European Social Work Education and Practice

Walter Lorenz
Zuzana Havrdová
Oldřich Matoušek *Editors*

European Social Work After 1989

East-West Exchanges Between Universal Principles and Cultural Sensitivity

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European Social Work Education and Practice

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Foreword

As this book comes to publication, the world is gripped by the Covid-19 Coronavirus pandemic. The European Union and its allied nations have closed their borders in an unprecedented action aimed to stop the spread of the virus. Under such calamitous circumstances the political appeal is to a collective Europe, a Europe with a common interest, social, political and economic. Whilst nation states must devise specific responses geared to their localized circumstances, the value of strong pan-European endeavour is underscored by the need to gain leverage both within and beyond European borders as part of global negotiations. Such solidarities will be important in sharing solutions, resources, facilities and learning, as well as important to the recovery phase that will follow.

These extraordinary circumstances crystallize our thinking about the European integration project which has proved to be both complex and contradictory. What is now summoned as a strong collective just months ago seemed to be so deeply questioned and precariously positioned, not least by the Brexit entanglements. The failure to resolve the tension between the ambitions of freedom of movement, vibrant democracy and protectionist welfare states has been increasingly exposed and usurped by extremist right wing pundits to undermine trust and certainty so necessary to social solidarity. One example was the '*strange death of Europe*' debate given a controversial and very public airing by the publication of Douglas Murray's book of that title (2017), which reduced the predicament of Europe into one overarching theme, that of the failure of Europe to more harshly restrict its borders. Murray's highly contested argument pointed a finger at the Muslim world and its putative encroachment on a beleaguered Christian Europe. Migrants, he claimed, largely Muslim, were responsible for rapes, murder and terrorism and the undermining of European values and mores, foreshadowing a dying Europe. All this political, social and economic turbulence impacts keenly on our role, our responsibilities, our work as social workers. We cannot afford any myopia, historical amnesia or banal ignorance in critically analysing and making the connections between this wider political terrain and the job we are required to do. Social work is and will always be politically implicated. This book both assists us and challenges us in that respect. It presents us with the conundrum that is Europe – its schisms, its angst, its

divisions, borders and anxieties, but also with the ambitions and aspirations of the 'social' project of which we as social workers and as citizens are a part.

My own take on this conundrum relates to Europe and its minorities, its newer migrants, asylum seekers and refugees. One of my early career outputs, the edited collection *Social Work and Minorities: European perspectives (1998)* arose as a result of a vibrant Erasmus collaboration, begun in the early 1990s, when my focus on the domestic politics of race in Britain was stretched by this encounter with colleagues from across Europe. The developments in post-1989 Europe opened up the possibility for scholars and practitioners to come together in productive collaborations to exchange ideas, methodologies, and explore notions of a common value base and identity for social work as part of the broader unification project. As the chapters in this volume attest, social work and social work education would become embedded in the political project of East-West integration and mechanisms such as ERASMUS would promote meaningful exchanges. Perhaps an enduring lesson for me from our particular project was an acknowledgement of the differing responses required in particular socio-political contexts to a local politics of anti-racism, coupled with an acknowledgement of the power of exclusionary cross-border agreements such as Schengen, which could produce what became recognized as 'Fortress Europe'. As a discipline and a profession, we drew on an emergent anti-racist project to challenge this illiberal Europe and our cross-national collaboration enabled a critical questioning of our own nation states in their response to diverse minorities.

The constitutive notion of Europe as tolerant and democratic has for some good while been questioned and in the aftermath of Nazi atrocities many European countries resolved a silence on or rejection of the category 'race'. It remains the case that many countries have no easy vocabulary of race to ground the discrimination, exclusions and violence they see meted out on particular 'others' in everyday life. The Roma peoples subject to state racisms, institutionalized persecution and everyday exclusions; the migrant and their descendants, the asylum seeker and refugee and perhaps the ultimate other – the Muslim subject, have experienced the powerful force and contradictions of formalized and banal forms of European tactics of bordering.

Europe's borders are, of course, like any borders, an artefact, a manifestation of socio-political relations. In this era of mobilities and movement they have become increasingly militarized and securitized borders in the reactive melee of European immigration policies of exclusion, such that we come to understand movement is for some but not for others. Fears and anxieties generated by popularist, right wing activists and neo-Fascist political parties grip the populace and provide fertile ground for scapegoating, labelling, violence and the erroneous linking of perceived threats (terrorism, health scares, criminality) to those categorized as 'others'. The framing of the so called 'migrant crisis' has shielded a reality check of the human catastrophe that has occurred on Europe's maritime borders. Some 30,000 deaths at sea since 2000, based on rough calculations, have made the beautiful Mediterranean Sea a mass grave, in Nicholas De Genova's words a '*macabre deathscape*' (2017, p.2). De Genova's work has powerfully drawn attention to how this '*unsightly accumulation of dead black and brown bodies*' (p.21) provides a testimony that Europe's

borders must be recognized as racial borders and that European countries disavow their (post) colonial histories that have created the very conditions of human movement they reject. De Genova's excellent writings and his trenchant and informed questioning of Europe provide a strong counter to Douglas Murray type claims.

The insidious Murray-style arguments that seek out a European solidarity based on some type of constructed external threat are reminiscent of a Cold War ideology that similarly looked to the hostile threat of an external enemy (Communism) as the instrument to unify European identity. The vain hope that placing certain individuals and groups somewhere beyond the boundary will cohere deep differences, conflicts, divisions and historical legacies within, once more repeats itself. Forms of illiberal democracy are becoming a norm in Europe based on false and precarious constructions of ethnic and moral unity. These are not easy issues to resolve as many of the contributions in this book illustrate, but the appeal must be to garner greater social equality, to extending humanitarian aid and forms of non-exclusive social security and to thoroughgoing deliberative dialogue. Social solidarities thrive in more equal societies, where there is clarity, confidence and trust over distributive rights.

The crisis related to race, ethnic and religious diversity that we see everywhere in what is a superdiverse Europe, suggests an important role for social work in crafting social integration and cohesion. We will all need to think differently about place, belonging, citizenship and rights and find a voice and concerted expression of anti-racism in Europe.

I opened with reference to Covid-19 pandemic and its emergent impacts as a case in point to illustrate the need for collaborative effort, cross border coordination, exchanges of learning and expertise. Here we enter unchartered territory in terms of the types of devastation that will be imposed in different country contexts and to Europe as a social and economic unit. Social work will have a significant role to play in the reconstruction efforts as well as in the immediate response to personal and community calamity. Profound economic and social dislocation is to be expected, human tragedy on an immense scale, human distress and many forms of emergent inequality will inevitably become apparent. All this is happening in a moment when welfare states and welfarism are shrinking. As the demand for our services and recognition of our role increases now and in the post-Covid-19 scenario, so must our voice in articulating the types of perspectives and values built on human rights and social justice principles. This is the deal breaker of our involvement, the moment to advance our political mandate and to secure ethical applications of our skills and knowledge. From adversity will come creativity. There will be opportunity to develop innovative practices and programs of mutual aid at local level and to transfer learnings. Our methodologies must include a broad range of partners in the change effort, beyond narrow exclusive professionalism towards instilling professional practices and values in productive collaborative effort. The time will be right to bring people together in dialogue, empowering and equipping them to devise solutions to the issues they confront. It will be important to draw on lessons from the past in shifting the nature of service delivery and lobbying governments.

For these reasons this book is timely and instructive. Social work is increasingly under pressure in neo-liberal regimes to implement questionable national agendas. It requires fortitude, discernment, and intelligent responses to nurture what is good about national sentiment, nation state policies and the practices of the domestic brief but also the ability to look beyond borders, to retain a reasonable amount of national scepticism and to reach out through international collaboration, exchange, borrowings and learnings in the work of adapting our localized contexts towards promoting social justice. We can't do this without a strong understanding of histories, without sharing ways of navigating deep divisions and differences, without understanding how to mobilize for change, how to influence and advocate, and without garnering learning from specifics of geopolitical contexts. This speaks to new competencies, to training mandates, to strong leadership within the profession and proficient international fora and to refreshed cross-border solidarities. This book makes a significant contribution to that endeavour.

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About the Editors

Walter Lorenz, PhD, MSc, is a recognized expert on European dimensions of social work. German by birth, Dr. Lorenz trained as a social worker at the London School of Economics and practised for 6 years in East London, UK, before teaching social work in Ireland and Italy. As president of the European Centre for Community Education, he steered the first Erasmus Thematic Network for the Social Professions in the 1990s and promoted European exchanges, particularly between Schools in Eastern and Western Europe, taking up numerous visiting lectureships in post-communist countries. Together with Hans-Uwe Otto, Dr. Lorenz was co-founder of the International Summer Academy TISSA, and launched the *European Journal of Social Work* and later the online journal *Social Work and Society*. Since retiring from the Free University of Bozen, Italy, he holds a visiting appointment at Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic. His research projects and publications deal with comparative issues of European social work and social policy. Dr. Lorenz holds honorary doctorates from the Universities of Ghent (Belgium) and Aalborg (Denmark).

Zuzana Havrdová, doc., PhDr., belongs to the first practitioners and academics who started to develop social work education and numerous social work services and community centres in the Czech Republic after 1989. Being one of the founding members of a social work programme at Charles University in Prague since 1990, Dr. Havrdová participated in the development of minimum standards of education through the Czech Association of Schools of Social Work (ASVSP), and founded and chaired the Board for the Development of Social Work. She developed Czech competence criteria in social work now used in most schools of social work, together with training programmes in supervision for social workers. Dr. Havrdová participated in several international projects and networks with most European countries that led her to research interests on the impact of cultural differences on social work practice and organizations. Her national and international publications reflect these research and practice interests. In 2000, Dr. Havrdová started a new university course in Management and Supervision in Social and Health Organisations, and in 2016, she started a doctoral programme in social work at Charles University that she also chairs.

Oldřich Matoušek, doc., PhDr., is qualified as a psychologist from Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic, and practised for more than two decades as a clinical psychologist in a psychiatric day hospital. After 1989, Dr. Matoušek co-founded the first university Department of Social Work at Charles University and taught there ever since, serving 10 years as Head of the department. He founded NGO LATA, an organization that offers voluntary support to youth at risk, and also works as a consultant to several Czech NGOs. Together with notable co-authors, Dr. Matoušek published a basic set of textbooks for social work university students that are widely used in Czech and Slovak universities. He was also chief editor of the first *Czech Encyclopedia of Social Work*, which comprehensively defined social work as a specific discipline. His *Dictionary of Social Work* is as widely used as his other monographs on key social work practice themes. Dr. Matoušek participated in several national and international research projects focused on children in care and social work practice. Presently he leads the team of experts from three Czech universities investigating the process of social work professionalization in the Czech Republic.

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1989 as a Key Moment in the Development of International Dimensions of Social Work

Walter Lorenz

1 Introduction

1989 was not only a political event of enormous importance for the political geography of Europe and for subsequent global developments; it also triggered social transformations which affected the very fabric of societies on both sides of the former Iron Curtain. The changes were obviously more dramatic and profound for former communist societies which had suffered more than four decades of oppression, collectivism and state control, all in the guise of socialist politics which were alleged to secure the well-being of every citizen much more comprehensively and reliably than the capitalist welfare system could. But with hindsight we can also state that in the countries of the European West, related transformations also took place, albeit of a more gradual kind but nevertheless also with profound implications for social solidarity. Whether these transformations were a result of the politics of the 1989 revolutions or whether the energies and motivation of civil society movements, which destabilised the rigid authoritarianism, were themselves the result of shifts in global relations and part of that new relationship between civil society and the state is a matter of arduous debate. The relevance of reflecting on those processes for social work lies in any case in the recognition that social work had its origins always as response to two newly arising challenges for societies, the re-structuring of economic conditions associated with technological changes and the need to ensure the integration of citizens into the politically and mostly also geographically newly defined units of nation states.

This had been the case in the aftermath of the industrial revolution in the UK as much as in the consolidation of the nation of the USA which formed through

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immigration and industrialisation; state welfare measures had already been part of the German unification strategy of Chancellor Bismarck in the 1880s; social work as a professional activity then received a decisive boost in many countries of Europe after the end of the First World War which brought with it an extensive re-drawing of national boundaries in most parts of the continent and required that social and ethnic divisions be kept in check within those boundaries. Social work became gradually but eventually firmly embedded in the social, economic and also democratic re-construction programme of Western Europe as the personalised face of the welfare states after the devastation of Nazism, Fascism and the Second World War. The situation of Europe after 1989 contained clear traces of these constitutive factors in as much as societies East and West were faced with profound changes in the rules of the economic game as well as being confronted with the issue of establishing social citizenship relations within basically new political boundaries. In the East of the former divide, this meant coming to terms with distinct national and cultural identities whose recognition had been largely suppressed under the ideological cloak of socialist brotherhood and the military hold of the Soviet Union over the Warsaw Pact countries, a task that was disastrously badly handled in former Yugoslavia and resulted in open war which tore that union of countries violently apart with the loss of an estimated 150,000–200,000 lives (Lukic and Lynch 1996). In addition, it became clear that removing the shackles of communism was one thing and replacing the structural social securities, which it had provided after all, with new provisions was quite a different matter. In view of the negative associations collective social measures evoked with socialism, particularly since in countries like Czechoslovakia and Hungary attempts to bring about 'socialism with a human face' had failed, the turn towards neoliberalism appeared attractive. Neoliberalism was anyhow turning into a globally undisputed economic dogma after 1989. Yet it was soon realised that the promise of personal liberty, at the core of this economic model, contained a highly divisive potential and in fact created social divisions between winners and losers on an unprecedented scale, thereby adding social tensions to the emerging ethnic ones.

In the West of Europe, the political identity challenge had already taken the form of how to commit members of separately existing nation states to bringing about a sense of belonging to the supranational entity of the European Union. The enormity of that challenge of bringing former enemies to share common goals was realised by the instigators of the unification process from the beginning, and they built their strategy on the following balance of arguments: While the warning example of nationalism in Europe that had caused global war twice in one century was still alive, support for promoting peace in Europe was a priority, and the strategy was to secure this by strengthening economic collaboration. It was anticipated that the gradual dissolving of border controls could become attractive as long as this did not affect national identities and the sense of national sovereignty. But we now know that the economic argument was insufficient and the expansion of the European Union into most countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) exposed the weakness of those assumptions. Historical insight into the factors which had contributed to the stability and integration of nation states in their relatively short history should

have drawn attention to the importance of social policies in unification processes. Public welfare can play a decisive role and Bismarck's original shrewdness with introducing the first public social insurance scheme after German unification in the 1880s was gradually accepted and copied by other European nation states. The EU neglected to learn that lesson and failed to make a united social policy approach the strategic complement to the economic pursuit of free market conditions, with the result that resentment is building up in many member states against the perceived dominance of financial restrictions and regulations imposed by 'Brussels' instead of European citizens being able to see in the EU a guarantor of their social citizenship. Since agreeing on the Lisbon Strategy in 2000 the EU pursued social policies mainly in the form of employment policies according to the formula of 'flexicurity', meaning adjustments of welfare support to the demands of a liberalised employment market (European Commission 2000). This contributed to the exhaustion of the European unification drive and ideal and was accompanied by growing social and economic divisions within national societies, divisions that were not only not ameliorated effectively by social policies, but on the contrary stoked by the neoliberal emphasis on more flexible employment arrangements. From this perspective, a convergence of issues becomes visible which characterise developments in all European nation states after 1989 despite contrasting starting positions. These amount to a fundamental questioning of the basis and the principles on which social cohesion and social solidarity under those changed conditions could be founded and manifest themselves as much in the crisis of the EU unification process as in the social tensions within European national societies. The social and political unrest which manifests itself all across Europe, particularly after the 2008 financial crisis, the rise of right-wing parties that often even form part of national governments and not least the withdrawal of the UK from the EU are indicators of this crisis of cohesion.

