SOCIAL WORK 2050

Designing healthy, inclusive and sustainable regional futures

E³UDRES² Live Lecture · Online

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A 60-minute interactive lecture

AI USE DISCLOSURE

OpenAI Codex, accessed September–October 2026, supported idea generation, scenario construction, structural revision and language editing. The author directed and revised the process and assumes full responsibility. Disclosure follows current APA guidance.

October 2026

2050

What will social work need to become?

Lea’s decision at 06:30

Enschede, summer 2050

The fourth tropical night in a row has ended. The district cooling budget can cover only one immediate priority.

- **A** Refrigerated medication
- **B** A cooled room for children
- **C** Charging home-care equipment

ONLINE POLL

What should Lea do first?

Vote for A, B, or C in the chat.
Then explain your reason.

There is no neutral allocation rule.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

What will social work need to become if European regions are to remain healthy, inclusive and liveable in 2050?

2050 is the horizon for consequences.
2030 is the horizon for first commitments.

How we will explore the question

01	**Selected pressures**	A focused scope, not a complete map of the future
02	**Scenario analysis**	Two pathways expose choices and consequences
03	**Speculative vignette and fabulation**	Lea's day and a retrospective from 2050
04	**Regional comparison through PLACE**	Three illustrative E³UDRES² lenses
05	**Decision challenge and backcasting**	From a desirable 2050 to action by 2030

PLACE at a glance

Five questions will guide Lea's regional exchange. We return to the framework in detail later.

P

Pressures

Which large-scale changes shape the situation?

L

Local exposure and vulnerability

Who is affected, and how was vulnerability produced?

A

Assets, access and capacities

What exists, and who can reach or shape it?

C

Choices and co-production

Who decides, and whose knowledge counts?

E

Enabling action

What must begin by 2030?

PLACE helps structure judgement. It does not make the decision.

