2020). One of the reasons for this might be the different impacts of climate

change different countries experience. The European Environmental Agency (EEA) shows that observed and projected impacts of climate change vary regionally, and that Denmark is actually part of a region that is also seeing some benefits from climate change e.g. "a decrease in heating demand and some benefits to agriculture" (EEA, 2017, p.4), rather than solely negative impacts. This might be part of the reason that there is no perceived need for green social work practice here. Whereas other places that are more often hit by disasters and can already feel the impacts of climate change are in greater need for green social work interventions.

Green social work and glocalization

These findings fit well into glocalization discourse. Roudometof (2016) defines "glocality" "as experiencing the global locally or through local lenses (which can include local power relations, geo-political and geographical factors, cultural distinctiveness, and so on)" (p.68). As mentioned earlier in this thesis, this notion is also embedded in the IFSW's definition of social work, *"The above definition may be amplified at national and/or regional levels"* (IFSW, 2014). As global problems are experienced differently in different locations, the way social work has to respond to them locally will differ as well. Thus the definition of what social work is can change accordingly too.

In order to experience the glocality of a phenomenon, the phenomenon has to have been through a stage of globalization before. Roudometof (2016) describes globalization as something (e.g. a cultural phenomenon, a way of practicing etc.) that originates in one place and then spreads across the entire globe. He contrasts it with transnationalization which only includes the spreading of something within a few nations. While climate change is not a phenomenon that

originated in one location, it is a problem that has spread across the globe and can follow some of the same patterns Roudometof (2016) describes in the way the global and local implications of it interact. When describing glocalization, Roudometof (2016) uses the image of waves–such as sound or light waves–as an illustration of how the local is interacting with "something" coming from the global level. These waves make their way around the globe and when they interact with "a locality' they might get absorbed, reflected back or refracted, or all of these to a certain degree. Absorption means that the waves are being "swallowed" by the locality without alteration. Reflection means that waves are being cast back by the locality, also without alteration. Different localities have different capacities to resist the waves and varying densities which determine how much of the waves are being absorbed or reflected. But the waves can also "pass through the local and (…) be refracted by it" (Roudometof, 2016, p.65). Refraction means that a wave enters a locality, in the locality the wave is being bent and altered and then sent back from the locality into the global space. According to Roudometof (2016) the absorption and reflection processes are what can lead to isomorphism and homogeneity, while the refraction process is glocalization and leads to heterogeneity. In a refraction process a globalized phenomenon passes through a locality, and rather than the local being "annihilated, absorbed, or destroyed by globalization" (Roudometof, 2016, p.65) it works alongside globalization and affects the end result. Thus, the local has the power to change the final product, and its individualities are not doomed to be leveled by globalization. This is also the idea Hong and Wong (2010) propose when describing how social work can react to globalization. The authors argue that nation states are dealing with the dilemma of catering to the needs of their citizens "while at the same time stay[ing] competitive in the world market" (Hong & Wong, 2010,

p.662). They further point out that different countries are suffering from different problems due to globalization, and that it is harder for developing countries with less-advanced welfare systems to combat these difficulties (Hong & Wong, 2010). This parallels the point Roudometof (2016) makes by referring to countries' differences in wave-resistance capacities. This thought can also be found in some of the responses to the survey, e.g. "*[...] I think it is easier in some countries to work socially on the problems than in others, all depending on the policy of the country.*" or "*A lot of other countries are heavily affected by the climate changes and I feel it's more important to help those people as their welfare systems are not as strong and developed as ours. [...]*". Hong and Wong (2010) argue that in order to face the challenges globalization brings, social work has to engage in "global thinking and local action to deal with the unmet needs" (p.662). This should be done through strengthening citizen participation both locally and globally, but also through advocating for changes in global social policy measures to address the structural problems (Hong & Wong, 2010).

