EASSW Regional Event Final Report

Co-Creating a Practical Guide: Activating the "Decolonising Social Work Practicum" Podcast for Transformative Learning in Social Work

Main practice output: Unmuting Practice (UNMUTE), an emerging approach to dialogic, decolonising learning

Workshop delivered as "Unmuting Practice: A Co-created Podcast on Decolonising Social Work"

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1. Executive summary

On 29 January 2026, the University of Sussex and Malmö University, both EASSW member schools, delivered a full-day participatory workshop at Malmö University built around the EASSW-funded Decolonising Social Work Practicum podcast. Forty-seven student colleagues, connected with universities in Sweden, Finland, Germany, Switzerland and Austria, worked with podcast episodes through small-group dialogue, cross-national comparison and embodied reflection, co-facilitated by host colleagues and members of the podcast's international co-creation team.

Over three-quarters of respondents said the workshop helped them reflect on decolonising practice education "quite a lot" or "a great deal". Analysis of the dialogue identified six interconnected elements, subsequently brought together by the lead applicant as Unmuting Practice (UNMUTE): Uncover, Name, Make space, Unlearn, Turn and Enact. It is an emerging approach, not a fixed model. The work has since continued through the now-published Malmö podcast episode, the British Association of Social Workers (BASW) UK Student Conference, and the 2026 Joint World Conference on Social Work, Education and Social Development (SWSD 2026) in Nairobi.

2. Rationale and purpose

The event grew from an international programme asking whose knowledge shapes social work practice education: the supervised placements, or practicum, through which students learn in social work settings. A scoping review funded by the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) (Jones et al., 2025) identified five themes: recognising Indigenous knowledges; challenging White dominance and racism; reconstructing curriculum and learning spaces; critical reflection and unlearning; and the wider socio-political context.

EASSW then funded the Decolonising Social Work Practicum podcast, an open educational podcast series that turns these themes into conversation. It was co-created by an international team of student colleagues, practitioners, educators and academics, with contributors from across Africa, Australasia, East Asia, Europe, the Middle East, North America and South Asia. Originally released as Decolonising Social Work Field Education, it was renamed following feedback from colleagues that "field" carries colonial connotations.

The Malmö event aimed to move the podcast from dissemination into active learning and to begin co-creating practical guidance for using it.

The application proposed a hybrid format. The partners chose in-person delivery because small-group dialogue and embodied listening relied on shared presence, while sensitive disclosures could be supported more safely in one room. International co-creators unable to attend remained present through their recorded voices in the podcast.

3. Preparation and collaboration

Malmö University, as co-applicant and host, placed the workshop within its international course HS180E Social Work: Social Policies and Welfare Studies, bringing together student colleagues from partner universities across Europe. Abigail M. Joseph-Magwood (Osnabrück University of Applied Sciences) contributed to the workshop design and delivered a session on decoloniality. EASSW funding enabled five UK-based co-creation team members to attend, including the two former

student co-hosts, now qualified social workers. With host colleagues, they facilitated small groups and supported learning together rather than an expert-to-student model.

Student colleagues listened to selected episodes, used coloured flags to mark responses and noticed bodily reactions. Small groups discussed one episode each: what shifted, how it connected with life and practice, what the embodied exercise revealed, and one small act to take forward. Groups then shared with the whole room. EASSW support was acknowledged on the opening slide (Annex A).

Consent. Before the workshop, student colleagues were told how the day would be recorded and used, and completed consent forms covering recording, podcast use and publication. Those who declined were not recorded. For the group photograph, participants were told that the image could be published, including online, and were invited to step out if they did not wish to appear; everyone chose to join the photograph. The original group photograph is reproduced in Annex A. The end-of-day evaluation was voluntary and anonymous; responses from those who did not consent to analysis and publication are excluded, which is why 36 responses are reported from 47 attendees. All quotations are presented anonymously.

4. Budget overview

EASSW awarded €2,000. After currency conversion and bank transfer fees, the University of Sussex received £1,563, which was spent in full.

Budget line	Planned (application)	Actual
Travel and accommodation, 5 UK co-facilitators	€1,400	£1,500 (5 × £300)
Workshop materials	€100	£63
Catering	€400	Not covered by the award
Local contributor travel	€100	Not covered by the award
Total	**€2,000**	**£1,563**

Travel and accommodation cost more than the €280 per person estimated, so the award was concentrated on enabling the five co-facilitators to attend, each receiving an equal £300 towards their costs. No staff costs were charged, and Malmö University provided the teaching space.

5. Outcomes and feedback

5.1 Evaluation

As shown in Figure 1, 28 of 36 respondents (77.8%) said the workshop helped them reflect on decolonising practice education “quite a lot” or “a great deal”, and 27 (75.0%) rated it “very good” or

"excellent". Feedback also included uncertainty, disagreement and requests for clearer routes to action, which informed later development.