SCOPE

Five selected pressures

1

Climate change

Heat, flooding and ecological disruption

2

Demographic change

Ageing, mobility and changing care needs

3

Inequality

Unequal exposure and freedom to adapt

4

Displacement

Movement, status and belonging

5

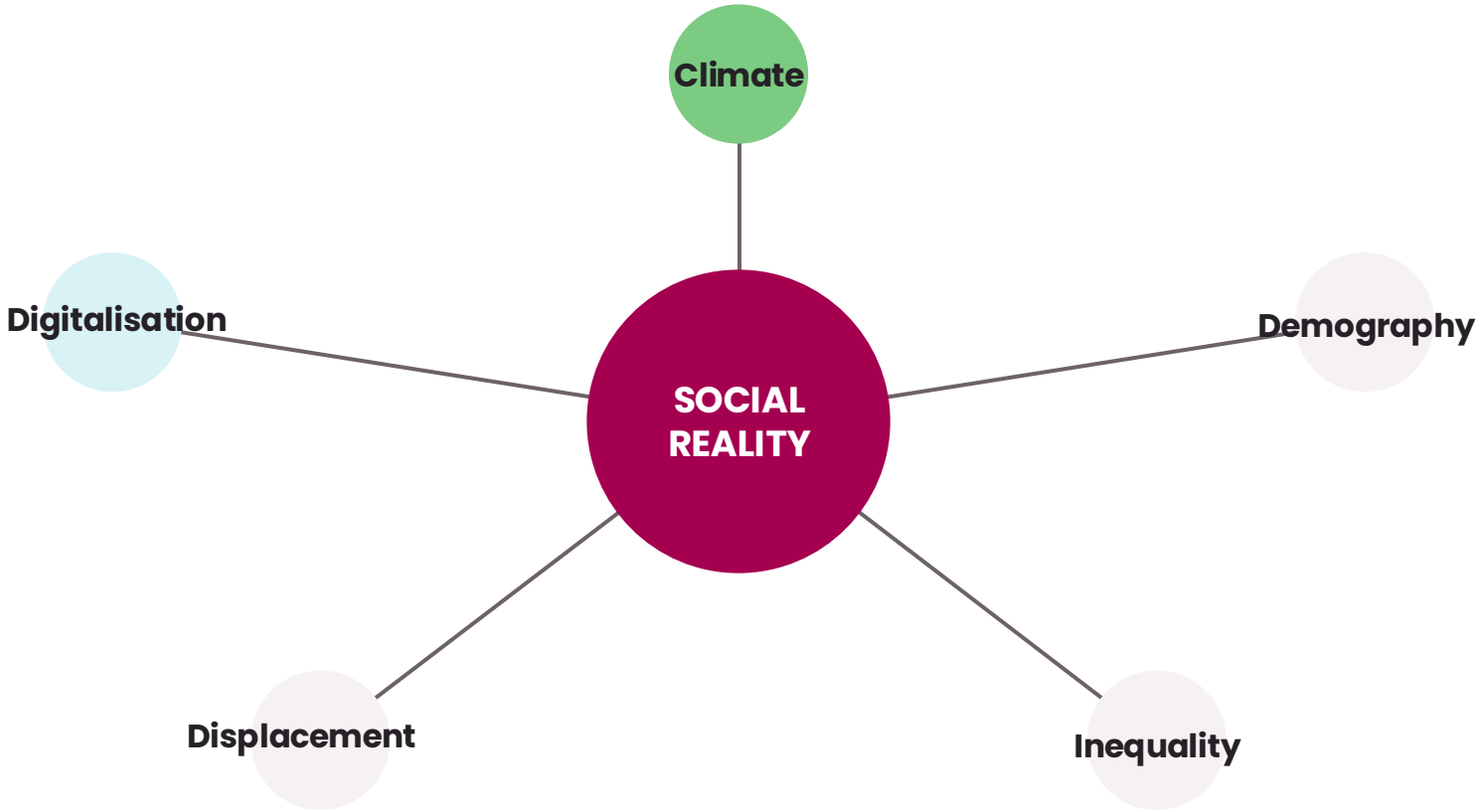
Digitalisation

Access, classification and surveillance

A purposeful selection, not a complete map of the future

Other drivers include geopolitical conflict, democratic backsliding, far-right mobilisation, labour-market change and a wider societal role for AI.

Pressures form one social landscape

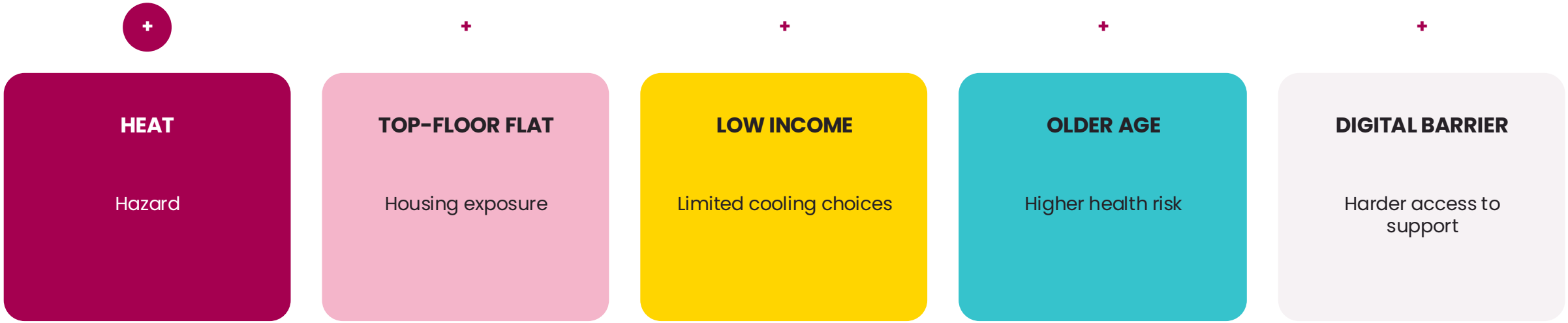


A heatwave becomes a social crisis when physical exposure meets unequal housing, high energy costs, isolation and inaccessible services.