But globalization is not causing the social problems the world faces, rather it exacerbates them (Hong & Wong, 2010). Here a parallel can be drawn to climate change as well. Climate change is not the cause for social problems either, but it intensifies them especially among already vulnerable communities (Dominelli, 2012, 2018). However, the impacts of climate change are not felt equally in all places (EEA, 2017), thus how it is perceived and what the response to the problem might be varies regionally. While all the respondents who answered the survey came from Denmark and thus no comparison can be made with how the importance of green social work is perceived in other places, this variance due to locality is something the respondents seem to be conscious of. Answers such as "[*I*] [*t*]*hink it is more important in other*

more vulnerable countries, especially in relation to natural disasters" show that there is awareness about differences in the impact of climate change from country to country. This answer ties back to Roudometof's (2016) idea of different countries' wave resistance capabilities and that less-developed countries have a harder time fighting the challenges they are facing (Hong & Wong, 2010). So these "*vulnerable countries*" have less resistance and more difficulties recovering when it comes to natural disasters. It also refers back to the injustices between countries when it comes to adapting to and mitigating the challenges of climate change (see e.g. Cox & Pawar, 2006; Dominelli, 2013; Islam & Winkel, 2017). This answer is connected to processes of absorption and reflection. Other responses, for example, "*[e]specially in relation to how climate change affects communities and what can be done locally to remedy this, while at the same time involving the [ones] exposed to this*" point more toward the process of refraction, as it specifically asks about what action can be taken locally. The last part of the answer also relates to the idea of challenging social problems through citizen participation and involvement.

Hong and Wong (2010) state that "[s]ocial changes resulting from globalization directly affect individuals' lives, and [that] there has been an urgent need to confront the social problems individuals are experiencing" (pp.664-665). Green social work is pointing out the same thing about the effects of climate change (Dominelli, 2012; Kennedy, 2018). Kennedy (2018) argues along the same lines Hong and Wong (2010) do about responding to globalization when proposing ways of action in green social work. Action should happen on multiple levels of society. Solutions should be co-produced with citizens, and then advocacy work needs to be done in order for the ideas to reach policy makers (Kennedy, 2018). Bridging the gap between citizens and the government is identified by Kennedy (2018) as an important role for social workers.

These ideas mix top-down and bottom-up solutions to reach the final goal. When new ideas and innovations are introduced in a welfare state there are varying ways of doing so as well (Fuglsang, 2010). Some theories, such as *new institutionalism* are driven by changing structures, and adaptation has to happen in order to stay legitimate. The downside can be, however, that change might only happen on the surface level rather than institutions actually adapting to the new policies (Fuglsang, 2010). In *innovation theory* on the other hand, drivers of change can be both internal or external, and innovation happens through the interaction of the different drivers. Here, innovation is produced in practice and then spreads and evolves from there. This can be in response to an internal problem that needs to be tackled, but the starting point can also involve a reaction to external policies and in that way it is interactive (Fuglsang, 2010). While Fuglsang (2010) writes about innovation and changes in institutions in the welfare state, and Hong and Wong (2010) refer to social work responses to globalization in general, parallels can be drawn to scholars of green social work demanding both, policy changes (top-down) as well as changes co-produced with the citizens (bottom up). Top-down policy changes need to happen in order for the profession to stay legitimate in response to the escalating global problem of climate change (e.g. Dominelli, 2011, 2012; Lucas-Darby, 2011; Kennedy, 2018). At the same time co-productive bottom-up processes are necessary for the change to be meaningful and lasting, and actually fitting for the local community (Dominelli, 2012, 2018). These different ways of implementing change can also be found in some of the answers to the question about how social work could become part of the participant's job. While one person pointed toward a top-down approach ("*If there is focus on it by the management*"), another one said that the shift needs to happen from the bottom-up ("*When we are all equally affected and there is joint effort and focus*

in this area"). This last comment also draws the circle back toward the different impacts of climate change people are experiencing, which is a conundrum and might be part of the reason why green social work seems to not have made its way into mainstream social work thinking–at least it looks that way in Denmark. Changing a system and shifting perspectives is often a very slow process. Gray and Coates (2015) state that it can be supported by a change of thinking in society. And the data shows that there is a general awareness about climate change and sustainability. Since most respondents had not heard about green social work before, it seems likely that they are basing their answers on their general knowledge about sustainability. Still, the majority of participants think green social work is important in Denmark as well as globally. Since social work is a profession that works closely with citizens, social problems, and changes in society, and the findings show that two thirds of the participants would like to to learn more about green social work it is baffling that the discourse seems to not have made its way into mainstream social work education and practice in Denmark. How can this be changed?