Experiences from the immediate biographical participation in these transformation processes over the decades since 1989 have been the motivation for the following reflections and for all authors of this volume. We start from the initially stated awareness that social work is essentially and deeply rooted in historical processes but are also driven by the commitment that we should therefore not aim to insert social work as harmoniously as possible into these contexts and to make it assimilate best to the new welfare conditions. Rather, we take these insights as a valuable resource for defining and tracing the nature of social work in critical opposition to these trends because they highlight the decisive moments in which the professionalism of social work is either made to count or to surrender.

2 Promoting International Dimensions of Social Work

This learning process had already started before 1989 when groups of European-oriented social work educators began to develop an academic and professional interest in getting to know and comparing the different versions of social work around Europe in the early 1980s. This signalled a revived interest in elaborating on

social work's international dimension which had characterised the profession from its beginnings when one recalls the series of international social work conferences held in Paris (1928), Frankfurt (1932) and London (1936) (Hering and Waaldijk 2003). Social work in Western Europe after the Second World War picked up on this strong international dimension which had been broken by Nazism. In the 1950s and 1960s, many social work lecturers either could undertake part of their training in the USA with the help of Fulbright scholarships or had participated in training initiatives organised by the UN, the USA and the UK. These initiatives were a means of bringing a scientifically grounded, politically neutral form of a 'standard model of social work' to countries that were, according to those standards, lagging behind in professionalisation and academisation (Lorenz 2006). But there was a growing awareness that this standard model, consisting of the triad of case work, group work and community work and disseminated largely through translations of English-language texts into other European languages, was by no means politically neutral. It did not take account of existing diverse training traditions and re-discovering these through European exchanges became scientifically and professionally immensely attractive for social work scholars. One such exchange and collaboration initiative was the *European Centre for Community Education* (ECCE) with a seat originally in Koblenz, Germany, which used the concept 'community education' as an umbrella term which could cover all the national titles under which the social professions operated in different European countries, such as social pedagogue, *animateur*, *agogics*, *socionom*, *barnevernpedagog*, etc. Exchanges between European countries by students were structured so as to facilitate the acquisition of a certificate (the ACCESS certificate[1]) which testified to the participants' competence in understanding and negotiating the significance of this variety of forms of social work and social policy systems as a means of promoting professional practice that had both a universal grounding in scientific research and a practice orientation to the differences in national, cultural and political contexts in which social services operate.

These initially informal activities received a considerable boost through the ERASMUS programme, which was launched in 1987 to promote such exchanges in all academic subjects. A study conducted by ECCE in 1993 confirmed that social work educators and students took part in these exchanges very actively, despite or probably because of the variety of models of social work practice and education they revealed. One of the major achievements of the work of the First Thematic Network in the Social Professions (ECSPRESS[2]), which had come about as a collaborative consortium between the organisations ECCE, the *European Association of Schools of Social Work*, EASSW,[3] and the *Formation d'Educateurs Sociaux Européens/European Social Educator Training*, FESET,[4]

[1] www.ecce-net.eu/ECCE-FH/Zertifikat%20ACCESS.pdf

[2] www.ecce-net.eu/ECCE-FH/ecsp_en.ht. For documentation see www.ecce-net.eu/Ecspress_08_online_final.pdf

[3] https://www.eassw.org/

[4] https://feset.org/

was to rate this diversity in European social professions positively rather than aiming at harmonisation, which had been an undercurrent of the official ERASMUS agenda.

In this sense, the contacts with colleagues in Central and Eastern Europe became particularly valuable. These had become possible after 1989 and were supported by various EU programmes like TEMPUS and PHARE as part of the preparation initiatives for the EU membership of those countries (see the respective chapters of this volume). Political and ideological impediments had previously rendered communist countries of Europe *terra incognita* for Western social work and had allowed only few scholars to get glimpses of the various forms in which social work type of activities were still possible under Communism. Where this did take place, there was a recognition that there were sometimes very inventive and determined efforts to practice forms of social work even though this was officially shunned or even prohibited and that these efforts had to count as part of a continuous though troubled history of this profession (Hering 2007). In the exchanges ensuing after 1989, members of the ECCE and ECSPRESS networks, but also of other like-minded collaboration networks, such as the European Research Institute for Social Work (ERIS) based at the University of Ostrava,[5] valued explicitly this pre-existing diversity and authenticity of formal and informal expressions of social work in the countries' respective historical and political contexts. This prevented their collaboration projects from turning into attempts at 'colonising' CEE countries with Western models of social work as was the case in some external 'aid' programmes that acted as if those countries had previously been completely ignorant of what social work meant. These contacts heightened also the awareness of the existence of courses in the social professions in CEE countries before Communism and of the part social work and social pedagogy pioneers from CEE countries had played in the early phase of the internationalisation of these professions. For instance, Ewa Marynowicz-Hetka now occupied a Chair of *Pedagogika Społeczna* at the University of Lodz in post-communist Poland in succession of the pioneering work Helena Radlinska had undertaken in 1945 by establishing Poland's first School of Social Pedagogy at that same university. She had already founded social pedagogy courses at the Polish Free University of Warsaw in 1925 and contributed to the first international conferences mentioned above. This underlined not only that Poland with its interwar social and economic development formed part of a wider European development but also that this pioneer was well familiar with and took up social pedagogy concepts of one of the German promoters of that discipline, Paul Natorp (Lepalczyk and Marynowicz-Hetka 2001).

Another example is the early history of social work training in Czechoslovakia, which was influenced by Alice Masaryková, daughter of the first President of that post-Habsburg Republic, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk. After completing her university studies in Vienna, she went to Chicago and experienced the already famous Settlement there and encountered Jane Addams. She received support from there

[5] https://eris.osu.eu/about-us/

both personally when she was imprisoned in Vienna during the First World War and in her efforts to introduce academic training for social workers later in her own country. She was infused by feminist and human rights ideals and founded the Higher School of Social Welfare in Prague after the end of First World War in the then independent Czechoslovakia. As later president of the Czechoslovakian Red Cross and together with the first graduates of that school, she established principles of professionalism for social work which were far-sighted and reflected international standards. Oppressed by the totalitarianism of the Communist Regime she left her country in 1950 and social work training was subsequently suppressed (Kubíčková 2001).

3 Challenges for Social Work in Post-communist Societies

But beyond these historical insights, collaborating with colleagues in CEE countries gave the opportunity to witness from close proximity the processes, difficulties and opportunities of developing a professional profile. What could be witnessed in many networks was how social work study programmes could engage with given historical contexts instead of introducing a model purely based on scientific 'universals' as if it were social work's task to consider only the psychological functioning of human beings. The difficulties CEE colleagues thereby faced were immense but all the while not totally dissimilar to the difficulties social work educators had to face in all pioneering situations. These difficulties highlighted a number of fundamental characteristics of the discipline and profession, characteristics that, as we can see with historical hindsight, are not just transient but constitute tensions that are unavoidable and overall productive for the ongoing development of social work.

3.1 Position Among University Disciplines

Social work in most cases had and still has difficulties in establishing itself as an academic discipline in its own right. Starting academic, professionalising study programmes poses the problem that since there are no previous graduates with a specific social work degree at basic and particularly at PhD level, courses are initially in the hands of members of other academic disciplines, most commonly psychology, pedagogy or sociology. Their suitability for constructing courses and teaching social work subjects cannot be judged on formal criteria because, as examples in this volume show, psychologists and sociologists can have a very appropriate understanding of the nature of social work and furthermore bring to social work often a sense of research-orientation, academic rigour and curricular clarity that gives a valuable impetus to the launch of the new discipline. While it is desirable that dedicated PhD programmes emerge eventually which give students the chance to pursue specific social work research topics without seeing

them marginalised by 'classical' research patterns, the ongoing exchanges with 'neighbouring' disciplines have proven to be very fertile in social work, as long as they help to recognise and tackle the complexity of issues confronted by social workers rather than imposing a reductionist perspective. A leaning towards too much universalism and abstraction can often obstruct the way in which results of such post-graduate research influence practice. Examples in this volume show that the 'marginality' of social work in relation to other disciplines can manifest the need by members of those disciplines to transcend their boundaries. For instance, in Hungary under conditions of 'really existing socialism', which had claimed to have solved all social problems, sociologists around Zsuzsa Ferge in Budapest could not only document the continued existence of social problems that had a 'social' origin (instead of being attributable solely to 'personal failings') but experiment with community-based interventions. Doing sociology from a critical political perspective led this group directly into social work before this became institutionally realisable in 1989. Similarly, in the post-communist situation of Czechoslovakia, psychologists around Zuzana Havrdová extrapolated from their existing knowledge and experience of community-oriented approaches to psychological problems that the limits of psychology had to be transcended now that the freedom to pursue such developments was finally cleared of ideological restrictions.

3.2 Relationship Between Academia and Practice

A similar uncertainty accompanies social work in relation to its practice orientation and whether this would necessitate training to be located in more 'vocational' third-level academic settings than in universities. The fact that in most post-communist countries a parallel development occurred at both levels mirrors the history of social work training in most Western countries and does again not constitute a negative verdict on the scientific grounding of the discipline. Many well-established academic subjects, notably medicine, have a very clear practice orientation that does not diminish their academic status. The entry of social work into the university context therefore constantly poses the challenge of having to justify this status with commensurate research efforts and achievements. But the duality equally bears witness to the phenomenon that research interests and probing research questions arise in practice contexts and need to be taken up not just by academics sensitive to those signals but by practitioners themselves, as the growth of practitioner-research now demonstrates. To illustrate this, one can take the economic necessity of most PhD students in CEE countries to remain in employment while doing research for their PhD on the one hand as a burden that can limit their academic achievements. On the other hand, as my work with such students showed me, this can give their research commitment and their understanding of the specific epistemological requirements of social work a considerable boost which students in more 'luxurious' circumstances as holders of bursaries may fail to develop. Working scientifically under

such practice-dominated conditions can become a productive challenge to further develop research methods that might have their origins in other disciplines out of an awareness of the specificity of social work contexts, and it can be expected that such experiences will make a decisive contribution to the development of 'evidence-oriented approaches' specific to social work. It can already be seen that other academic disciplines are opening up to dimensions, once regarded as 'contaminating' the 'pure' aspects of research in social work, which instead enhance knowledge production once specific historical, social and cultural aspects are not eliminated but taken into consideration, as is happening even in allegedly 'pure sciences' (Nowotny et al. 2001; for social work see Gray and Schubert 2010).

3.3 Relationship with Social Policy

The re-construction phase of post-communist societies posed the fundamental question: is social work necessitated by the change to capitalism or does it derive its legitimacy from other principles that constitute its autonomy? In these open circumstances, this question could be addressed more explicitly than in Western countries where social work had long found an accepted and mostly valued place in society. After the Second World War, there was a broad consensus that some form of welfare state was a useful mode of keeping capitalism's impact at a socially acceptable level. This had promoted an indispensable position for social work to personalise social policy provisions and thereby also to legitimate the political and economic system. This function of social policy and of social work became consolidated by a pervasive sense of competition of this version of 'social capitalism' with the welfare claims of the Soviet Bloc on the other side of the Iron Curtain and had somewhat obscured the more fundamental question why social work was needed in the first place. The rise of social work after the ending of this confrontation in the East of that divide was not carried by a similar consensus and therefore forced the profession to position itself more consciously in relation to the emerging social policy context. This contributed in no small way to the broad differentiation of settings in which social work became established where public social services were mostly exceeded by new NGOs and civil society initiatives which created versions of social work that were often not easy to 'standardise'. These developments raise the more fundamental question whether social work is merely the product of particular social policies, or posed even more bluntly, of the failures of social policies to provide the kind of social protection that results in an integrated society, or whether social work takes active and critical position towards those developments and shapes them, at policy-making level or at the point of delivery, according to an independently arrived at base of principles of social justice and solidarity that constitute authentic social work values. Being able to participate in this shaping process in CEE was so fascinating and relevant for us Western colleagues in these past 30 formative years because it helped us to recognise more clearly how shifts in social policy related to the formation of social work.

3.4 Reputation in Society

The task of establishing a public reputation is also related to the necessity for social workers to find a place among other professionals and within the overall social policy framework. The 'classical' approach, taken up in many countries according to Western models, is the creation of a professional association or 'chamber' sanctioned by legislation which regulates membership, representation and conduct of professionals on their register. Such associations formed in most post-communist countries and came to play a role, not least at an international level through membership in European and international federations; nevertheless, the results do not seem to have been an overall success, partly because a plurality of competing representative bodies emerged, as in the Czech Republic, partly because social workers were reluctant to become engaged in and hence regulated by such an official body that for many still smacked of authoritarianism from the old regime. In certain respects, the fact that social work finds it hard to ground its public reputation on formal procedures makes it lose out on privileges associated with higher status such as greater political influence and above all higher salaries. On the other hand, a more secure position among the ranks of other professionals could lead to greater distance to service users. The dubious reputation of the social work profession has to do with its proximity to marginalised groups in society, but this is often taken by groups of social workers in such developing situations as a challenge to develop a stronger advocacy role on their behalf and a more autonomous social justice engagement.

4 Transformation Processes and the Position of Social Work

While witnessing these developments through close collaboration and exchanges was interesting enough, what gave and continues to give East-West contacts added actuality is the observation that just at the time of these profound revolutions (in the case of East Germany one speaks of a 'turning point', *Wende*) and the challenges they posed for those societies in total transformation, profound changes began to take hold also in Western Europe. As indicated above, they amounted to an extensive reshaping of the principles of social solidarity in which 'the social question' was completely reformulated (Rosanvallon 2000). In terms of the challenges in the four areas listed, drawing together experiences from both sides of the former divide, as this volume attempts to do, allows for a better understanding of what those changes mean for social work. Above all, it points to the chances of capitalising on the comparative and collaborative insights in order to develop a distinct perspective of 'European social work', combining general observations with context-specific responses and approaches. It leads to the insight that social work in Europe is not just the juxtaposition of different practice traditions but requires in each country reflections on how these practices are embedded in specific European historic and

political contexts, a process which then leads to the formulation of a distinct version of European Social Work (as proposed in the Compendium of European Social Work, Kessl et al. 2020). Only on the basis of such a cross-border analysis can social workers take a critical and independent stand towards political and other transformation processes as part of their professional mandate (Lorenz 2017b).