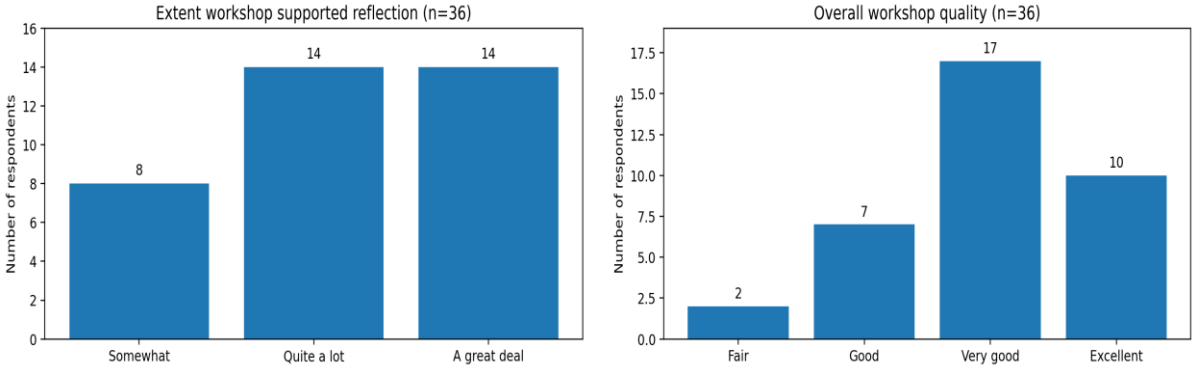


Figure 1. Anonymous end-of-day evaluation (n = 36).

5.2 Co-creating Unmuting Practice (UNMUTE): six elements from the dialogue

The dialogue was co-created: participants' discussion, disagreement, examples and proposed actions shaped its substance. UNMUTE is the lead applicant's synthesis of that co-created learning, developed after the event from the recorded discussions.

UNMUTE = Uncover • Name • Make space • Unlearn • Turn • Enact

Unmuting Practice is a dialogic approach to decolonising practice education that helps learners and educators identify and loosen what mutes knowledge, voice and action in their own contexts. Muting can occur through structures, curricula, institutional norms, group dynamics and shame; participants unmute themselves and each other, and educators include themselves. The six elements address four things that can be muted: knowledge (Uncover, Name), voice (Make space, Turn), the self (Unlearn) and action (Enact). They are not sequential steps: educators and learners can enter anywhere, move between them and revisit tensions as context, relationships, knowledge and action evolve.

U — Uncover what mutes, close to home. Many had met colonialism as closed history; the shift was seeing coloniality as "part of a structure that we upkeep", located in language hierarchies, displacement and students from former colonies training in colonising countries: "not just about ethnicity, race". Begin with participants' own histories, languages and systems.

N — Name what is missing and the gap between knowing and doing. "We learn that we should use this knowledge, but we don't learn how to get to the knowledge." Several said the topic was absent from their degrees. Make the gap visible, widen access to non-Western sources and create routes towards action.

M — Make space for other ways of knowing. Some valued listening with the body ("we can feel when things aren't right"); others found it difficult, and facilitators affirmed that feeling nothing was also valid. Offer embodied, relational and other ways of knowing by invitation, with more than one way to respond, while attending to provenance, context and knowledge holders.

U — Unlearn with responsibility, not shame. Some felt overwhelmed; one left "with a very heavy feeling". Another distinguished responsibility from blame: "Otherwise, I'm frozen." Build in breaks, debriefing and hope so discomfort supports unlearning without immobilising people.

T — Turn towards less-heard voices in the room. One group realised that summarising by majority had silenced a different response: "What's with the people who got left over?" Others challenged the premises or reported little shift. Surface less-heard and dissenting responses, allow further dialogue and treat disagreement as part of learning.

E — Enact one small change and follow it through. Groups committed to listening first, reading beyond white Western authors and speaking up. Students from one university planned to write about a "blind spot after almost two years of studies"; another proposed new content for their international social work module. End with one realistic action that can be revisited.

Unmuting Practice is not a new decolonial theory. Its early emphases are coloniality close to home, moving from awareness to action, responsibility without immobilising shame, and attention to less-heard and dissenting responses. It complements, rather than replaces, Indigenous and decolonial knowledge systems, and is not yet validated.

Closing reflections. Student colleagues anonymously shared what they were taking with them and what they wanted to leave behind (Annex B). Together, the responses suggest they had begun to move from shame, judgement, pessimism and bodily tension towards awareness, reflection, openness and hope. "Shame" appeared on both sides, illustrating the complexity of unlearning, and awareness was more visible than action.

Several responded in languages other than English. In an English-medium workshop, participants brought their own languages and ways of expressing knowledge into the space, extending the question of whose language counts. Deeper change in practice develops over time.