The first step to do so could be the introduction of teaching the subject in social work education, and also providing training opportunities for social workers in practice. After all, education is a tool to spread information (Boetto, 2019). Acquiring knowledge about mechanisms of climate change and green social work theory might bridge some of the disengagement Kennedy (2018) describes, which points to people feeling that their actions do not have a wider impact–either good or bad. That way someone who, as one of the participants put it, is "*Having trouble seeing what difference it can make*" might be able to engage with the subject in a new way, because "*After all, it concerns all people*" (participant) and "*[y]es, together we make a difference*" (another participant).

Reflections and limitations

Survey construction

Only in three cases did people deem green social work to be important in Denmark but not globally. One of the respondents just put "pass" for the follow up question which can thus be disregarded for this part of the analysis. The other two answered why they thought green social work is important in Denmark with "*Volunteerism*" and "*Promotion of environmental and climate rights*" respectively. When asked why they did not think it was important globally they answered, "*Unfortunately, it doesn't fill most (people's) everyday life*" and "*Because the weakest in society are not the ones that are thought about when climate impacts occur. The money follows the strong in the community*". Besides that last statement containing great reflections on power structures in (capitalist) society, which green social work seeks to challenge (Dominelli, 2013, 2014), the answers suggest to me that these participants understood the question they were asked on a different level than I intended. When asking "do you think green social work is important in Denmark/globally" I meant to ask people about their personal opinion on the subject. But these answers suggest that people are writing about their assessment of what is happening in Denmark/globally rather than what they think is important. This interpretation of the question can also be found in the code I labelled *not heard conclusion*. When asked why they thought green social work was not important, people answered that they had not heard about it or that they did not know any green social workers and consequently the subject cannot be that important at the moment. E.g. "*Never heard of it in Denmark, which is why I don't think it's important. It probably should be!*" This response reflects very well that the person's opinion is

actually that the subject is important, but they do not think it is currently treated as being important. These discoveries lead me to reflect on having a pre testing period for a questionnaire. While I had two people test the survey multiple times for technical bug fixes and timing, both of them knew what I intended to ask and thus had a blind spot for grammatical or interpretative ambiguity such as this. Mostly due to time constraints, I was not able to have a bigger trial run of the survey. However, most of the participants seemed to have understood the questions I intended them.

This also points to one of the downsides of conducting self-reporting surveys. Neither the participants nor the researcher can ask for clarifications if a question or an answer is unclear or not satisfactory (Dudley, 2011). The participants were given my email address at the end of the survey where they could contact me with any questions or comments, however, none of them did.

Researching as an international student

Being an international student in Denmark has had an influence in the creation and distribution of my survey. From my experience living in Denmark, I have found Danish people to be very open to communicating in English, but my framework might have been biased. Just because people are not hesitant to speak English in a conversational way in low-threshold situations, i.e. the grocery store, the sports club, that does not mean I can count on the same openness when conducting a survey about an academic matter. I tried to keep the survey accessible by telling people that they were welcome to respond in Danish even though the questions were asked in English. Receptive skills in a foreign language (i.e. reading or listening) is often perceived to be less hard than producing something in a foreign language (i.e. writing or

speaking). Thus, I thought if people could respond in Danish they would be more likely to participate than if they had to respond in English. But the response rate to the English survey remained low (14%) nevertheless. This might have been due to language difficulties, but another contributing factor might have been my way of outreach. Promoting and posting my survey in English clearly identified me as a non-Dane which might have influenced how many people wanted to participate. Research participants might have had less interest in helping out a non-Danish person. Once I had the survey translated into Danish, I also promoted it in Danish online learning platforms and translated my posts into Danish as well before publishing them in social media groups. The result was that a lot more people followed the link to the survey in a shorter amount of time and the completion rate was around 36%.