For instance, the Bologna Process was overall a useful vehicle for promoting a coherent, well-structured academic programme, also for social work, and has been keenly implemented by now in 48 European countries, in some even before their EU membership. But subsequent quality control developments in the academic context across all nations pose an acute threat to the position and the nature of social work as a discipline. All universities and all academic activities have become increasingly subjected to quantitative performance and quality indicators. Articles in journals, many of them newly founded, proliferate and the criterion 'impact factor', unknown in 'classical' scientific research and publication traditions, dominates the ranking tables of universities and of individual scholars. While there is growing scepticism in advanced academic circles whether this type of quality orientation can actually deliver what it promises, namely, stronger engagement by academics in research and on topics that *have* 'an impact' (e.g. Pusser and Marginson 2013), the development is particularly problematic for social work because of its uncertain boundaries as an academic discipline and its particular research requirements in complex practice situations as discussed above. For many emergent scholars, and not only in CEE countries, this means often having to concentrate on publications that fall into the categories of 'established' academic disciplines, thereby depriving the discipline of social work of a body of scientific literature that would testify to its academic autonomy. Furthermore, social work researchers are having to comply more and more with terms and topics under which research is being funded, which implies that these objectives and issues are already pre-defined and do therefore not arise 'from the bottom up', i.e. in contexts of immediate relevance for social work practice (Gray and Schubert 2010). In this situation strong international coalitions are required between academics who have recognised these dangers and who, from a stronger position in their country, can support colleagues in those countries where the adverse effects of these developments threaten to stifle social work's academic profile building.

5 Social Work in Neoliberal Social Policy Contexts

Similar advantages of cross-country contacts arise in relation to recognising the impact of social policy changes (Lorenz 2017a). Collaboration and mutual support, based on the shared analysis of what changes are happening in social policy nationally and globally, are also becoming a mirror in which to recognise more vividly the role social work is expected to play in making these social policy changes take effect. It might appear superficially that social work's context on both sides is completely different with the East still in the process of building up social support structures and the West engaged in revising and reducing existing welfare systems. But

our observations of developments 'in cross-border perspective' suggest, for instance, that the devaluation of the term 'social' in East and West is everywhere being actively promoted by political parties and governments which support a free market economy model. On both sides, aspects of collective social solidarity are increasingly portrayed as a threat to the freedom of the individual and denounced as relicts of Communism. Social workers in all countries face the risk of becoming enlisted in an agenda of 'activation' (Nothdurfter 2016), meaning that instead of helping citizens to claim their social rights and to build their existence and their potential on the security of such fundamental rights, they are called upon to remind welfare recipients of the conditionality of such supports and to exhort them to 'enterprising behaviour' (Serrano and Magnusson 2007). The divisive effects of such policies and the dilemmas they pose for social workers are again by no means limited to post-communist countries, but they only manifest themselves particularly starkly there. Social workers from those countries report being caught between on the one hand offering social work support as a kind of liberating activity that renders people more autonomous and on the other hand having to operate with implicit or at times even explicit 'threats' in cases of non-compliance with welfare benefit conditions, assertions of power that invoke memories of authoritarian control. These phenomena demonstrate the dominance of economic interests in social policy programmes and amount overall to the development of what has been called a post-Fordist 'Schumpeterian workfare state' or a social investment state (Morel, Palier and Palme 2015) in which 'redistributive welfare rights take second place to a productivist reordering of social policy' (Jessop 2003, cited in Lister 2003: 430). In other words, welfare spending is only justified if it can be shown that it furthers productivity, and this economistic mentality filters through to every social service organisation, whether it is public or non-governmental. Health and education might sometimes benefit from such policy priorities, but what is the economic point of, for instance, investing in the elimination of homelessness?

On both sides of the former divide, the social work profession could no longer be assumed to be making a valuable contribution to the integration of society and came under suspicion that it even formed an obstacle to the well-functioning of a society. The economy-driven policy criteria introduce a pervasive division within societies between those members who are considered to be 'productive' and those who are (or are at risk of becoming) 'unproductive' and hence a 'burden' on society who have no longer a legitimate claim on social protection. At the same time, as the poverty gap widens in societies across Europe, the existence of poverty is by this mechanism being 'legitimated' as an attribute of the poor which in turn feeds attitudes of discrimination and racism. This explains the drastic resurgence of racism against ethnic groups like Roma and Sinti in line with the reduction of social rights (Ferge 2010). Precarious positions of citizens in work and in society in combination with this propaganda account for the attitudes, reported in several countries illustrated in this volume, that people, including social work clients, come to seek again the authoritarian certainties the old regime represented. For this reason, they often cannot accept and cannot cope with the empowering intentions that essentially should characterise social work interventions.

The German sociologist Rosa (2018) analyses this pervasive social phenomenon of late modernity which forms the wider political background for these social work experiences from the perspective of '*Unverfügbarkeit*' (non-availability): with the disappearance of binding structures in the wake of the abolition of collective arrangements, whether in the form of religious, secular scientific, political or cultural authorities or in that of imposed ideologies, people are destined to manage risks out of their own resources but find themselves overloaded and hankering after new 'taken-for-granted' certainties. In this dilemma, one area in which certainty is being vigorously pursued is positivist science which dominates current risk calculations at all levels with a supply of 'facts'. Building often on pseudo-science, this is taken up by politics that purport to offer certainties to legitimate their claims that 'there is no alternative' to their own political stance. The phrase was coined by then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher as her affirmation of neoliberal economics which, in her last year in office 1989, she claimed had 'triumphed' over communism, an event declared by the historian Fukuyama (1992) even to mark 'the end of history'.

However, certainties in terms of life challenges are ultimately never 'available' but require an effort of constantly constructing new solidarity structures, for which a person's individual strengths and resources are not sufficient. Social workers have a key role in assisting people in coping with uncertainties of this existential kind but at the same time have to be in a position to facilitate access to material and human resources, not as charitable benefits but as rights. When these resources are being curtailed and social workers are made to stress self-reliance in clients one-sidedly, their work with marginalised people can lead to further disappointments and resentments which in turn undermine their efforts to give effective support.

6 Populist Politics as a Further Challenge to Social Work

The ambiguity between growing insecurity and the reliance on certainties presented as unquestionable facts is increasingly being instrumentalised by populist politics which lately have become a feature of many European countries, East and West. Apart from operating with the scare of 'opening the floodgates to immigration', these politics feed on the sense of insecurity produced by the dismantling of comprehensive welfare support systems and the growing marketisation of public services while at the same time undermining the social policy commitments of traditional social-democratic parties. They operate with false promises of stability and security through taking recourse to nationalism and racism, without however addressing the causes of the fragmentation of social relations (Berman and Snegovaya 2019). These politics pose a further serious threat to social work and not only because of their discriminatory treatment of the majority of 'typical social work clients'. Populism sets up a polarised political context that devalues essentially the professional and scientifically based mandate of social work. The dualism characteristic of populists' simplifications poses an alternative between the

construct of the totally autonomous individual as the strong, self-reliant person who is capable of looking after himself (with all the gender bias this implies) and who is not a burden to anybody and the glorification of an ethnic or national community which takes care of all the needs of individuals who have an 'inherited' right to belong and can enjoy the security of the collective. Social work cannot support either option but seeks lastly to assist people in negotiating a viable, socially sustainable path between both extremes. People value freedom and need to be independent and at the same time to live constructively in interdependent relationships, with others personally and with societal structures.

These experiences of deep social divisions underline the special role social work has in relation to conflicts and divisions that separate groups of people, be that historical, political, territorial, ethnic, cultural and social divisions. It would be naïve to see social workers only as neutral mediators across divisions, as the ones who make divisions bearable by working out compromises or who decide who deserves to belong on one side or the other. Instead, the examples of this volume show to what extent social workers are always already implicated in divisions and are allocated a position on a distinct side of the border. The professional role of social work invariably touches on political issues and makes social workers political actors, not in a party-political sense but through a constant engagement in the democratic process of securing marginalised people's social citizenship at the 'micro-level' of person-oriented interventions (De Corte and Roose 2018).

Looking at those underlying convergent developments that are taking place in countries that are still building welfare support structures and in those revising and reducing existing structures reveals how precariously social work is positioned in both contexts. Much depends therefore on social workers' ability to recognise the traps laid by both neoliberal activation policies and the exclusionist policies of populist nationalism and to resist becoming instruments of both. These dangers, but also these opportunities for questioning practices that have not yet become too firmly established, are particularly evident in what still amounts to a kind of ongoing laboratory in the fluidity of post-communist societies.

A central role in this regard belongs to civil society processes. Civil society had played a decisive part in the defeat of communist regimes and had in a way paved the way for the direction developments in CEE countries took after 1989 (Tismaneanu 2010). It is therefore significant that many social service initiatives in the period of reconstruction, as in the period of adjusting to industrialisation, have arisen at the level of civil society through non-governmental organisations which came to play an important role in promoting an independent and professional role of social work and which have always been the context in which innovatory methods of social work were created (Zaviršek and Lawrence 2012). But there is a fear that these initiatives, once concretised in institutions, could come under commercial influence and thereby lose their critical and creative potential. As Tismaneanu diagnosed in 2010 with regard to CEE: 'Critical intellectuals seem to have lost much of their moral authority and are often attacked as champions of futility, architects of disaster, or incorrigible daydreamers' (2010: 131). The nature and composition of civil society movements is changing globally, becoming in one sense more spontaneous

through the extensive use of social media which allow the mobilisation of large numbers quasi instantaneously, in the other less 'visionary' and instead more concerned with immediate urgent issues. The ambiguity of the orientation of these movements, which frequently are also promoting or playing into the hands of nationalism and racism, urgently calls for a more active engagement on the part of social workers with their experience of a clear social and community orientation.

7 Conclusion: History, Conflict and Reconciliation

Social work's contribution to the ongoing transformation processes is indeed centred on the profession's historically contingent nature. Social work not only has a highly diverse and meaningful history; it is constantly enmeshed in historical processes which accounts for the diversity with which it manifests itself in international comparisons. By strengthening its own historical awareness and facing up to continuities as well as discontinuities in its own history, it can promote a process which is so badly lacking in the current state of European developments: a critical rather than an idealised, ideologically distorted or indeed an indifferent attitude towards Europe's history. This history in the modern era, apart from carrying the promise of liberation from imposed authorities, is one of enormous failures and guilt, a legacy which derives its particular character from the destructive use of modernity's scientific and technological achievements for the purpose of oppression and domination, whether in the form of colonialism or in those of Nazism, Fascism or Stalinist Communism. Social work is part of this history, for better or worse, but it can draw lessons from its involvement in conflict and with a view to its empowering potential, as, for instance, the experiences social workers are making in Ireland show (see the chapter on Ireland).

Ongoing overt or latent conflicts cannot be resolved without a process of openness and reconciliation in the public sphere (Tismaneanu 2010). Facing honestly up to history has never been easy for European societies (Judt 2002), as this writer can testify having grown up in West Germany in the immediate decades after the Second World War when denial of Nazi crimes was a pervasive public attitude that overshadowed even school curricula. Yet the project of creating a united Europe was initially so successful because it was inspired by a spirit of reconciliation and also of solidarity across former enemy nations. But the current fragmentation of social solidarity, and with it the crisis of Europe, triggered a pervasive crisis of trust which can be observed in societies all across Europe. In this context and in view of these challenges, the mission of social work goes far beyond the solving of social problems and extends directly to the contribution the profession can make to the revival of the European unification project. This perspective on European social work is not at all new if one only remembers that many of the pioneers of the profession were actively engaged in the international peace movement after the First World War and Jane Addams was awarded the Nobel Peace in Price in 1931 as the founder of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom in 1919 (Shields 2017).

It is therefore proposed here that the unique features of social work as a professional activity and hence of its contribution to society consist not in its scientifically established universality, important though this aspect will always be, but in the manner in which academically trained social professionals can engage effectively and critically with varying political, cultural and social contexts in a dynamic process of adaptation and transformation in both directions, in that of a critical questioning of social work's conceptional basis and in that of a critical engagement with social policy developments. Reflecting on social work in Europe in the 30 years after 1989 has given ample impetus for affirming this agenda for European social work.

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Beginning Anew: Social Work Education in the Czech Republic After the Velvet Revolution

Oldřich Matoušek and Zuzana Havrdová

1 Introduction

The transformation and reorganisation of institutions in the Czech Republic including those providing education in social work followed fairly well-designed plans. However, the results depended on what values and normative expectations in the wider social environment influenced these developments. Therefore Skovajsa (2006) distinguishes between institutional and cultural transformations that occur during the transformation of a society and this will guide our analysis of social work and its education after the Velvet Revolution.

2 Society and Social Work Before the Velvet Revolution

Czechoslovakia's culture before the Velvet Revolution was far from uniform. Twenty years before 1989, the ruling ideology created the picture of a well-functioning society which had almost no correspondence to reality. Work and housing were secured, and a moderate level of quality of life was guaranteed. People who did not work, had no place to live, abused alcohol or protested openly were labelled 'non-adaptive'. 'Deviants' could be treated as psychiatric patients, be imprisoned, even expelled from the country. People with severe disability,

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elderly and psychiatric patients were removed into ‘invisible’ residential homes in the periphery. After the Soviet invasion in 1968, even the majority of left-minded citizens, who until then believed that socialist ideas were valid and were only incorrectly applied, grew more cautious with their political views. The defence strategies of the various population groups, even those who managed to conform with the requirements of the regime, came under great pressure from the systems of surveillance exercised by the Communist Party which had collaborators everywhere, in schools and academic institutions, in factories and in the so-called street committees with a mandate to ‘re-educate’ those ‘non-adaptive people’ (Voňková 1980). Only the bravest individuals were willing to resist the regime openly because surveillance was accompanied by autocratic decisions, e.g. which children were allowed to study or if families could stay in their flats. As Marada (2003) points out, this prevented the negotiation of alternatives through open public dialogue. Skovajsa (2001) distinguishes four layers of ‘culture’ characteristic for the period between 1970 and 1989 and with echoes thereafter: acceptance, adaptation, escape and protest. We will apply adaptation and acceptance as the cultural layers that have also pervaded social work and analyse how they resonated with European values of social work.

After the invasion in 1968, many people had to leave their posts, and those who took their place demonstrated all the now required signs of loyalty. These highly adaptive and ambitious people were then perceived by others as both collaborators and as vermin, and at the beginning of the 1990s they met with ostracism. Nevertheless, many benefited from their past positions and contacts and also began to quietly benefit from the new regime. For these people, however, social work was not an attractive field until 20 years later, when registration became obligatory in health and social care.

One subcategory of adaptation could be called ‘silent disagreement’. Those who did not agree with open forms of protest coped by self-censorship instead of direct confrontation with the regime. They remained ‘in the grey zone’, in their places, in their professions, with greater or lesser creativity and maintaining sporadic contacts with other countries. In this way sometimes innovative forms of health and social care emerged. For instance, a system of alcohol treatment was developed using the principle of the Therapeutic Community, or day centres for psychiatric patients, telephone helplines, personal social support for discharged prisoners, a regional network of matrimonial and pre-marital counselling, a crisis assistance centre for abused children, etc. After the regime change, many of the protagonists of this silent disagreement culture became carriers of rapid change by being professionally and often linguistically prepared to show the necessary attitudes and values – such as active commitment, creativity, flexibility, willingness to learn, to work beyond normal expectations and a preference for non-authoritarian approaches.