INTERACTION

One heatwave, unequal consequences

The physical event is shared. Exposure and capacity are not.



Social work sees how systems turn a hazard into unequal harm.

Global forces meet local systems

GLOBAL PRESSURES Climate, demography, inequality, displacement and digitalisation

↓

REGIONAL CONDITIONS Housing, transport, labour markets, services, landscapes and trust

↓

LIVED CONSEQUENCES Who is reached, protected, heard and able to adapt

Regions connect European or national rights with the places where everyday provision actually happens.

ILLUSTRATIVE TEACHING CASES

Three regional lenses for 2050

SETÚBAL · PORTUGAL

Metropolitan coast

Heat, water, housing and public space

How can protection improve without displacement?

ENSCHEDE–TWENTE · NETHERLANDS

Medium-sized cross-border region

Heat, ageing, labour shortages and fragmented systems

How can coordination retain human judgement?

VIDZEME–VALMIERA · LATVIA

Rural network of towns and villages

Distance, population decline, connectivity and energy vulnerability

How can support remain reachable?

Documented starting points, extended into illustrative 2050 scenarios. Not empirical profiles or forecasts.

One day with Lea in 2050

- 6:30am - It`s still pretty warm out there.
- 8:00 am – A visit beyond the dashboard
- 11:30am – Three regions on one screen
- 02:00pm – The dangerous hours
- 6.00pm – The court makes a decision
- 09:30pm: Lea records what the system didn't catch

PLACE makes a shared conflict visible

SETÚBAL

Cooling centre full after residents arrive from an overheated informal settlement.

ENSCHEDE–TWENTE

Housing and cross-border care systems fail to recognise the whole situation.

VIDZEME

Storm damage cuts remote access. The next physical visit is 70 kilometres away.

THE VIDZEME CHOICE

An offline-first network was built by social workers, library staff, residents and technologists. A community board governs access and deletion.

Public funding could stabilise the network, but connection to the national platform may allow care data to be reused for eligibility checks or fraud detection.

Protect the network through integration, or protect its autonomy?

LEA'S WORK IN 2050

Familiar practice, wider field of action

Listens and assesses

Relationships remain central

Check data carefully

Classification becomes a professional issue

Connects cases to systems

Repeated emergencies become evidence

Works across borders

Responsibility follows people, not only jurisdictions

Looking back from 2050, Lea finds the new institutions more unusual than the technology.

Citizen review of automated rules · paid neighbourhood stewards · anti-displacement duties

Two pathways to 2050

THE LONG FALL

Temporary exclusions become the new baseline.

Emergency response
Data control
Institutional withdrawal

THE RISE OF SOLIDARITY

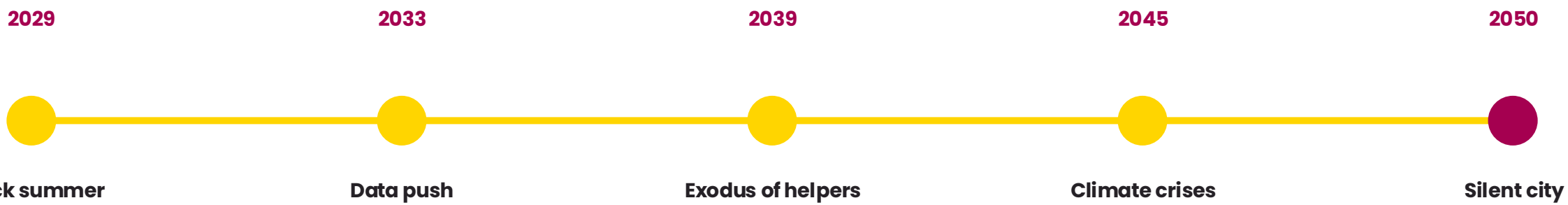
Crisis experience becomes a mandate for redesign.

Public learning
Rights and safeguards
Shared regional capacity

Same pressures. Different institutional responses. Real futures will remain mixed.