Participant outreach/ Sampling bias

Besides the aforementioned potential language barrier, another way that outreach to potential candidates was limited was the platforms on which I advertised the survey. Outreach to students was done in multiple ways (through some of the colleges/universities and social media) but outreach to practitioners was rather limited. Since I did not receive a response from the Danish Social Workers Association, the only way I was able to reach out to practitioners was through a Facebook group that was recommended as an outreach platform by a professor. This limits the group of potential candidates in two ways. For one, the people who have a profile on Facebook and then second, to those who are actually part of that specific group. It can also not be ruled out that people with an already higher interest in environmental concerns were more intrigued by the survey and that thus they are over-represented in this thesis. Outreach was done in this way because it was the easiest for me to do in the timeframe and not reliant on other

people to forward my request in any way. With more time, there could have been more follow up

with the Danish Social Workers Association, as well as with the different colleges and

universities. Furthermore outreach could be done through municipalities who are one of the main

employers among social workers in Denmark (Dansk Socialrådgiverforening, 2019) or other

private organizations where social workers work.

Social desirability bias

"Social desirability bias refers to the tendency of research subjects to choose responses

they believe are more socially desirable or acceptable rather than choosing responses that are

reflective of their true thoughts or feelings" (Grimm, 2010, para.1). Environmental sustainability

is on the agenda of national and international policy making, and has become a constant in

everyday life. Businesses and institutions have sustainability guidelines and are branding

themselves as green. Not being supportive of sustainability is becoming less socially accepted.

Thus, some participants might have responded in favor of green social work to give a more

"acceptable" answer. This might have been especially the case for people who could not

elaborate on why they thought green social work is important. Due to the design of the

survey–namely it being anonymous and self-reporting rather than with an interviewer–the effects

of the bias should have been kept small, but can never be fully ruled out (Krumpal, 2013).

Positionality

It is important to reflect on my own position toward the research topic when approaching

the thesis. Berger (2015) points toward multiple ways the researcher's own characteristics,

background, and experiences (e.g. gender, race, religion, political affiliations etc.) can affect the

research process. Berger (2015) identifies three ways how these characteristics can influence the

research process. The first two–i.e. access to the field and influence on the way a researcher relates to the participants–were not as applicable in my case. Maybe my status as a social work student made it easier to access some groups on Facebook, but technically anybody could find them and request to be a member. Berger (2015) talks about the relationship between the researcher and the participants when doing face-to-face interviews which did not apply in my case. Lastly, Berger (2015) states that the researcher's positionality can influence the operationalization and outcome of a research project. I am very passionate about fighting climate change and establishing environmental sustainability in my everyday life, and green social work to me is a way to combine my personal interest with my professional interests. Scientific evidence (e.g. IPCC, 2014, 2018) shows that humans have to reduce their contributions of greenhouse gasses, and work toward adaptation to climate change among all people. A way for social work to contribute to this has been presented at length in this thesis. I agree with this way of approaching social work, which might have shaped the questions I asked–even though I tried to formulate them in a neutral way–and it might have colored the way I interpreted the findings. One of the methods I used to counteract this was by using the mixed method approach to triangulate the different findings with each other.