A different version of adaptation in people’s behaviour was an attitude for which Czech has the expression *švejkování* after the character of Švejk from the famous novel by Jaroslav Hasek (Hašek et al. 1965), and the so-called Potemkinades, creating ‘Potemkin villages’, i.e. facades which give the illusion of prosperity while

hiding miserable conditions. Švejk's fictional character responded to conditions in the army of the crumbling Austro-Hungarian Empire during the First World War with grotesquely ironic behaviour by externally pretending loyalty while internally living rejection and passive resistance. Both *švejkování* and Potemkinades are symptoms of serious alienation between citizens and the state, a form of learned helplessness, ultimately leading to moral decline. It signals an escape from civic participation and the negation of authority by seeking to circumvent the established rules in a given situation.

These pathological cultural features still prevailed after 1989 and recently tune in well with the post-modern decline of great ideals, an all-pervasive disavowal of norms and the discrediting and lack of trust in institutions in general. After 30 years of transformations, these features are still present in Czech society as evidenced, e.g. in the European Social Survey (Rabušic and Chromková 2018).

Social workers were part of the system as 'civil servants' who had to regulate the lives of people, with all the moral risks and challenges attached (Beyerl 1980). They were educated only at high school level in Prague and Ostrava with no contact with academic discourses in Western countries, but some continued to study pedagogy at the university or became lawyers or criminologists and were looking for ways to develop better social assistance for people.

Only in healthcare was there less authoritarian state interference where a few doctors and psychologists concerned themselves also with the social context of their patients (e.g. Dunovský and Stolinová 1974), and even some initiatives of individual and group psychotherapy and counselling were tolerated. And already in 1967 (!), a support system for discharged prisoners was planned, not implemented until the 1980s. However, few candidates for these positions were found and roles differed significantly from those of social workers in the children's and youth departments. Some politically ostracised intellectuals found employment here and their work gained a very good reputation as one of the acceptable models of social work practice that continued after 1989.

3 New Beginning

After 1989, the political system was rebuilt from the ground up but with minimal capital in the form of necessary knowledge and competences. Neoliberal rhetoric emphasising freedom, individual autonomy and responsibility sounded attractive and resonated also, e.g. in the field of work with disadvantaged people, and this at first not purely as a money-saving strategy. The hope was that the state could provide better and more humane care to citizens and respect their freedom and human dignity. These values, missed by the majority of people under state paternalism before 1989, shaped the new empowering discourse of help.

The decision to create a system of tertiary education for social workers in a still 'revolutionary' climate accelerated the development of university departments and

colleges[1] of social work under the political patronage of I. Tomeš (the then deputy minister of Labour and Social Affairs). With the help of foreign experts and internships abroad, teams of teachers formed and began to gradually get accustomed to the new approach to social work. Practitioners as high school graduates soon became involved in social work education as did graduates from psychology, pedagogy and sociology who understood the significance of social work although had only a vague idea about the methods the field uses and about the ways in which it differs from other 'helping professions'.

The freedom of movement and newly created or renewed contacts with partners abroad, particularly the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Germany, Austria, the UK and the USA, significantly helped social work educators to get acquainted with their values, principles and methods of social work. Comparisons showed that the Czech service system was fragmentary and called for systematic expansion to also create practice training opportunities for students of social work. But new spaces for creative work were opening up for experts and enthusiastic volunteers under the title of 'projects'. Legislative frameworks and rules shaping the activities of the non-profit sector and of schools were established later.

The Czech Republic and other post-communist countries became a laboratory for the implementation of ideas generated in professional debates and practices in other countries.

4 Systemic Changes

4.1 Changes in the Structure of Social Services

In the early days after the Revolution, workers ready for change generally oscillated between feeling 'that we have missed the train' and being fascinated by the new opportunities and possibilities for catching up.

Experts from the USA, Israel, Norway, Denmark, Austria, Germany or the Netherlands shared their know-how, intentions and principles with colleagues in the Czech Republic who had different professional and educational backgrounds. Through visits, internships and conferences, Czech personnel could form their own notion of social work and practise it in newly founded organisations, often learning from mistakes. A whole range of organisational forms, approaches and methods of European and American social work were introduced in the Czech Republic with all the diversity and inconsistency of professional identities (Lorenz 2017; Askeland and Payne 2017).

[1] The college has a similar concept as Fachhochschulen in Germany (Vyšší odborná škola (VOŠ)), but it does not have the status of a university. The mixed status of VOŠ causes problems, because it is at the same time a post-secondary school, which is lower than bachelor, but it belongs to tertiary education and according to ISCED the level of education is the same as bachelor. VOŠ started in 1995 in the CR.

Because these exchanges most often took place in English, new terms came into use in the Czech context, and they were sometimes not understood in their original meaning or were re-interpreted. This freshness of the Czechs' understanding was sometimes inspirational even for colleagues abroad.

On the organisational level, lively contacts with other countries in the first decade after the Revolution led to a rapid founding of new non-governmental, non-profit and church organisations in cooperation with foundations or private donors abroad. The majority of them were then (and in many cases still remain) dependent on assistance from abroad. State subsidies and contributions from the European Union came later. According to a survey from 2015, of the 2500 providers of social services in the Czech Republic, only 30% were established by the state or local administrations. Of the 33 types of social services currently defined by law, only 6 types had been allowed to exist in some form before 1989. In 2015, there were about 17,000 social workers in the Czech Republic, most of them in state organisations. 36% of all social workers work in social services, only 600 work in healthcare, 450 in education and 116 in prison services (Národní strategie 2015). While before 1989, there were only few alternatives to residential care and the state monopolised all care, gradually many types of out-patient and field services were developed by diverse providers including the civil sector. In residential services, municipalities and districts began to play an important role alongside the rise in the number of private providers in recent years.

Despite these successful organisational changes, the social and organisational culture, attitudes and values began to show 'path dependency' and are likely to affect social work for years to come. On visits to foreign social service organisations, Czech social workers often found the work models non-transferable because they were established in completely different societal conditions. They sometimes described their experience as a 'visit to another planet'. The influence of authoritarian and discriminative public discourses was felt both in the attitudes of the public towards risk groups, particularly Roma people and immigrants, as well as in the attitudes of certain social workers and social caregivers who grappled with the discrepancy between empowering approaches and traditional controlling methods. Path dependency affected particularly personnel in healthcare, education and prison services which had existed before 1989. The majority of managers in hospitals expect social workers to mainly perform administrative tasks related to documentation, assist patients in applying for benefits, organise funerals, etc. and are slow to replace social workers with only high school diplomas with university graduates. Since the end of the 1990s, it has become clear that change in the organisational culture in areas in which social workers worked already during the former regime is very slow and complicated. The issue of attitudes, values, management and leadership in social work as part of a multidisciplinary team committed to overcoming those cultural discrepancies has become an issue addressed, for instance, by the new Master programme in Management and Supervision in social and health organisations at Charles University.

4.2 Conceptual and Legislative Changes in the Period of Post-revolutionary Stabilisation

By 2000, the 'new social workers', who had studied after 1989, began influencing the values, principles and legislation concerning social work particularly in social services. Concepts such as empowerment, de-institutionalisation, tailor-made services, quality standards, service networking, case conferences, care planning, etc. entered the Czech professional and social policy debate. With political support, a team of social workers at the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs under Milena Jabůrková promoted reforms inspired by concepts common in European social work like autonomy and dignity of the users of social services and including principles of democratic negotiations and extensive participation of academics and practitioners in the reconstruction of the field. They sought to shift attitudes towards clients from perceiving them as the object of care to carriers of rights who play an essential role in constructing their path towards improving their own situation.

The interest in citizens' and clients' rights and their autonomy has intensified as a result of preparations for EU accession and wider legislative changes. A White Paper on Social Services[2] was adopted in 2003, which established principles of independence and autonomy, social inclusion, respect for needs or equality of access along lines characterising social service developments in other European countries (White Paper 2003). This new social policy orientation encouraged workers intending to work in this spirit.

Another milestone was the first version of 'Standards of quality in social services' developed over several years of discussions with hundreds of social workers and caregivers. It heralded a client-oriented culture by promoting 'personal growth and user independence' (Standardy kvality 2002). It sought to support employees to act professionally and to adopt ethical standards and improve service conditions by defining quality standards according to user preferences.

In 2006 the Social Services Act 108/2006 was adopted which introduced a binding typology of social services with mandatory registration of services and a quality control system with verification. It included care allowance paid directly to clients or caregivers as a new measure to enable them to decide on the form of care needed and to cover its costs. The law defined two professional positions in social services: social workers (who have to have a 3-year post-secondary education at a university or social work college) and so-called social service workers with only 200 hours in-service training.

There were divided reactions by social workers to these developments. Those who had participated in defining quality standards or shared their values welcomed them as promoting the proper functioning of organisations and good services to clients. Those who were unable to relate to these values, not having understood them despite many training opportunities and support, regarded them as purely

[2] A consultational document issued by the government in 2003 to raise discussion among interested parties on local and central levels on social issues.

administrative measures bringing additional administrative stress. They staged the 'Potemkinade' of producing documents for inspection without team discussion and changing actual practice which seriously impedes effective reforms.

In 2008 at the initiative of Tereza Kloučková, social worker at the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, non-institutional forms of care were promoted with EU funds. Institutional care was declared to be limited to the necessary minimum in the near future – a process which still depends on political will and finances.

Bringing the living conditions of disadvantaged children and adults, and particularly those with disabilities, closer to normality was relatively successful in recent years except for institutional facilities for children, with their long tradition under communism. For psychiatric patients, a project to create community mental health centres was launched in 2019, which should take a leading role in the care for people with mental illness and reduce psychiatric hospital inpatient numbers (Národní strategie 2015).

The cultural visions contained in the Social Services Standards have been realised in many services. But it was precisely their implementation with the emphasis on empowering and respecting clients, which made 'path-dependent' resistance to change more evident in some service segments.

5 Social Work Methods and Professionalism Clashing with 'Cultural Residues'

Frost (2008) considers that part of the shared identity of social workers in Western and Northern Europe after the Second World War is rejection of top-down approaches. Instead professional ethics demand bottom-up approaches. This resonated also in the Czech Republic after the Revolution. Accordingly, Kurt Ludewig's (1993, 2002) systemic approach became popular, popularised by Úlehla (2009). He distinguished top-down 'control' from bottom-up approaches called 'help' and linked social workers' professionalism primarily with 'help'. The principle of empowerment and respect for client autonomy was central to the formation of social work students in the early post-revolutionary years in almost all Czech schools and in legislation. Community work as a bottom-up approach also clashes with authoritarian cultural remnants and had no precedents under communism. Although several teachers and practitioners promote community work, it is evident that, despite urgent problems with marginalised neighbourhoods and examples of successful community work projects (documented in a booklet edited for the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs by Havrdová 2015) and renewed efforts to demonstrate its value (e.g. at Ostrava University, Stanková and Gojová 2018), society is not ready yet to value this method and prefers top-down solutions like casework. This may have different causes: 'neighbourliness' is difficult to develop and people tend to guard their privacy or still fear informers which were common in neighbourhoods during socialism. There is also little experience in constructing a free and safe public sphere of interaction and shared decision-making.

This lack of trust in safe public discourses probably also hindered the development of volunteering. Where voluntary social engagement exists in the Czech Republic, it tends to involve mainly students of helping professions or members of church congregations. Society lacks the experience that people can do something publicly and constructively for others or sees it as a kind of succumbing to authority like that of street brigades commanded by the street committees during communism. Economically, it is also difficult for citizens to make ends meet and free time is still largely dedicated to securing basic needs. Secularisation presents another obstacle to the expansion of volunteerism. The percentage of religiously non-affiliated people in Czech society is the highest in Europe.

6 Contemporary Debate on the Profession

The image of social workers as agents of the repressive state still survives in society and among professionals. Low wages for professionals and insufficient support from their own organisations in disputed cases lead to demoralisation, particularly in social workers employed by the state, leading often to 'defensive practice' when compliance with the letter of the law and other formal requirements is given preference over the needs of clients (Hejnová 2019).

Professional social workers lack strong and influential representation which could push for better working conditions and improve their public image. The rapid development was not conducive to the emergence of a single platform for a shared professional identity of social workers. Although there were umbrella organisations of social workers after the Revolution, there are now several, each with only a few dozen members. Some areas of social work have developed their own training courses and associations (e.g. streetwork, work with drug addicts, family counselling). Since 2003, there has been a debate, recently suspended for political reasons, on the necessity and form of a law governing professions providing for professional chambers with compulsory registration to which social workers take an inconsistent stance. Proponents of a compulsory professional chamber argue this ensures the quality, prestige and growth of professional social work. Opponents warn that this will only create new power positions and control over the performance of social work and professional group selfishness so that professional loyalty would prevail over clients' needs (Hůle 2015; Kodymová et al. 2012; Suda 2014).

While significant strata of social work in the free world after the Second World War remained outside the state bureaucratic system with its rigid rules and political interests in order to preserve the possibility of self-reflection and critical reflections on the state's social policy, many new social workers in the Czech Republic have not taken such an independent position. They believed that by working closely with the state administration, they would gain a number of benefits for their professional field and for themselves. They often succeeded, thanks to personal ties and the widespread culture of clientelism. Marada (2005) warns against vague values and inconsistency concerning attitudes often shown by representatives of the non-profit sector when participating in political deci-

sion-making. It is questionable however if the experience articulated by social workers in countries with longer democratic traditions receives now more attention.

7 Social Work Education

7.1 The Phase of Post-revolutionary Enthusiasm

Soon after the Revolution, three teams of future university teachers formed in Prague, Brno and Bratislava, later joined by colleagues from the universities in Olomouc and Ostrava. Pioneers like J. Šiklová, I. Tomeš, I. Možný and V. Labáth invited a further 20 personalities from various fields to participate in this beginning. In the late 1990s, colleagues from Hradec Králové, Pardubice, Ústí nad Labem and České Budějovice and later still from Plzeň started study initiatives. Currently, social work is taught at 7 universities and about 20 colleges. Contacts with Hogeschool de Horst in Driebergen, which were organised on the Dutch side by Jef Helmer, provided great benefits for the first three universities. During numerous visits of Czech teachers to the school, local teachers had the opportunity to share their professional experience. These visits later expanded to include organisations providing social services in the Netherlands.

Early curricula were oriented on the needs of newly emerging departments and service organisations but each university developed distinct priorities. The Brno department consisted of sociologists (Mareš, Rabušic, Musil) whose primary focus was research of the labour market and unemployment; in Bratislava social work was built on the discipline of pedagogy including counselling and therapy (Gabura, Pružinská), sociology (Kovářová) and social policy (Strieženec).

The Prague university department evolved since the beginning in the spirit of civic engagement; its first Head of Department, J. Šiklová, was a dissident in the past regime. Other founding members were Tomeš, Hartl, Kučerová, Havrdová, Matoušek and Červenáková who covered a broad spectrum of fields including social work methods and social policy. Teaching social work methods and practice was based on reflective dialogue between lecturers and students giving concepts and methods of empowerment in individual, group and community contexts great importance to promote autonomous negotiations between social workers, state and society. The action learning approach was systematically developed in collaboration with international colleagues, on community work (Leida Shuuringa from the Netherlands, 1993) or inclusion of people with disability (JDC Institute from Israel, 1994), approaches deepened by internships abroad which became possible.