5.3 After Malmö

- **Malmö episode:** Built from consented recordings, the episode is now published at https://www.dialogueswfe.org/episode-11 and available through YouTube, Spotify and Apple Podcasts, making workshop dialogue and reflection accessible beyond the event. Mitali Kulkarni is addressing a website technical issue affecting the transcript; this does not affect the published audio.
- **BASW UK Student Conference 2026:** The former co-hosts, now practitioners and project mentors, co-facilitated "Co-creating the Nairobi Proposal on Decolonising Social Work Practice Education: From Malmö to Global Action" with European student colleagues.
- **SWSD 2026, Nairobi:** The approach was further explored through collective mapping and an explicit action prompt with 28 participants from five continents, testing how the learning could be adapted rather than simply transferred.
- **Practical guidance:** Unmuting Practice is being developed further in "From Listening to Action: Using a Co-created Podcast to Decolonise Social Work Practice Education", forthcoming in a University of Sussex open-access toolkit of inclusive teaching practices.

6. Reflection on future events and collaboration

Future work will test and adapt Unmuting Practice, first in social work education. The host's HS180E international course has operated since 2010, with approximately 900 students participating in the

wider course by 2026, according to Jonas Christensen; this is context for the partnership, not a measure of UNMUTE uptake. We propose to:

- explore a further full-day workshop within Malmö University's HS180E international course in 2028 (potentially 3 February 2028), subject to joint confirmation by April 2027, and involve partner universities;
- invite EASSW member schools and practice-learning partners to try or adapt it;
- share the report, published Malmö episode, UNMUTE working paper and subsequent guidance through EASSW channels, subject to arrangements with Michael Wallengren-Lynch, as well as institutional and teaching/research networks;
- follow up with partner universities on the curriculum actions student colleagues proposed.

7. Conclusions

The Malmö event turned an EASSW-funded podcast into a live international learning encounter. Its clearest practice output is Unmuting Practice (UNMUTE), an emerging approach whose value will depend on how others use, adapt and sustain it. In line with EASSW's Mission Statement, the event promoted innovation, critical reflection on social justice and international exchange between member schools.

8. Final materials and links

Annex A: workshop photographs. **Annex B:** closing Mentimeter reflections.

Chen, H. L. (2026). Unmuting Practice (UNMUTE): a dialogic approach to decolonising practice education. Working paper. Zenodo. https://zenodo.org/records/23265805; https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23092202

Malmö workshop podcast episode: https://www.dialogueswfe.org/episode-11
YouTube: https://youtu.be/yDAprssZC58
Spotify: https://open.spotify.com/episode/5255uzmpeGE5l3WwypjQyt
Apple Podcasts (series): https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/decolonising-social-work-field-education/id1827283334
Project and podcast platform: https://www.dialogueswfe.org/

EASSW feature on the podcast: https://eassw.org/Pages/news_item.php?n=149&t=1

BASW UK Student Conference 2026: https://basw.co.uk/about-basw/social-work-conferences-uk/basw-uk-student-conference-2026

SWSD 2026, Nairobi: https://allevents.eventsair.com/swsd2026

Underpinning research: Jones, M., Anka, A., Segev, E., Allassad Alhuzail, N., Mohamed, O., Wallengren-Lynch, M., Cantley, L., Mitra vom Berg, N., Laver, S., Hammond, L. and Chen, H. L. (2025) Decolonising social work practice field education: A scoping review. International Social Work, 68(6), 1032–1050. https://doi.org/10.1177/00208728241303596

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Annex A. Workshop photographs



Photo 1. Student colleagues, host colleagues and co-facilitators at Malmö University, 29 January 2026.



Photo 2. Co-facilitating and host team, with the opening slide acknowledging EASSW funding and the flags of participating countries.

Annex B. Closing reflections

At the close of the workshop, student colleagues answered two anonymous Mentimeter prompts. Word size reflects how many people gave each response.

What am I taking with me today?

a process **awareness** advocacy bridging context deep breathing **hope**

emotions fear feelings matter homework **knowledge** ideas introspection listening

more awareness **reflection** new insights open-minded openness pessimism

perspective prejudice really listening relearning responsibility shame

Sawubona model thoughtfulness tight chest togetherness growth unawareness understanding

verständnis we can do it judgment сила همپذیری පරාවර්තනය

What am I leaving behind?

anger **shame** anxiety emotion fear feeling alone **ignorance** guilt häpeä

language barrier negative emotions **pessimism** not knowing how to act oppressed heart

pressure stomach ache **judgement** tension unawareness des préjugés

frustration prejudice feeling overwhelmed

Figure B1. Anonymous, voluntary responses: 42 of 47 attendees gave 70 responses to the first prompt and 37 gave 73 to the second. Spelling variants are merged. A blank response, and repeated responses naming an individual or a country (likely in-group references), are omitted. Translations: verständnis (German), understanding; сила (Ukrainian/Russian), strength; همپذیری (Persian), mutual acceptance; පරාවර්තනය (Sinhala), reflection; des préjugés (French), prejudices; häpeä (Finnish), shame.