Green social work and the environmental discourse it is embedded in, is however, not a dominant discourse in social work, but rather it provides an alternative to the central discourses of the profession (Healy, 2018). The fact that the green social work discussion is happening a little removed from the center of green social work can also be seen in who the scholars are that are contributing to it. Sometimes it seems as if the same group of researchers–mainly from the US, the UK, and Australia–keep on referencing each other in their work, in a bubble away from

the main discussion. Though Dominelli's edited *Handbook on Green Social Work* (Dominelli, 2018) has started to include more scholars of countries from the global south, and works on broadening green social work's boundaries in general. So, while I am adding to the discussion by including Nordic views on green social work, it is another addition from the global North. And, even though I find the arguments these authors make convincing, and I see the value green social work practice can add to meeting the needs of people in the 21st century, a holistic paradigm shift of the entire profession might be an utopian dream, especially when looking at the near future.

Yet, even big changes can start small, and if maybe this survey has contributed to a few participants giving green social work an extra thought beyond the questionnaire, it is a modest contribution to widening the circle of those who engage in the subject.

Outlook: The future of green social work

Further research

Despite its limitations, this thesis presents a good overview of the view of green social work among social work students and practitioners in Denmark, and can be the basis for future research projects.

First, the sample of this study is still relatively small. To gain a broader understanding of the topic and be able to generalize findings with higher validity, it could be a possibility to treat this survey as the pre test for a survey among a broader audience. A longer timeframe for data collection and a more varied outreach, could open up participation to a more diverse sample.

Then, it could be interesting to explore in more detail what previous knowledge students and practitioners have about green social work and how they have acquired this knowledge, and whether there is a difference between students and practitioners on these two levels. My data showed that proportionately there was no significant difference in how many students had heard about green social work versus how many practitioners, but there might be a difference in the kind of knowledge they have about the subject, e.g. theoretical versus practical knowledge. Additionally, a larger sample could reveal quantitative differences between students and practitioners, which this data could not.

Further, there should be more research on what the social work curriculum and social work praxis look like in regard to green social work approaches beyond what students and practitioners report. Analyzing the curriculum at Danish (and international) universities, and doing practice research in the field to explore if green social work practices might already be at play. Building on this, since green social work itself can be located in critical theory, it is important to also do research involving everybody who has an interest in the matter. What do service users think about it? Could there be participatory practice research projects done with a focus on green social work? For example, earlier in the process when determining a topic and project for my thesis I reached out to *Kalaallit Illuutaat Aalborgimi/Det Grønlandske Hus i Aalborg* (The Greenlandic House in Aalborg), because I thought it might be interesting to explore the influences climate change impacts might have in the social changes and decision-making processes among Greenlandic people when deciding to move to Denmark–both explicitly and implicitly, since global warming is changing the way people live and work in Greenland, and indigenous people hold a lot of knowledge about the natural environment in

which they have lived for generations. Unfortunately, I never heard back from them but it might be an angle worth pursuing in the future.

Finally, all participants in this study were from Denmark, but as I mentioned before, climate change impacts are not equally felt around the world (EEA, 2017; IPCC 2014, 2018), and attitudes about sustainability differ as well (Eurobarometer, 2020). Thus, a study that includes students and practitioners from different countries, which differ in how much they are suffering from climate change impacts and in their citizens' attitudes toward sustainability, would be very interesting to explore, in greater detail, the influence of local and global factors, and glocality.

Green social work education

This thesis has shown that the majority of Danish social work students and practitioners, who participated in the survey, think that green social work is important, on a Danish as well as a global level. Another finding was that people were curious about the subject and would like to learn more about it. This stands in contrast with the relatively low percentage of people who had heard about green social work. Especially when widening the research with a larger sample size, these findings could be a stepping stone toward developing ideas on how to introduce green social work into the social work curriculum in higher education as well as finding a way to give social work practitioners access to more information and training opportunities in this field. When looking at the IPCC's predictions on global warming, and the outlook literature on green social work give about the importance of greening the profession (e.g. Kemp, 2011; Lucas-Darby, 2011; McKinnon, 2013; Nesmith and Smyth, 2015), it seems like this approach to social work might become increasingly important. This was also evident in some of the

responses, e.g. "*As climate change impacts are increasing the importance of green work within the practice of social work is likely to increase in the future [as well]*", and *"Global crisis and disasters will become more frequent and interconnected during the coming years creating a need, and a space, for social work to interfere [...]"*. Thus, it is important to make sure social work practitioners today and in the future–current social work students–have the tools they need to tackle climate change related issues in order for their work to stay relevant. Perhaps, here too, a participatory research approach is a good way to develop the curriculum and training opportunities through collaboration with students, educators, and practitioners, so that the outcome can meet the needs of all these parties.