The first cohort of students were mainly middle-aged and were already involved in social activities but had not been able to study before. They saw this as a unique opportunity to identify themselves with new developments. With their experience, they were a valuable source of feedback, and they often contributed contents and shaped forms of teaching out of which approaches of group supervision developed. Most of them became pioneers of new methods and founders of new organisations.

For the first 10 years, foreign articles and books were perceived as hard to access resources; although some were translated, Czech textbooks and teaching materials had to be written.

Teachers as well as students were excited by the pace of developments and visible results in practice. Soon the further development of services required also management skills and supervision to secure professionalism and an ethical orientation. Consequently in 1999, Z. Havrdová started a Master programme on Management and Supervision in social and health organisations with action learning as the key approach.

7.2 Securing Standards for Tertiary Education

In 1993, the Association of Educators in Social Work (ASVSP) was founded, representing almost all university departments and colleges which provide education to social workers in the Czech Republic, to promote education which meets the requirements for the complex tasks of social workers. In the early 1990s, the founding schools wanted to prevent social work from being taught at schools like engineering departments which did not relate to social work. Parallel to that, minimum standards for education were established as part of the PHARE project and in cooperation with foreign experts. The standards, negotiated in difficult and often controversial discussions, included 11 broad topics, like philosophy and ethics, introduction to sociology and psychology, theories and methods of social work, social policy, research methods, work with minorities or professional practice, and described in detail the approach, the goal, knowledge, skills and learning outcomes (see Minimální vzdělávací standardy ASVSP). The participation of colleagues from abroad in this process was significant in securing the importance of practice, particularly at universities.

Members of ASVSP organise training for academic staff and also mutual consultations to ensure that minimum standards of education in social work are being met, to strengthen cooperation between schools and the teachers in this field, to deal with difficulties and to share experience. The Association also takes position on matters relating to groups of citizens at risk.

Through the Association, the manual on organising and guiding practice was written (Havrdová 1995), practice seminars were organised, and supervision started to be used in schools across the country. Care for the practice placements, introducing contracts between placements and schools or courses for practice teachers contributed to building a common discourse.

In 1997–1999, a team of teachers from a number of schools and practitioners from several regions formulated competences for social work practice (Havrdová 1999), emphasising the reflexive nature of work instead of the mechanical application of standards. This gradually created a common language for social work practice to which also the monograph on student practices contributed that integrated experience from the Czech Republic, Israel and Germany (Maroon et al. 2007).

The minimum standards were accepted as binding by ASVSP for educational programmes at universities and colleges and were used by the Accreditation Committee of the Ministry of Education and the National Accreditation Institute for its university course evaluations. The minimum educational standard is now perceived as partially reached with ongoing gradual adjustments in consultation with associations of social workers and employers, with equal standards for university and third-level courses. However, with the emphasis in accreditation shifting towards 'learning outcomes', not all academics approve of standardisation; some see the trend of quantifying competences and knowledge as an attempt to 'Taylorise' professional education. Furthermore, the academic performance of teachers does not have to correlate with learning outcomes in terms of professional competences. Lecturers at colleges are under less pressure regarding their academic performance and can respect practice requirements more.

Further work on standards forms part of the 2019 research project PROSOTAČR at three Czech universities in collaboration with experts from Denmark, Germany, the UK and Switzerland. The project has two objectives: to describe the state of professionalisation through a representative sample of Czech social workers and to describe schematically all existing and new positions available to social workers in the labour market.

To satisfy the need for original teaching material, a team led by Oldřich Matoušek published a series of 8 textbooks during the early post-revolutionary years with the financial support of Dutch sources. They discussed topics such as the welfare state, social policy, methods of social work in general, institutional care, the process of counselling, support of families, unemployment and youth at risk (followed up by Matoušek et al. 2001, 2003, 2005).

7.3 Current Practice Issues and Their Educational Relevance

The publication of *The Encyclopedia of Social Work* by 88 authors of academic and practice backgrounds (Matoušek et al. 2013) was an attempt to define the field comprehensively. Comparisons with similar works from around the world show that the influence of English language sources is massive in Czech professional discourses. The work mainly describes and reflects on concepts and models that influenced Australia, Scandinavia, the UK and the USA. Germany, Austria and Poland, countries geographically much closer to the Czech Republic, had a much smaller influence on the encyclopaedia entries. Other foreign influences are quite sporadic.

The evaluation of academic performance is adjusted to international practice at all universities. Besides the habitual scientometrical evaluation of research and publication activities, the first round of the qualitative evaluation by foreign experts has started at some Czech universities in 2019.

Some universities introduce educational programmes on social policy or social work in English to accommodate participants of the ERASMUS programme.

Post-graduate education of social workers is an area in need of fundamental change. At present, there are hundreds of courses on offer which are accredited by the relevant ministries (Labour and Social Affairs, Interior, Education, Youth and Sports) without control of professional learning outcomes.

After social work education had been consolidated around 2000, it became 'normal' for courses to cooperate with Western colleagues on an equal base as partners in international projects. Students and teachers of BA and MA programmes participate in internships at universities abroad within the framework of the ERASMUS programme with intensive programmes and summer schools being particularly attractive. The ERASMUS (plus) and LLP programmes have created opportunity to develop collaborative teams across cultures from different universities (e.g. Prague with Finland, Portugal, Scotland, Germany) which bring an intensive cross-cultural learning and sharing of innovations in research, content of education, didactic skills (e.g. action learning, e-learning, e-conferences) and common publications among all partners (Havrdová et al. 2016). Some colleges also have long-term contacts with European schools of social work. Hosting lecturers from European countries at universities is supported by inter-university agreements.

Doctoral programmes are currently accredited at three Czech universities. In all of them, experts from various European countries are members of the scientific boards making a very important contribution to internationalisation. International student internships are part of doctoral programme requirements as well as publications and presentations at international conferences.

7.4 Research

The Institute for Labour and Social Affairs and the Institute of Criminology and Social Prevention conduct research relevant to their fields. Their research reports are available online. The European Research Institute for Social Work (ERIS) was co-founded at the University of Ostrava. The range of topics covered by ERIS monographs is pan-European (e.g. Erath and Littlechild 2010; Hämäläinen et al. 2012). Research also takes place at other universities with the backing of public or university-specific grant schemes. Some grants are linked with the European funding programme; the majority of research grants is however financed by local grant agencies (the Czech Science Foundation (GAČR); the Technology Agency of the Czech Republic (TAČR)). There are also a number of private agencies that conduct research in the fields of social policy and social work.

7.5 Specialised Publications and Conferences

Several Czech publishing houses produce publications important both for social work students and practitioners. The largest body of literature in the last 20 years has been published by the Salesian publishing house Portál. The vast majority are

works by Czech authors who draw upon foreign literature. Since the Revolution in 1989, only a few translated specialised publications have been published.

The journals *Sociální práce/Sociálna práca* (published by ASVSP) and *Forum of Social Work* (published by the Faculty of Arts of Charles University, Prague) are specialised peer-reviewed journals. Both journals publish also papers by foreign authors.

There is a rich and regular programme of national and local conferences as well as of major conferences with international participation with the University of Ostrava being most active in this regard. These conferences are a forum at which academics from many countries, including from the former Soviet Bloc, meet and inspire one another.

8 Conclusion

The transformation of educational institutions in social work after 1989 was fast and relatively successful. The assistance of experts in the development of social work and social services from many countries, supported by European Union funds, was enormous. Without reference to practice examples, know-how and funding, the development would have been much slower. Our analysis has shown however that the cultural transformation necessary for the full realisation of European social work values had to face many obstacles and still is far from completed. On the one hand, the multilayered culture of the previous regime has accelerated the development of social work and education, mainly due to the professional and linguistic readiness of many professionals from bordering disciplines who resonated with the values of European social work and contributed their own experience and commitment to their implementation in the Czech Republic. Because social work in Western countries functioned under different economic, legislative and personal conditions, Czech educators had to determine their own approaches, priorities and timing and develop local strategies to engage political, economic and professional stakeholders in the implementation of these values. For the well-educated and creative professionals, this was a challenge which they were prepared to face. On the other hand, numerous cultural residues of the past regime obstructed this development such as a top-down authoritarian approach, a constitutional culture dehumanising both clients and workers, distrust of institutions and public involvement, attitudes towards Roma and immigrants. There are issues shared also by colleagues in other countries such as the uncertain identity and mission of social work in public and political perception, variations in focus and level of education of social workers, tensions between the academic demands of social work education and practice needs, the ambiguous role of professional chambers and associations in terms of selfish interests. These are concerns to be discussed across borders of European countries within a broad and global understanding of core values and principles of European social work. As in all countries undergoing transformation, including Western countries, the form of a particular institutional solution must be negotiated locally in order to be implemented sensitively and with respect to a specific social culture and economic-political situation.

Within this Europe-wide struggle, the expertise of countries of the former Eastern Bloc can perhaps serve as inspiration because of their perseverance and creativity in embodying the values of European social work in difficult cultural and economic conditions. And in this respect, Western countries can be inspirational for their anticipation of threats as well as awareness of new possibilities for fostering these values in the ongoing development of democracies and a globalised economy. The opening of borders after 1989 has thankfully 'normalised' shared discussions and collaborative partnerships between East and West, enabling both sides to prepare for common challenges in which social work is particularly implicated as a valuable resource.

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Nurturing Opportunities to Advance the European Values in Specific Contexts—Examples from the Czech Republic

Matěj Lejsal and Zuzana Havrdová

1 Introduction

The ending of the authoritarian communist regime in 1989 opened spaces where on the one hand anti-democratic stereotypes and authoritarian habits were maintained, which had prevailed during the 40 years under one-party rule, while on the other hand the opportunity to advance suppressed ideals of a fair society like democratic power sharing, fairness, human dignity, opportunities for open learning and dissemination of information and real social solidarity could be pursued. One of the key principles introduced into Czech social welfare policy and practice from democratic parts of Europe was participation leading to empowerment and civil rights of disadvantaged people. Participation means different forms of active involvement leading to greater choice, more power and decision-making (Adams 2008).

Working with this concept resulted from newly opened borders in the early 1990s which allowed intensive knowledge transfer, study visits abroad and visits by invited experts to the Czech Republic. This could be noted not only in the rapid growth of the civil society sector, some of which emphasised participation principles,[1] but also in stronger social welfare advocacy and networking initiatives. This principle was applied in international collaboration projects[2] and became an essential part of

[1] Statistics of the number of NGOs in 1990–2012 according to Czech Statistical Office data.

[2] One for all: Czech-British project 'Support of Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in the reform of social services' 2000–2003. 'White book of social services' as a significant output of the project has influenced the further development of a participative culture in Czech social services.

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policy papers expressing a deeper integration in European collaboration programmes such as PHARE[3] or the European Social Fund (ESF).

In this chapter we shall focus on two examples of promoting participation and related values through social work attitudes and skills like reflective communication, participative decision-making, collaboration and mutual feedback. One example will focus on developing palliative care in homes for elderly persons, illustrating the struggle for participation and empowerment on the level of service users. The second example will follow the development of supervision as a tool for participation and empowerment in social work students and employees in social service organisations. Both stories describe the implementation of the principle of participation during the process of professionalisation and institutionalisation whereby institutionalisation means here becoming a recognised part of the social political system through the regulation of supra-individual behaviour within an organisation or system (Keman 2017) as in the cases of residential palliative care and professional supervision in social work.

2 Residential Elderly Services: Climbing the 'Ladder of Participation'

Participation builds on the key values of human dignity and the rights of citizens.[4] Since 1989, social work in homes for the elderly has achieved considerable progress from the lowest 'manipulation' stage towards 'partnership' according to Arnstein's 'ladder of participation' (Arnstein 1969). In partnership the key element of human dignity as the right of self-determination finds expression in the practice of advance care planning.

The criterion of grades of participation allows us to trace improvements in conditions of social care provision in legislation in the evolution of attitudes of social service staff towards individuals and to identify shifts in this direction in terms of competences of social workers and other professionals. Besides concretely manifesting such progress in the institutional environment, participation symbolises a gradual taking of control of the 'keys to active citizenship' (Duffy 2003).

2.1 Evolving Conditions

Social work is a field in which two fundamentally different aspects of the law meet: private law and public law. Application of one can, in some cases, be in direct conflict with the other. One source of this conflict can be found in the post-totalitarian

[3] The PHARE programme was a pre-accession instrument of the European Union assisting the Czech Republic and other accession countries of Central and Eastern Europe in their preparations for joining the European Union.

[4] Two key documents are the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the European Social Charter.

Constitution of the Czech Republic of 1992. In its Article 2, paragraph 3 the Constitution states that:

> State authority is to serve all citizens and may be asserted only in cases, within the bounds, and in the manner provided for by law. All citizens may do that which is not prohibited by law; and nobody may be compelled to do that which is not imposed upon them by law.

Although the legal environment of the Czech Republic has been changing gradually after 1989, the original Social Security Act (Act 100/1988), dating back to the communist era, remained in force throughout the 1990s without any fundamental amendments. All homes, then called 'social care institutes for senior citizens', were guaranteed and run by the state. Participation of care-dependent seniors was effectively limited to 'take it or leave it' decision-making. Service delivery was by administrative decisions of district offices on 'placement in a social care home' for a specific price. The language used ('decision to place') reflected the manipulative exercise of power, which was also evident in the manner in which care itself was provided. The law provided a de facto description of a typical recipient of assistance, and services were calibrated to this 'average' type, not to the needs of individuals. Thus, in sharp conflict with constitutional principles, persons depending on help were forced to accept the conditions set by the state without being obliged to take up the service.

2.2 Participative Activism Versus Rigidity of Systems and Authorities

As soon as new social services began to form in 1990, new organisations of civil society asserted themselves. This was a period when new types of services and a new understanding of social services emerged. However, between 1990 and 2006, the conflict between approaches applying private and public (totalitarian) law became apparent in the fields of social security and care. Emerging civil society organisations (foundations, clubs, revived church organisations, etc.) providing care to senior citizens introduced new attitudes, new approaches, new techniques and forms of practice, for instance, by signing written contracts with clients on the extent and content of the services provided. From the point of participation, this element of self-determination was an important shift in the direction of human dignity. Their mandate was in effect legitimated by one sentence of the then social security law, 'Senior citizens may also receive necessary care in day-care institutions, or optionally in other social care institutions' (§89 of the Social Security Act 100/1988). Because authoritarianism, centralism and paternalism not only in social welfare had been the dominant approach during the 40 years of totalitarianism under the guise of 'social protection', spontaneity, civic activity and the entire changing social, legal and cultural climate were extremely challenging for social welfare officials for whom civic initiatives were inconceivable or suspicious. This lack of understanding together with a general uncertainty outweighed the potential

benefit of taking shared responsibility for solving urgent social issues. The reluctance of the authorities to accept a more elastic interpretation of the law manifested itself in financial and 'paperwork' controls and limited access to public funding by new service providers.

The authoritarian communist regime had denied the existence of social problems (e.g. unemployment) that cast doubt on the official appearance of 'prosperity' with the slogan 'what I don't see does not exist'. Care for people with disability took place literally behind the walls and closed doors of institutes, often in former mansions or monasteries in remote villages or secluded forests. Those who did not want to adapt and take advantage of the solutions offered were 'punished' by even greater social exclusion.

