

# **Social work and social services in late modernity: The case of Sweden**

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Today, it is becoming obvious that the preconditions for social work – and even social work itself – in Sweden is under renegotiation. While the Social Services Act of 1982 stated that the social services should deploy an overall view in working with clients, a focus upon preventive measures and take active part in the planning of society, the development in recent years has rather been characterized by tendencies towards specialization and by an increased focus upon individualized measures. And today, there are a number of proposals that taken together (if decided) would result in an abandonment of the idea of a cohesive organization for social services within the local municipality. However, the debate on these changes has so far been limited. This project takes its departure in that it is important to conduct a thorough discussion on how social work and social services of tomorrow should be organized. The aim is to, by developing a theoretical perspective on social services in late modernity, contribute to the foundations for such a debate. Studying social work practice in late modernity must acknowledge that social work itself developed as a central part of modern society, but also; that the preconditions for social work has changed as modernity itself has been radicalized. For example, alongside the development of social work, there has been strong efforts to strengthen the knowledge base in relation to practice. In recent years, these efforts also questions the foundations for practice. Another example is the increased individualization of social services – which can be seen as a way to adapt social work to a more heterogeneous society. Describing the development in the context of late modernity offers a possibility to avoid the dichotomy of modernity vs postmodernity. Instead, the development is viewed more as an open-ended process.

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