Conclusion

Overall, this thesis provides some answers to the research questions posed. What is the view of green social work among Danish social work students and practitioners, and how do their perspectives connect to the global discussion among green social work academics? The findings suggest that green social work is still on the periphery of what Danish social work students and practitioners are conscious of and have knowledge about. Nevertheless, they regard it as important and the majority would like to learn more about it. This echoes findings of previous studies, most of which were from around five years ago (e.g. Crawford et al., 2015; Drolet et al., 2015; McKinnon, 2013; Nesmith & Smyth, 2015). However, a paradigm shift does not seem to have happened in Denmark yet; one of the contributors to this phenomenon might be the relatively low severity of climate change Danes are experiencing. The slow implementation of bringing a green social work framework into mainstream social work, and seizing the

opportunity to shape the global discourse from a social work lens is in stark contrast with the urgency with which academics call for these changes to happen. It also diverges from pressing scientific findings on how fast climate change impacts are predicted to become worse. But of course, such holistic changes and perspective shifts often take a long time to be established, especially in a bureaucratic system. The discourse around green social work aligns with the broader societal discussions related to all other efforts around adaptation to and mitigation of climate change, e.g. the development and implementation of renewable energy sources. The question is, whether humans in general and social work as a profession can afford to take this time.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Tables

Table 1

Table 1

Perceived importance of green social work in Denmark and globally crosstabulation.

Variable		Do you think green social work is important in social work globally?		
		Yes	No	Total
Do you think green social work is important in social work in Denmark?	Yes	86 (96.6%)	3 (3.4%)	89 (100%)
	No	30 (52.6%)	27 (47.4%)	57 (100%)
	Total	116	30	146

Note. Percentages of columns are given in relation to the total n of the row.

Appendix B: Survey outline

Survey Outline English and Danish

*** Undersøgelsen er på Engelsk, men du kan også svare på Dansk ***

Thank you for your interest in participating in this survey!

It is part of my thesis for the Nordic Master of Social Work and Welfare (NOSWEL) program and investigates social work students' and practitioners' interest in Green Social Work.

There are **no right or wrong answers** as all these questions want to explore what people think about the subject.

Tak for din interesse i at deltage i denne undersøgelse!

Denne undersøgelse er en del af mit speciale i Nordisk Master of Social Work and Welfare (NOSWEL) og undersøger praktikere og studerende indenfor socialt arbejde's interesse i grønt socialt arbejde.

Der er ingen rigtige eller forkerte svar, da alle disse spørgsmål ønsker at undersøge, hvad folk synes om emnet.

All your responses to this survey are completely anonymous and confidential. Your responses cannot be traced back to you in any way and will only be used for the purpose of this thesis.

Alle dine svar på denne undersøgelse er helt anonyme og fortrolige. Dine svar kan ikke spores tilbage til dig på nogen måde og vil kun blive brugt til formålet med dette speciale.

This survey will take approximately 10 minutes to fill out.

For every completed survey I will donate 5 DKK to Danmarks Naturfredningsforening.

Denne undersøgelse tager cirka 10 minutter at udfylde.

For hver afsluttet undersøgelse donerer jeg 5 kroner til Danmarks Naturfredningsforening.

I greatly appreciate your help!

Jeg sætter stor pris på din hjælp!

Anke Hostert

Please press "Next" to start the survey.

Tryk på "Next" for at starte undersøgelsen.

→ Next

- Starting of simple. Who are you?

  I am…

  En enkel start. Hvem er du?

  Jeg er...