The Velvet Revolution brought about an overall relaxation of the atmosphere, which made it possible to admit that many social problems existed, to name and thereby start solving them. Existing informal or self-help initiatives by users (e.g. families caring for children with disability) could now be formalised and subsequently professionalised, mostly incorporated as civic associations. Individuals who were considered by the previous regime as dissidents for criticising the quality of life of inmates of institutions (Cháb et al. 2004) became initiators of new forms of social services. Through the opening of borders support from Western Europe in the form of financial donations, sharing of experience and knowledge became a significant accelerator of change. The advancement of services sensitive to the needs of individuals had to overcome not only legal obstacles but also those created by bureaucratic procedures when, for instance, funding decisions were based on the 'opinion' of public administrators which did not necessarily reflect 'good practice'.

2.3 Fragmented Care Schemes Versus Complex Needs

The greater focus on clients' needs highlighted also the growing discrepancy between a coordinated interdisciplinary approach and strict segregation between 'social' and 'health' administration, legislation and financial schemes. Stronger or bigger organisations working on a national level, often with foreign links (*Caritas Czech Republic*, *Diaconia*, etc.), were in a better position as they had financial as well as methodical support from abroad. They used this position to lead the entire field (see Sect. 3.4) and to pilot new approaches.

After 2000, the Ministry, probably due to an incorrect understanding of the concept of 'de-medicalisation' of social services, started to strongly oppose employing health-care workers in homes providing social care, but this did not reflect a changed view of the character and scope of users' needs. Long-term care for care-dependent seniors is fundamentally an interdisciplinary concern. The conditions for applying for funding from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (2004) simply state that 'the wages of health care workers may not be covered from the grant'. Therefore, ensuring dignified conditions for the end of life of geriatrically fragile or chronically ill persons required a creative and courageous endeavour. Certain islands of

'underground initiatives' began to emerge, which used work methods common in other parts of Europe but not specified by Czech law and thus technically 'illegal'. Service managers handled this variously: Sometimes numbers of nursing staff in 'social' long-term care facilities were reduced, or nurses were dismissed or renamed as 'workers providing complex care for elderly persons' in order to ensure funding.[5] But these efforts to maintain existing services in turn often created obstacles for progress.[6] Nevertheless, several initiatives introduced holistic approaches to quality of life and interdisciplinary collaboration, often working on small-scale projects highly dependent on private donors and unaware of one another, thereby unable to share and spread these budding 'good practices'.[7]

2.4 From Passive Recipient to Contracting Customer

The year 2006 saw a major shift in legislation when the Social Services Act 108/2006 was passed, which remains in place without major amendments. This was a response to the changing perception of the role of social services in society and in the life of individuals. The new Act formally confirmed and emphasised a number of key values and principles largely common in EU welfare states and expressed in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU (2012/C 326/02). These comprise 'horizontal' principles such as democracy, equality, sustainability and good governance and emphasis on human dignity, respect for the individual's needs, interests, rights and freedoms.

The new Act reflected the legally passive position of individuals within social services and particularly in institutions providing social care which had prevailed until then. The old attitude was summarised in an explanatory memorandum to the law: 'The individual is seen as an object within the system rather than an active participant, whose objectivized needs and whose will to solve situations ought to be essential in determining the form of assistance' (Parliament 2006: 104). It integrated new forms of services developed by the non-profit sector: field and outreach services, preventive services and counselling. Another element was the stipulation that the relationship between an individual, the 'user', and the provider of a service be of a contractual nature. Participation approaches at individual and community level were incorporated as well as the standards of quality of social services.

[5] A specific example from the Sue Ryder Nursing Home in Prague.

[6] For example, nurses employed as 'providers of complex care for elderly persons' could not include this period into the total period of their professional life.

[7] For instance, Markéta Bowe, earlier Nováková, M.A., played an essential role in this respect in the Sue Ryder Home. Having been head of social services, general nurse and social worker with experience from a British hospice, she applied this approach in her everyday work already in 1998, including in the selection and management of a team of co-workers. But there had not been capacity to network and develop a stronger initiative.

The law recognised social work as a specific profession.[8] Even though the Act introduced relatively broad prerequisites for the practice of social work, it did introduce an important change: besides practical activities (social enquiry, counselling, management of social planning, crisis assistance, etc.), the Act stipulates that social workers perform 'analytical, methodical and conceptual activities in the social field' (§108 Act on Social Services 108/2006) which provided a legitimate framework to actively participate in the formation of the entire system of social services, not only as an 'active citizen' but also as part of one's professional rights and duties.

The new Act aimed, to a certain degree, to complete the efforts to tilt the social services system towards the confirmation of the active role of users of these services and of professionals working in the field. However, the way it was structured meant that in many areas the Act preserved the situation prevailing at that time and this rigidity became an obstacle for later advancements.[9]

Regarding homes for elderly persons, the Act confirmed the need to connect social and health care in order to fulfil the needs of service users,[10] ensure their quality of life and to respect human dignity and citizens' rights.

2.5 From Activities of Daily Living to Quality of Life

While thanks to social workers taking an active role the scope of participation of users and their relatives widened in decision-making on solutions to various life situations, the focus shifted from simply concentrating on providing care and services towards questions dealing with life values. Consequently, attention was directed on getting to know the person's own basic ways of coping with various life situations, and in homes for elderly persons to the question of quality of life in the face of life-threatening illness or frailty. This induced social workers and other professionals to seek to integrate palliative care in homes for the elderly.

'Palliative care is an approach that improves the quality of life of patients and their families facing the problem associated with life-threatening illness, through the prevention and relief of suffering by means of early identification and impeccable assessment and treatment of pain and other problems, physical, psychosocial and spiritual' (WHO definition).[11] This provides a framework within which self-determined aspects of life would be facilitated where 'end of life' otherwise would mean drifting into passivity.

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[8] Social work was only mentioned in 6 paragraphs of the total 121.

[9] The Act on Social Services 108/2006 provides an exhaustive list of 34 types of social services and basic activities. Service providers reflecting a client's complex needs are expected to provide a mix of several services covered by contracts.

[10] The Act on Social Services has introduced a new specialisation 'nurse in social services' and eligibility of residential social services for public health insurance schemes.

[11] https://www.who.int/cancer/palliative/definition/en/. Accessed 28 Nov 2019.

The overall aim is to provide comprehensive solutions to the needs of individuals, which often surpass the compartmentalised understanding of social and health care. The legal definition of services provided by homes for elderly persons does not account for end-of-life and relationship-based forms of care (Hradcová 2017). Again, fundamental differences of opinion between state officials and social care providers in interpreting the Act on Social Services (Act 108/2006) prevented progress. A number of public statements by representatives of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs provided an official interpretation of the Act that may be paraphrased as: 'As long as the law does not say that social services provide palliative care, then the service cannot be provided'. The system of social services only made token reference to participation even though it effectively was the service context in which principles of active citizenship as defined by legislation should be provided in the first place (Adams 2008).

Palliative care in the Czech Republic is a relatively new part of the service system. In practice it appeared already in the early 1990s, although it remained outside the system of health care covered by public health. Consequently, a number of solutions emerged in practice: some care providers connected palliative care to a different kind of care (for instance, to a type of home-care combined with home visits by doctors); others provided direct care and also tried to achieve systemic changes. Care providers' expenditures were covered by donations and payments made by patients and families (Dragomirecká et al. 2015). Palliative care was recognised as a medical specialisation by the Ministry of Health and Public Health Insurance schemes first in 1997 in the form of in-patient care. However, only the medical part of palliative care, provided by palliative physicians and nurses, was recognised in law and covered with resources. Experts of other disciplines were covered under so-called respite services in combination with 'specialised social counselling'. Only in 2017 did representatives of non-mobile hospices succeed in negotiating the link between the Social Services Act and the Health Care Services Act to cover non-medical (social, psycho-social, spiritual, etc.) components of in-patient hospice services, whereas field and out-patient forms of palliative care, though accepted in 2018, are still waiting for such a connection.

Well-defined needs have served as an important piece of inspiration and motivation for both palliative care itself and for the effort to make it available in homes for elderly persons. Such needs were substantiated by national research (Stem/Mark 2011) as well as by the results of European co-operation and particularly by the Council of Europe Recommendation 1418 (1999) on the protection of the human rights and dignity of the terminally ill and the dying.[12] Multinational treaties, agreements and declarations with obligatory reports on their implementation provided a strong argument in pushing for new approaches, methods and techniques in social work.

In 2014, the process of integrating palliative and end-of-life care received a new impetus from local initiatives and the entry, in 2013, of the Avast Foundation

[12] assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-en.asp?fileid=16722

and the programme 'Together until the End'[13] into the field of palliative care in the Czech Republic. One of the programme's priorities was the promotion of interdisciplinary cross-sectional partnerships. A consortium of social care and specialised palliative care providers led by Sue Ryder Home[14] received support for a 3-year project called 'Integration of palliative care into homes for elderly persons' (three homes, two specialised mobile palliative teams) in recognition of needs identified by local health and social professionals and to find solutions for situations not anticipated nor stipulated by law.

Consequently, this activity was 'illegal' from the perspective of public law, while from the perspective of private law the activity was 'not forbidden, therefore legal'. Palliative care has challenged the current practice of social and health care in nursing homes, including legislation and its application. The law provides that only the individual client of social services is authorised to make decisions regarding the service but palliative care includes the family and loved ones to participate in the decision-making process. The team pursuing the interdisciplinary project used this array of impulses together with their own practical experience in order to map the requirements necessary to ensure the availability of general palliative care and specialised palliative care in homes for elderly persons.[15] This resulted in model projects in a number of homes for the elderly as well as the publication of a guide on palliative care in the Czech Republic. This serves as a manual for other organisations as well as for changes within the system of social and health-care services (Hrdá et al. 2018). Thanks to active networking on the part of individuals and organisations throughout the Czech Republic and across disciplines, the topic of palliative care succeeded in being included in programmes funded by the Open Society Fund and in local grant and subsidy programmes.

The whole initiative and dissemination of results has been designed and driven by social workers, including the first author ML. They successfully facilitated the process of change based on principles of participation and created an informal network of committed workers of different profession and backgrounds.

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[13] Avast Foundation was established in 2010 as a vehicle for philanthropic activities. In 2013 a long-term plan for supporting system changes of palliative care in the Czech Republic was announced. The Foundation has distributed more than 6 M EUR over the following 5 years and achieved a significant shift in the selected area. Since that time it expanded to several other topics (early care for families at the risk of social exclusion, elementary education).

[14] Sue Ryder Home is a mid-size Czech charity (NGO) offering long-term care for elderly people. Since 1998 it also advocates quality of life and human dignity on behalf of elderly persons and their relatives through innovative approaches and techniques and sharing professional knowledge and expertise with other professionals and students. The name Sue Ryder refers to its founder Lady Sue Ryder of Warsaw.

[15] International projects consulted included The Golden Standards and the Liverpool Pathway from the United Kingdom, Hospiz Austria and palliative care in Amersfoort (Netherlands).

3 Supervision Promoting the Culture of Participation in Social Work

The commitment by social workers to promote participation amongst clients and thereby the values of their human rights and dignity relates back to the parallel process which took place after 1989 with regard to the position of the social worker within social services. This traces a fragile relationship and tension between the faster institutional and the slower cultural change in providing services that demand 'nurturing', particularly in cultural aspects. Professionals in the social and care field would not have been able to promote the culture of participation unless they themselves experienced it as something valuable and effective and learnt how to implement it in the everyday context of care. One way to learn to 'live' participation, we discovered after 1989 (as had other countries a little earlier), was through providing properly organised supervision. In the following we reconstruct how a culture of participation was furthered by the concept and process of supervision. We will trace steps from the early period before the Velvet Revolution to achieving a degree of institutionalisation of supervision in social work after 1989. The story is told through the eyes of the second author, ZH, who started working at the social work department of Charles University, Prague (Faculty of Arts 1990–1999) and later launched and since 2000 led the Master programme in Management and Supervision at that university's Faculty of Humanities.

3.1 Supervision Before 1989

Before 1989, the term supervision was rarely used by professionals despite the fact that even in the 1950s Czechoslovakia maintained some continuity in psychoanalytic training which included supervision (Havrdová et al. 2008). At that time, social work was only taught at secondary schools as the subject 'social administration'. Where supervision did take place, it happened in an inconspicuous manner without legal backing. It was motivated by the workers' wish to educate themselves. Retrospectively we can see that this constellation had created conditions for the ethos of self-help within this social group which also laid the foundation for their future active citizenship and participation without expecting guidance from any authority.

Of the three commonly described functions of supervision (Kadushin 1992), only the supportive and the educational were perceived as offering inspiration. In these circumstances the administrative function of supervision was not seen as something desirable as people resented the regime's obsession with control. Invoking this third function would have had negative connotations. The then emerging spirit of supervision in helping professions could be described as supportive, reflective and a safe space for organised mutual learning. Officially, supervision did not occur in any state or municipal organisation or institution of the communist regime and was in no way institutionalised.

3.2 Learning Supervision in Social Work Schools: Facing Cultural Obstacles

It was only after the Velvet Revolution that supervision could be openly developed. One of the branches of this development was linked to the arrival of colleges and university departments of social work and to the emergence of new positions of social workers in the rapidly developing social services. The Department of Social Work established at Charles University in Prague was amongst the first to realise that field practice must constitute an important part of social work studies and that field practice must be 'guided'. It was after a period of intense international orientation (with the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Denmark, Sweden, the United States) that ZH, co-author of this chapter, was able to put into practice the potential of proper supervision for a participative, reflective form of education in social work. Discussions on the form of the new educational framework for social workers, which took place within the Czech Association of Educators in Social Work (ASVSP), newly founded in 1993, polarised between predominantly academic and top-down educational tendencies on the one side and a recognition of the requirements of participative practice training on the other. The Prague Faculty of Arts showed a clear preference for integrating practical training and practice supervision into the curriculum. Thanks to the PHARE project in 1995 and in co-operation with foreign experts, minimal standards were established for the social work curriculum, including the requirement of 25% of 'guided' practice placements. Learning under supervision should have provided this 'guidance'. There was, however, little experience how to arrive at this. A detailed manual resulted from the international comparisons and national experiences on how to organise practice elements of the curriculum, how to guide students by means of supportive learning supervision and to evaluate them (Havrdová 1995) together with the first experiences in supervision of practice.

Cultural remnants of controlling attitudes from the previous regime, particularly in the school system, slowed the implementation of proper reflective and supportive supervision in social work schools.[16] The same problem was repeated in the prevailing 'old' social services at the governmental offices or in social care institutions which were expected to provide practice placements.

3.3 Training of Practice Supervisors and Self-Help Initiatives to Develop Competences

Our experiences proved that it is crucial but difficult for schools to find field experts in practice teaching who could guarantee that the required participative style of learning would develop and social work skills were properly taught and evaluated

[16] The old culture of top-down teaching without participation in the educational system was one of the reasons why the social work profession in the Czech Republic rather blocked relations with social pedagogy emerging in parallel.

since little experience and no professional social work standards existed as yet. Research amongst social workers showed that they did not know how to guide students in practice (Havrdová 1995). On this basis it was decided to prepare training for practice teachers, which would include the experience of supportive supervision as a vehicle for experiential learning and a participation culture for teachers and through them for students.