PATHWAY ONE

The Long Fall



No single decision destroys social infrastructure. Repeated emergencies and unchallenged exclusions gradually narrow what institutions believe they can do.

When decline becomes normal

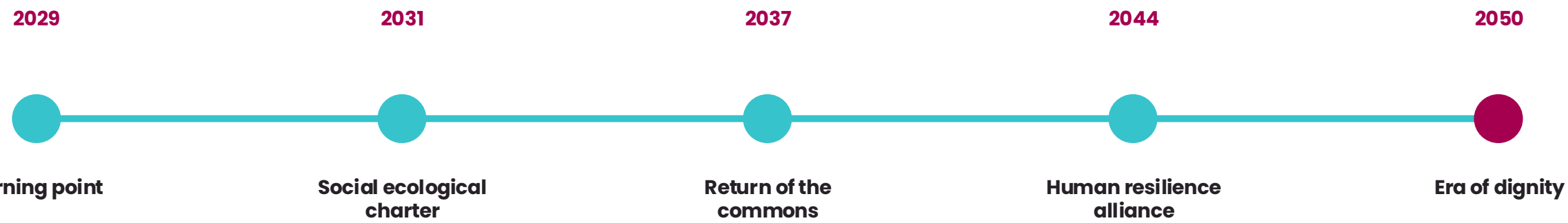
“Did public services really respond simply because somebody needed help?”

A teenager in 2050 has never known another baseline.

The concept comes from environmental research. Here it is used by analogy to ask whether expectations of welfare, rights and public responsibility can also contract across generations.

PATHWAY TWO

The Rise of Solidarity



Emergencies become evidence for redesign. Solidarity takes the form of enforceable rights, budgets and public infrastructure.

ONLINE POLL

Which early decision most strongly separates the two pathways?

A How housing adaptation is funded

B Whether automated decisions can be challenged

C Whether community knowledge changes public rules

D How organisations learn from repeated emergencies

Choose one. Add a short reason in the chat.

LIMITED REGIONAL BUDGET

Enschede–Twente decision challenge

A **Cross-border coordination**

Integrated Dutch–German access to care and social support

B **Neighbourhood heat resilience**

Housing renovation with affordability protection

C **Public-interest data platform**

Human review, multilingual access and a non-digital route

Choose one priority. Who benefits first? Who might remain excluded? Which safeguard must accompany your choice?

2 MINUTES · CHAT

Transfer check: How would your choice change in Setúbal or Vidzeme?

Three pathways for the profession

1

GREEN SOCIAL WORK

Links environmental change with social justice

Risk: ecological policy without community power becomes technocratic

2

TECHNOLOGY-AUGMENTED PRACTICE

Extends professional capacity under democratic and community control

Risk: efficiency can hide bias, surveillance and exclusion

3

COMMUNITY-LED SUPPORT

Moves knowledge and influence closer to residents

Risk: participation becomes unpaid labour or public withdrawal

Community-governed technology connects the second and third pathways.

The approaches work best when they correct one another's blind spots.

The PLACE framework

P

Pressures

Which large-scale changes matter here?

L

Local exposure and vulnerability

Who is exposed, and how was vulnerability produced?

A

Assets, access and capacities

What exists, and who can reach or shape it?

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Choices and co-production

Who decides, and whose knowledge counts?

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Enabling action

What must begin by 2030?

Relational check across every step: What happens to trust, mutual recognition, power and collective responsibility?

AI/Author's synthesis · adapted teaching framework · not a validated instrument

From a desirable 2050 to action by 2030

Imagine one feature of a healthy, inclusive and liveable region in 2050.

1. **Who must act?**

2. **What must begin by 2030?**

3. **What would count as early progress?**

WRITE ONE SENTENCE

OPEN CONVERSATION

Questions, reactions, disagreement and feedback

REACTION

What stayed with you?

CRITIQUE

What seems too simple, too optimistic or too pessimistic?

TRANSFER

What changes when you apply this to your own region?

If this is the 2050 we want, what must we be willing to begin by 2030?

14 minutes reserved