  ❏ … a student of social work (Socialrådgiver) education

❏ … en studerende i socialt arbejde eller på socialrådgiver uddannelsen

❏ … a practicing social worker (Socialrådgiver)

❏ … en praktiserende socialarbejder eller socialrådgiver

❏ … an educator in social work (Socialrådgiver) education

❏ … en underviser i socialt arbejde (Socialrådgiver) uddannelse

❏ … none of the above.

❏ … ingen af det ovenstående.

→ Next

If "none of the above" → Thank you for your interest in this survey, but unfortunately you are not part of the target group I am trying to reach with this project.

Tak for din interesse i denne undersøgelse, men desværre er du ikke en del af den målgruppe, jeg forsøger at nå med dette projekt.

_____

Demographic Data

Now, please provide some more information about yourself.

Lidt flere oplysninger om dig selv.

- Age: _____ → Alder

- Gender: → køn

    ❏ Female → kvinde

    ❏ Male → mand

    ❏ Other, please specify _____ → Andet, angiv venligst

- I am a student/ practitioner in: → Jeg er studerende / praktiker i

    ❏ Denmark → Danmark

    ❏ Other, please specify _____ → Andet, angiv venligst

- Native language: → Modersmål

    ❏ Danish → Dansk

    ❏ Other, please specify _____ → Andet, angiv venligst

- Current semester of studies/ years practiced as social worker:_____

→ Nuværende semester af studier / år som praktiserende socialarbejder

→ Next

_____

- In the future which of the following types of Social Work are you most interested working in? // Which of the following types best describes the field of practice you are in?

  → Hvilken af følgende typer socialt arbejde er du mest interesseret i at arbejde i fremtiden? // Hvilken af følgende typer beskriver bedst det felt du praktiserer inden for?

  ❏ One on one work with service users (e.g. counselling)

  → En til én arbejde med servicebrugere (f.eks. Rådgivning)

  ❏ Social work with families and children

  → Socialt arbejde med familier og børn

  ❏ Social work with disabled or elderly people

  → Socialt arbejde med handicappede eller ældre

  ❏ Community organizing

  → Community organizing

  ❏ Working with social policies

  → Arbejde med socialpolitikker

  ❏ Social work education

  → Uddannelse indenfor socialt arbejde

  ❏ Other, please specify: _____

  → Andet, angiv venligst

→ Next

_____

This survey aims to learn more about a shift towards green social work in social work education and practice. Here you can read a very brief introduction to the main ideas of green social work.

→ Denne undersøgelses formål er at lære mere om et skift mod grønt socialt arbejde inden for socialt uddannelse og praksis. Her kan du læse en meget kort introduktion til hovedidéerne i grønt socialt arbejde.

Green Social Work
- A quick overview

- Addresses the impact of the declining environmental stability upon human populations

  → Working in the relief efforts after (hu)man-made and natural disasters (e.g. flooding, wildfires)

  → Working with people forcibly displaced by the effects of climate change and disasters

- Promotes **environmental justice**

  → The people who are contributing to climate change the least are the ones suffering the most

  → This unfair power dynamic and its root causes need to be addressed

Design from https://www.slidescarnival.com/

Sources: - Kapro, K. (2016). What is Green Social Work. Retrieved from: https://socialworkhelper.com/2016/10/13/green-social-work/
- Dominelli, L. (2012). Green social work : from environmental crises to environmental justice . Cambridge: Malden, MA.

Grønt socialt arbejde
- Et hurtigt overblik

- Behandler virkningen af den faldende miljøstabilitet på menneskelige befolkninger

  →Arbejder i hjælpeindsatsen efter menneskeskabte og naturkatastrofer (f.eks. Oversvømmelse, ildbrande)

  → Arbejde med mennesker som efter virkningerne af klimaændringer og katastrofer er blevet fordrevede

- Fremmer miljø- og klimarettigheder

  → de mennesker, der mindst bidrager til klimaændringer, er dem, der lider mest

  →Denne urimelige magtdynamik og de grundlæggende årsager skal løses

Design from https://www.slidescarnival.com/

Sources: - Kapro, K. (2016). What is Green Social Work. Retrieved from: https://socialworkhelper.com/2016/10/13/green-social-work/
- Dominelli, L. (2012). Green social work : from environmental crises to environmental justice . Cambridge: Malden, MA.