To address this challenge, a civic association called *Socium Carolinum* was established at the Prague Department which could offer training for practice teachers for all social work schools in the Czech Republic associated to ASVSP. The training group always included people with practice experience from newly emerging social services who could offer practice placements to students. Each school of social work was recommended to send a team of three people, at least one from practice. The training sessions consisted of 150 hours of training and took place between 1996 and 1999. In the same period, *Socium Carolinum* launched an action research project with people from various schools, organisations and regions, focused on identifying key problem situations occurring in practice in which the social worker's professional approach is tested. It revealed considerable confusion about the meaning of professional social work and the need for agreed standards. This was an example of self-help activism for formalisation and self-regulation based on participation. The result was a textbook with a set of competences for the practice of social work with many examples and guidelines, which became the basis for reflectively guided support of students' professional development. It stimulated a discourse on social work practice and how to reflect and recognise appropriate skills (Havrdová 1999). This set of competences was never meant to be a compulsory form of social work education, and the authors warn against the tendency to over-simplify the process of evaluating students' practice by merely ticking off lists of competences.[17]

3.4 Need for Staff Supervision and Steps Towards Institutionalisation

Parallel with the arrival of educational supervision, social workers providing new services felt the need to receive supervision themselves in view of the fast pace of change. Supervision was expected to enhance the capability of people to learn from one another and look for new solutions. It was stressed, however, that supervisors should not be part of the organisation concerned and not wield institutional power over the worker. Peer learning in a safe environment provided by supervision was emphasised. This need was internally stimulated by the fact that everybody had to learn many new skills. External support came from professionals who were already

[17] In 2017 an up-to-date system of minimal supervision standards was established at ASVSP which requires that during practice the student be guided by an expert with practical experience who had undergone supervision training.

experienced in supervision, held governmental positions and could institutionalise their visions. One of the first was Dr. Pavel Bém, drug coordinator at the Government Office, who in 1995 introduced the system of so-called K-centres for the prevention and therapy of drug abuse. He was a family therapist with training and supervision in family therapy at Rochester University, USA. Another impulse for the institutionalisation of supervision in NGO social services occurred in 1999 when supervision was demanded by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs as an obligatory requirement for social service projects that applied for grants and subsidies. This surprising initiative came from newly university-educated social workers (Milena Jabůrková and others) who, during their studies, had seen the impact of supervision on good practice. These were the first social workers with university degrees in social work; subsequently many of them were employed at the Ministry where they supported each other while pushing through new standards, including the requirement to have an independent, additionally financed supervisor of their own choice when services requested subsidies. Through such bureaucratic measures and financial incentives, supervision gradually became established in many social services. Freedom of choice of an 'external professional' (supervision was not legally specified) was defended as part of a supportive (and not controlling) culture of supervision.

3.5 Social Work Supervisors Training

By the end of the 1990s, the field of supervision was still being developed mainly through voluntary self-help initiatives, and supervisors had no specific supervision training other than knowledge from psychotherapy. In the mid-1990s, Kurt Ludewig's systemic approach and Berne's Transactional Analysis were amongst the most popular psychotherapeutic training methods not only in Czech social work. Ludewig's systemic therapy was closely linked to solution-focused therapy of the American school of Steve de Shazer and Insoo Kim Berg, both of whom visited the Czech Republic repeatedly. Later, even Rogerian training made its entrance, as did cognitive behavioural therapy and others. Dynamic approaches continued the tradition of psychoanalytical training and became quite common with family therapy, starting also before 1989.

In 1996–1997 with the help of *Socium Carolinum* and another PHARE programme, the first training of staff supervision in social work took place. Under the auspices of the British embassy and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, British lecturers trained the first Czech supervisors in social work. Besides consultation methods and empowerment approaches towards clients, the training also drew the supervisor's attention to reflection on good social work practices, the worker's role in organisational contexts, participation and co-operation in teams and community networks (case management, community work). Some graduates (Havrdová, Rothová, Sýkorová) later organised further supervision training for workers in mainly non-profit social work services, for instance, Caritas Czech Republic, *Diaconia* and others.

3.6 Master Programme in Supervision and Management at Charles University

After the experience of several rounds of staff supervision training in Caritas and other social services, an MA programme in supervision was suggested in 2000 at the Faculty of Humanities, Charles University. The programme was launched in 2001 in combination with management studies in what now constitutes the Department of Management and Supervision in Social and Health Care Organisations. Entry requirements are in accordance with the principles of the Association of National Organisations for Supervision in Europe, ANSE. No other university education for supervisors has since emerged in the Czech Republic. The programme was another step to institutionalise supervision through an officially recognised and accredited university programme.

3.7 Cultural Background of Supervision and Its Relation to Participation

In the Czech Republic, individual supervision was replaced quite early by team supervision, which is the most frequent type of supervision in all services. At the Department of Management and Supervision, attention was soon directed at the context of an organisation, particularly its culture and its influence on how supervision is delivered. The term 'culture' (of an organisation or a group) was applied in the sense of social constructivism (Schein 2004), culture meaning a relatively permanent result of social learning based on a continuously created discourse in the everyday practice of decision-making and problem-solving. This view helped us to link supervision and management education, which, according to the founders of the Department, was intended to create an optimal environment for providing good quality participative social work and care. The culture of the organisation and the culture of supervision can sometimes be in conflict even to the extent that supervision cannot take place (Havrdová 2011; Baštecká et al. 2016). Supervision is regarded as an organised opportunity to reflect on the work context, specific work situations and professional relationships in order to improve the quality of work. When participants decide and find agreement, impulses resulting from supervision are provided to the management, as stipulated in the contract.

The early emphasis of the profession on supervision was a key element in making social workers become catalysts of change in a professional culture that does not create dependency on experts but validates the abilities and coping skills of clients. Another important aspect of supervision is that it enables workers to participate in developing the organisation and services.

The described culture of supervision is especially close to the ethos of participation and active citizenship which, after 1989, was advanced mainly by the non-profit sector. Supervision continues to advance it and thereby develop the social work

profession. Supervision established itself rather quickly in non-profit organisations providing social services and became a common part of workers' support and education. On the other hand, a clash of cultures occurred during the implementation of supervision in residential services, particularly in those with a history reaching back to the communist era, such as care of elderly people. In many such services, supervision is not implemented yet. The clash started to appear mainly in 2006 when the Act on Social Services came into effect as did the Standards for Social Work. And it is here that our second example relates back to the first example in this chapter.

3.8 Participation Leading to Empowerment or Misappropriation?[18]

When does participation lead to empowerment and when does it lead to misappropriation?

During the communist regime, the concept of participation in the sense of involvement and 'collaboration' with those in power (thereby acquiring more power) was perceived by the general population as something dishonourable or as betrayal. During the Velvet Revolution people chanted 'we are not like them', and 'them' were those in power, the Communist Party governing the state and all political processes with whom decent people did not collaborate. This was the ethos for 40 years.

It required deep changes after the Revolution to build participation against this background. Lack of trust and fear of having one's visions and ideals misappropriated were associated with 'collaboration' and engagement. On the other hand, participation and collaboration have become signs of the new identity of active citizens who have trust in the democratic system. In this spirit many social work students, already during their studies and soon after their conclusion, voluntarily became agents of change. In the first 15 years, they built some completely new service systems at governmental level, a system of probation and mediation; they initiated social service standards at the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs; they worked on the Social Service Act and engaged in many other smaller or greater changes. Others were engaged at NGO level, started new services and educational initiatives, like interactive video-training (spin-vti.cz), community centres (*Český západ*) or networking civic associations like the Professional Chamber of Social Workers (pksp.cz) or the Association of Supervision in Helping Professions (ASuPP.cz). During this period, it has become clear, however, that political power can often be misused and participation again does often not lead to more power for participants but to their misappropriation.

[18] The term 'misappropriation' is meant here as 'stealing' the benefits of a participative process that resulted from people having invested their time, energy, creativity and social capital to promote change, e.g. in the form of new guidelines, principles or standards of practice. When these results are being appropriated by others with the intention to exploit their credibility and abuse the original meanings for the opposite political or personal purposes, the originators lose power to influence the use of their original meanings.

The populist rhetoric of political parties serves to further their own positions and to improve their results in elections. Thereby the idea that becoming a governmental employee means to have power and the opportunity to change things for the better has become problematic. Providing time, ideas and energy for change could be misused for the position and career of key figures, and at times this was a discouraging experience. A process of formalisation and regulation which developed through voluntary efforts was necessary in the first period of building the new system. People became engaged in developing standards of quality in various fields and initiated regulations to secure their visions on quality. But this has often become a ladder for power seekers who started parasitising and controlling those who worked in the field. This experience has had an impact not only on the regulation of supervision but also on social work as a profession itself.

Workers and supervisors who identified themselves with the culture of supervision started to question whether regulation through law or state bureaucracy would be of benefit. The law on supervision would enforce supervision in cases where management refuses to provide it and would thus help workers as well as clients. Others feared that governmental regulation of supervision would endanger its culture and burden it with bureaucracy with which our society had such bad experience. Ultimately, the quality of human relationships, understanding and participation cannot be regulated in this way, and any attempt to legally regulate supervision could be counterproductive and endanger its fundamental culture.

As in the process of regulating social work generally, the position to enforce supervision and regulate who can provide it under what conditions and the fear against it are in conflict.

It seems that professionals in social work and supervision were able to develop a participatory culture in their approach and on the level of organisations, but at the level of the political system and of society generally the culture tends to still favour misappropriation over empowerment. This goes hand in hand with the atomisation of social relations and a certain inability to identify oneself with supra-individual structures together with the unwillingness to be influenced by a sense of obligation to those structures which Jiří Večerník (2002) described as being one of the legacies of the communist regime.

4 Conclusion

Being actors in the stories described in this chapter and reflecting back on the process taking nearly 30 years to develop, we learnt a lesson which we would like to share. The implementation of participation is inseparable from other difficult processes like sharing power, listening to different voices and discovering common interests amongst different people. Participation is part of a complex culture which can enable or block certain forms of behaviour, and the conditions for its positive development must be permanently nurtured on many levels including the institutional. It seems that after 30 years social workers were quite successful in supporting a true participation culture

in many social organisations in the Czech Republic. Social workers, most often as managers or representatives of organisations providing social services or as state officials, played an exceedingly important role in both our examples, the professionalisation and institutionalisation of palliative care and supervision. Remarkably, despite the fact that field-specific and thematic networks of organisations were established which played an important role in influencing conditions for the practice of social work (i.e. the Czech Association of Social Care Providers, SKOK, the Czech Council of Humanitarian Organizations, the Czech Association of Streetwork and others), social workers resist having an overarching professional platform similar to a professional chamber which could play an active role in society. The resistance might have similar origins in supervision. People feel the risk of ideals being misappropriated by the potential leaders of a social work chamber; they feel the risk of losing control over the values which they care for in their profession. They themselves feel the need for certain norms and rules but fear that power is not being shared democratically. They prefer to enter the participative space of supervision and develop their sensitivity through feedback from colleagues whom they know and trust. Interest in supervision in social work continues to grow. The discipline is mostly successful in deflecting attempts of authoritarian power influences from penetrating into the protected space where the participation of workers in their own growth is being cultivated.

To summarise our lesson: in order to strengthen the skills of participation, a participatory culture is necessary. Such a culture requires rules and regulations, which have to be respected. Team supervision shows that professionals have an interest in self-correction and growth, but norms and rules cannot be generated through supervision alone; they require some form of institution. On the other hand, the process of codification and regulation governed by a rigid (non-participative) authority like public administration cancels out principles of participation. Despite this experience, many social forces in post-communist society are turning to public administration and expect codification and regulation. It seems that the critical moment in avoiding a discrepancy between bottom-up knowledge and its transformation into a sensible institution that empowers people is the competence and belief in self-regulation and the codification of norms in a participative way.

Against the background of our Czech experience, it is worth asking whether social workers in Europe who have the competences to self-regulate their institutions while consistently nurturing a culture of participation also face misappropriation under prevailing restrictive social policy conditions and populist political tendencies and whether such efforts could help to invite more segments in society to become participatively involved in solving social problems effectively.

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After the Divorce: Social Work in Slovakia Since the Peaceful Division of Czechoslovakia

Peter Brnula and Ladislav Vaska

1 Introduction

The year 1989 brought profound political and social changes that led to the democratisation of society and the formation of parliamentary democracy in Czechoslovakia. A country that had been isolated due to the 'Iron Curtain' changed and opened itself to the world. Moreover, this opening gave people the possibility of expressing their own opinions and political beliefs. It also created a space for citizens' associations based on the principle of civic engagement. Freedom and democracy are considered the highest values citizens may aspire to. Generally, the changes were accepted positively by citizens even while a free and democratic society was still developing, yet it is clear that such developments also bring certain negative aspects.

These manifested themselves in the form of new social phenomena which the former society had no experience or knowledge of (since the then ruling political ideology hid them away and declared them unacceptable). The first social issues that became openly visible around 1990, exposed by Šiklová (2001), included the growing number of sex workers, the phenomenon of homeless people and migration and the need to integrate prisoners released from prison after President Václav Havel's amnesty. The unemployment rate was not high at first, and only after it

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began to increase in 1991[1] was it perceived and reflected upon by society as a new multifactorial phenomenon. The risk of poverty evolved together with the growth of unemployment, and poverty rates basically paralleled the development of unemployment.

Social work also had to address new target groups such as victims of the sex business, victims of domestic violence and the increasing number of people with addictions. Furthermore, social work faced the challenge of the beginning de-institutionalisation of social work and social services (see below).

After 40 years of state monopoly on social work and social services, there was a move to create and establish civil society alternatives. This was the beginning of the development of the non-profit sector made up of nongovernmental institutions, church (revived after the end of the totalitarian regime) or alternative services provided by civic associations. The end of this monopoly brought plurality and the possibility of choice to people using social work services. The formation of the non-profit sector is perceived as demonstration of the values of freedom and democracy through the direct practice of the developing civil society.

Social work was present in the times of the totalitarian regime, but it was concentrated on providing care for children and the elderly rather than being oriented towards the general population. Later on the area of people with disabilities received social work attention. Providing this kind of care is connected with the ideology of the totalitarian regime for the purpose of ensuing a balance in society. Social work also existed in the form of so-called social work in the working contexts in state-owned and state-managed businesses, and here it was fully under the influence of the state.[2]

National social work after 1989 was poorly equipped in terms of a grounding in theories to work with new social phenomena. It had to prepare for the new situation and this was particularly true for the development of social work education. The initial response to implement knowledge from abroad was not ideal and it was necessary to find a more organic approach. When Krakešová stated that the genesis of the problems of people whom social work addresses was different in different countries because it always depended on many factors, economic, cultural, social, etc., she also stated that work with specific individuals must correspond to the context of a particular country (Krakešová et al. 2018).

These processes are also clearly related to the necessary search for new solutions in terms of social policy measures. External changes concerned the sociopolitical paradigm, social policy frameworks and methodology, and the organisational forms were changing. The internal change in social policy included a change in known approaches and ways of implementing social policy. The social policy paradigm

[1] 'Hard data' are not available in many areas (such as sex business, homelessness, etc.). This might be illustrated by the prisoners under amnesty in the Slovak Republic who numbered 7441 individuals (Gál 1991). In terms of the growth of unemployment, the data show that at the end of 1990 the unemployment rate was 1.5%, at the end of 1991 it was 11.8%, at the end of 1992 it was 10.4% and at the end of 1993, 14.4% (Mihalik et al. 1994).