Now I have a few questions about your opinion on green social work. There are **no right or wrong answers** as all these questions want to explore what people think about the subject. All open ended questions **may also be answered in Danish**.

→ Nu har jeg et par spørgsmål om din holdning til grønt socialt arbejde. Der er ingen rigtige eller forkerte svar, da alle disse spørgsmål ønsker at undersøge, hvad folk synes om emnet.

- Had you heard the term *Green Social Work* prior to this survey?

    → Har du hørt udtrykket Grønt socialt arbejde forud for denne undersøgelse?

    ❏ Yes → Ja
    ❏ No → Nej

- If "yes", where did you come across it? → Hvis "ja", hvorfra?

    ❏ Heard about it from professors/ in class // heard about it from colleagues/ at work

        → Hørt om det fra professorer / i undervisning// hørt om det fra kolleger / på arbejdet

    ❏ Read about it when doing research on/ reading about social work

        → Læste om det, når du undersøger / læser om socialt arbejde

    ❏ Read about it when doing research on/ reading about climate change

        → Læste om det, når du undersøger / læser om klimaforandringer

    ❏ Other, please specify _____ → Andet, angiv venligst

- Do you think green social work is important in social work in Denmark?

    → Synes du, at grønt socialt arbejde er vigtigt i det sociale arbejde i Danmark?

    ❏ Yes → Ja
    ❏ No → Nej

- What aspects of green social work are important in social work in Denmark? If you don't think it is important, why not? *** Du kan også svare på Dansk ***

→ Hvilke aspekter af grønt socialt arbejde er vigtige i det sociale arbejde i Danmark? Hvis du ikke synes det er vigtigt, angiv hvorfor ikke?

- Do you think green social work is important in social work globally?

  → Tror du, at grønt socialt arbejde er vigtigt i det sociale arbejde globalt?

    ❏ Yes → Ja
    ❏ No → Nej

- What aspects of green social work are important in social work globally? If you don't think it is important, why not? *** Du kan også svare på Dansk ***

  → Hvilke aspekter af grønt socialt arbejde er vigtige i det sociale arbejde globalt? Hvis du ikke synes det er vigtigt, angiv hvorfor ikke?

- In which way does your education/ your work already include Green Social Work approaches? *** Du kan også svare på Dansk ***

  → På hvilke måder inkluderer din uddannelse / dit arbejde allerede grønne sociale arbejdsmetoder?

- Are you interested in learning more about Green Social Work?

  → Er du interesseret i at lære mere om Grønt socialt arbejde?

    ❏ Yes → Ja
    ❏ No → Nej

- What aspects of green social work would you like to learn more about? // If you do not wish to learn more about it, why not? *** Du kan også svare på Dansk ***

  → Hvilke aspekter af grønt socialt arbejde vil du gerne lære mere om? // Hvis du ikke ønsker at lære mere om det, hvorfor ikke?

- How do you think Green Social Work could become part of the social work education curriculum? / How do you think Green Social Work could become part of your job?

   *** Du kan også svare på Dansk ***

   → Hvordan tror du, at Grønt socialt arbejde kan blive en del af uddannelsen socialt arbejde? / Hvordan tror du, at Grønt socialt arbejde kan blive en del af dit job?

→ Continue/ Submit

_____

Thank you for your participation in my survey!

→ Tak for din deltagelse i min undersøgelse!

If you have any questions or would like to hear about the results of this survey feel free to contact me by email at ahoste19@student.aau.dk

→ Hvis du har spørgsmål eller gerne vil høre om resultaterne af denne undersøgelse er du velkommen til at kontakte mig via e-mail på ahoste19@student.aau.dk