[2] See the chapter by Havrdová and Matoušek.

itself changed: individuals and their responsibility for their own social situation became recognised, thereby adding a new dimension to social policy (Strieženec 1993). Moreover, the transfer of responsibility to an individual/community was seen as an important and significant key point for civil society and its values on which social work stands. The period of changes since 1989 was therefore very dynamic.

According to Strieženec (1999), there are two levels at which changes came to determine the course and nature of social policy in Slovakia:

- **The first level** consisted of the gradual creation of theoretical and practical aims of social development as a federal concept (still within Czechoslovakia) through new social legislation.
- **The second level** meant social legislation as an independent approach within the newly established Slovak Republic (1993).

The separate Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic were established on 1st of January 1993 as two successor countries to the former state of the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic, formed after the Velvet Revolution of 1989. Both countries started to build their independent organisations of civil society, thus demonstrating continuity with the previous country. However, the forms of civil society organisations differed in correspondence with the wording of the preambles of the constitutions of both countries. The preamble of the Constitution of the Slovak Republic begins with a reference to the state as forming the Slovak nation including also other groups of the population such as national minorities and ethnic groups living in the Slovak Republic, and only later, in the conclusion, it refers to the civic principle ('we, the citizens of the Slovak Republic'). The Constitution of the Czech Republic refers to this civic principle at the beginning of its preamble by introducing the citizens living in the territory of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia as forming the state of the Czech Republic. Slovakia was built at the end of the twentieth century on a national principle, which presupposes a conservative/traditional perception of the state's role. Although the Constitution of the Slovak Republic refers to the principles of democracy and freedom, the very beginning of the preamble is not an invitation for civic participation in building the state in contrast to the Constitution of the Czech Republic. This political and social orientation may have led to more complex social developments as well as developments in social policy and social legislation. It is also assumed that this may be one of the reasons for the continued perception and greater focus of attention on the weaknesses of an individual encountering social work. As we perceived it at the end of the 1990s, Western social work was more likely to focus practice on the strengths of an individual (Saleebey 1997) and on the concept of resilience as well as on structural social work (Mullaly 1997). Nevertheless, the 1990s in Slovakia were characterised by the development of the non-profit sector, which in many areas of social work and social services took over the task of government services (e.g. field social work, community work and community social work, etc.) and created alternatives to the classical approach to social work and social services.

2 Social Work in the Public and Non-profit Sector

In the early 1990s, Novotná and Schimmerlingová (1991) pointed out that what was termed social work in today's territory of Slovakia (which was at that time a part of the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic) in reality differed greatly from what developed as social work abroad.[3] Defining social work in this period was – from their point of view – problematic because social work had been underestimated and neglected for almost 40 years and it had no specific scope.

The influence of concepts from abroad on Slovak social work education and practice became apparent in 1993 when Labáth (1995) provided a definition of social work modelled on that of the Dutch Association of Schools of Social Work that was more oriented towards therapeutic environments (therapy-related methods of counselling, socio-therapy, psychotherapy, mediation, etc. characterise social work; see also Payne 1997).[4] The perception of social work as therapeutic aid has become more established in the non-profit sector and in academia than in the public sector.

The **public sector** perceived social work as the work of a social worker in institutions and facilities for the implementation of social policy at individual level (Strieženec 1996). It can be concluded that the public sector from that time to the present day perceived social work as a tool of social policy. The difference in content of social work in public institutions and the non-profit sector also derives from this perception of social work as socio-legal aid rather than a paradigm. This vision of social work has been present in Slovakia for over 27 years. If we refer to the perception of social work in the non-profit sector as therapeutic aid on account of its paradigm and clinical value orientation (Reamer 2006), social work in the public sector seems locked into the social and legal assistance paradigm which also affects its value orientations which Reamer (2006) defined as an 'amoral' value orientation.

The changes in public administration after 1989 were very dynamic. In 1990, 'National Committees' and 'Committees of Public Inspection' (collective entities representing the one political party) which had been managing the civil and political life of communities and therefore the entire municipal life ended their activities. Decision-making and management competences were returned to municipalities, central government authorities and local government authorities, all referred to as public administration. District and local offices started to emerge in the same period in the name of decentralisation and heralded a return to involving the community more closely in finding solutions to issues of their concern. However, after 40 years of centralised solutions to social issues, passing responsibilities to individuals and

[3] In our conditions, it was developed in the form of social care at the level of central authorities and social care in state-run enterprises – corporate social care/politics.

[4] Payne defined his paradigms in 1997, though he himself had already moved away from them and shifted his perception in later editions. However, in the Slovak environment of social work, these paradigms have become established and are still used today.

the community was and still is problematic. People continue to show a tendency to appeal to and expect help from government. The change in the social policy paradigm towards democratisation and decentralisation of state power is still not accepted by many groups. In 1996, a new Act on Territorial and Administrative Arrangement of the Slovak Republic came into force. This law (valid to date) defines territorial and administrative units with municipalities being self-governing units and the creation of eight regions as the higher territorial units. This change did not signal a return to centralisation; however, this territorial and administrative division failed to respect the historical territorial division of Slovakia, which would have been more direct, more specific and more comprehensible to citizens for the solution of social issues and cooperation of natural communities. In addition, competences were not passed to the regions until 2002. The original institutional care fell into the funding competence of the regions. Since at that time there was no clear way to finance social services, many services (e.g. for seniors) pushed the change from the funding competence of the municipality to that of the region. This situation caused the original services for seniors (retirement facilities and homes) to be joined with social service facilities. The natural support for seniors, which had always been the domain of the community/municipality, was thereby disrupted and was shifted to the regions. The connection with social service facilities strengthened an institutional culture and caused social work to become reduced to its administrative form. As a consequence, social service facilities had to care for very heterogeneous groups of beneficiaries which restricted their capacity to tailor support to individual needs and to emphasise the strengths of service recipients. This in turn favoured the use of institutional solutions instead of supporting care services, which is not entirely in line with the subsidiarity principles on which social policy is based.

The perception of social work as a social policy tool can also be related to the Social Assistance Act 195/1998 which frames social work as social assistance although its intention is that of moving it beyond the mere providing of assistance. Defining social assistance in that sense meant progress from the original focus of social work and social policy on social care, but conceptually, social work is still thereby relegated to an administrative form of assistance. The law also included the definition of social work as a tool for identifying causes of material or social needs and specified means of providing corresponding options of assistance and monitoring their uptake.[5] This covered issues of unemployment, social insurance, social prevention, socio-legal protection, general social services and compensation for people with disabilities.

Social services were decentralised to different geographical/territorial units which had to provide various types of social services. Radičová (2003:90) states that ‘the Social Assistance Act did not sufficiently provide for the development of services for families in need of social assistance since it did not take into account new forms of family services and crisis intervention (such as resocialisation centres,

[5] The proportion of the population in material need has been rising from 7.2% in 1993 to 11.3% in 2000 (Radičová 2001).

shelters, orphanages). Problems were caused by straight forward definitions of social assistance instruments and criteria for their funding in cases where social work was part of a comprehensive solution to citizens' problems (including education, employment, etc.) by one and the same organisation'.

An important change with regard to the concept of social work was the adoption of the Act No. 305/2005 Coll. on the socio-legal protection of children and on social guardianship in 2005. This law introduced necessary fundamental changes in the care of the child and the child's family such as social guardianship, the prevention of crisis situations as well as the removal of impediments to resocialisation. This area is still in transformation and is constantly undergoing innovative changes in the form of amendments to the law of 2005.

The process of change from social assistance to social services was completed in 2008 with the adoption of the Act No. 448/2008 Coll. on Social Services which after 10 years finally ended social work being seen as social assistance. Since the late 1990s, social work had been associated with social services as these services were part of the Social Assistance Act. The decisive change occurred only after the adoption of this law on social services separate from the Law on Allowances in the same year 2008. Brichtová (2011) as cited in Repková (2018) states that identifying social work with social services is inappropriate and could harm recipients of social services and misrepresent social workers and other professionals. She defines social work as a necessary system for society, as society itself produces social risks for people and groups of people; social work cannot be legally claimed on its own, while social services – regulated by law – can. She sees social services as an individualised legal claim aimed at satisfying people's social needs and their guaranteed rights. Despite this, she considers social work and social services to be 'inseparable disciplines' and looks critically only at their identification. This is also the reason why the development in social services has to be dealt with separately (see below).

As mentioned above, the **non-profit sector** (referred to as the 'nongovernmental sector'/'third sector') was implemented at the beginning of the 1990s (unfortunately perceived as a counterpart to and in competition with the public sector). This sector created a space for the personal participation of citizens in addressing their specific interests and fulfilling their personal responsibility for the quality of their own lives. Organisations in this sector were perceived as alternatives to public and social policy, according to Strieženec (1999), and gave expression to the diversity of ideas. Highly topical is the understanding of the mission of non-profit organisations expressed by Ondrušek (1998:11) as entities that:

> expose gaps in the social assistance network and respond immediately to the needs of society in order to also find clients who are willing to pay for services over time (if the need arises). Sometimes, organisations that were originally non-profit making transform themselves into a corporate form, at other times, they manage to extend the range of the government's care provisions by their own efforts. In the areas not originally covered (by public services) the state itself gradually assumes financial and organisational responsibility for the standard provision of services. On the other hand, (as a result of long dialogues and responsible political decision-making) the state decentralises, delegates or allocates other services or responsibilities therefore to private and non-governmental entities.

In other words, they complete the field of services and assistance and are more flexible and responsive to the changing needs of society.

The most active period of the non-profit sector may have been the period of the first establishment of organisations and their activities in the 1990s – as pointed out above – given that they were substituting for and completing the services of the public sector. This was related to the era of Mečiar's government ('Mečiarism') in Slovakia and the culmination of the transformation of the social sphere by the already mentioned Social Assistance Act until 1998. The period of Vladimír Mečiar's government was typical in that 'the government sought to use various non-democratic and governmental instruments to control the third sector and to limit its independence' (Hirt 2009:40). This period can also be referred to as a period of 'civic campaigns'. In the fight against authoritarian activities, non-profit organisations used a set of instruments according to democratic norms which expressed the value of the rule of law to citizens. In this early post-authoritarian period, a strong commitment came initially from organisations dedicated to children, providing services to people with disabilities, people with various diseases, people with addictions, victims of domestic violence and people working in the sex business. It was not until the end of this period that they also attended to the plight of homeless people.

While in other countries 40% of the non-profit sector's revenue comes from government subsidies, in Slovakia this amounts only to 22% (Radičová 2003) which necessitated a higher percentage of non-profit sector funding from abroad in the 1990s.[6]

Mydlíková (2010:68) states that 'volunteering must not be omitted in connection with social work and non-profit organisations'. The author further states that in 1998, about 19% of citizens engaged in voluntary activities although in 1999 it already dropped to 13%. Brozmanová-Gregorová and Mračková (2012) state that the Slovak legislation had not comprehensively regulated the area of volunteering until 2011. Discussions on comprehensive legislation on volunteering began in 2002 and continued until 2011, when the Volunteering Act was passed. The law focuses on the rights of volunteers and organisations, less on their responsibilities. It is intended to introduce the concept of volunteering and at the same time promote volunteering.

3 Social Work and Social Services

Before 1989 social services were initially characterised by a charitable approach and later by a culture of institutionalisation, a paternalistic approach which continued into the 1990s with institutions mainly for people with physical and mental

[6] This may have given rise to negative attitudes today towards non-profit organisations portraying them as 'Western Agents'.

disabilities; for children, adolescents or adults; and for seniors. This type of care was characterised by a biomedical discourse with emphasis on diagnosis and treatment which, although providing protection, had all the implications of segregation, labelling and dependency of residents (Cangár 2018).

Historically, social services came from social care and in the 1990s attempted to humanise services. Several outpatient and low-threshold services were created, but de-institutionalisation and the development of field-oriented social services were promoted mainly by the non-profit sector. At the same time, representatives of the non-profit sector also promoted the transformation of institutional care in the public sector. According to Cangár (2018), systemic changes in the socio-legal protection of children were taking place between 1995 and 1996, when also the gradual transformation of orphanages began. In 1996, the Slovak Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family adopted the concept of 'social sphere transformation', but decisive de-institutionalisation did not happen until 2010.

Gradually, the goals of social services as formulated by Levická et al. (2013:17) took hold: 'securing and protecting social welfare, that is, a certain level of quality of life for all citizens, expressed in the official national social policy' and this not only through residential services. At the same time, efforts were made to bring a human rights perspective to social services, but as Repková (2017) finds, social service providers have not yet been taught how to base their practice on human rights and to balance individualised interventions with universal ones. What she formulates as the ultimate goal of social services is to support a person to lead a meaningful everyday life in an individualised form and at the same time to universally anchor social services in human rights.

Nevertheless, looking at social services through the human rights perspective has come to be considered very important. However, we also have to recognise that in the view of the majority of people, social services as well as social work are still linked predominantly to issues of abnormality.

Based on a thorough analysis, Repková (2018) sums up the current relationship between social work and social services in Slovakia in three models: social work as part of social service delivery, social work as a precondition for getting assistance from social services and coordinating this aid from the provider and social work as promoting inter-organisational collaboration.

4 Education in Social Work

In the field of the education of social professionals, there has been the same dynamic development as in practice over the last 30 years.

In the early 1990s, the tradition inherited from the period of the First Czechoslovak Republic continued in education. In that historical period, from 1918 to 1938, social work education was mainly influenced by an 'American model of social work' and

the original Austro-Hungarian concept of social work and social policy. Unlike the Czech part of Czechoslovakia, Slovakia did not have its own education or social education programme at that time. The women's movement 'Živena' was the first organisation to bring short-term courses in social care to the Slovak parts (1920–1923).[7] Later it created a public school for women (Institute of M. R. Štefánik in Martin) that focused on social care (1925–1953) until it was closed by the totalitarian regime in the 1950s. According to Kodymová (2013), the study period was between 1 and 4 years, and a lower limit for admission was set at 18 to 20 years.

The creation of Slovak social work education after 1989 was at first somewhat influenced by foreign social work models and only gradually by research on the country's own social work history and links to the curricula contents from before the Second World War. Slovakia gradually began to build higher social work education in the 1990s as it developed a more Western-type society which also meant that it could not fully follow this positive history of autochthonous experience in the field of social work education.

Higher social work education was fully launched in 1991 in collaboration with colleagues from the Netherlands, the UK and the USA and in collaboration with people who were active in the field of pedagogy, psychotherapy and health care which influenced the content of social work education.

By the end of the 1990s, social work education had adopted three paradigms: as therapeutic aid, as a paradigm within the educational discipline[8] and as a paradigm of social-legal assistance. This orientation did at first not focus on the individual's strengths or on structural implications of social work interventions, but this began to develop after 2005.

In the late 1990s, social work courses emerged mostly at pedagogical and social academies and in secondary vocational schools of pedagogy. Graduates of the latter were referred to as 'socio-educational workers' after a 4-year full-time or distance study course offered by approximately 20 secondary schools in Slovakia. The 'socio-legal activity' follows a 2-year postsecondary study programme offered by over 15 secondary schools. In terms of paradigms, these two disciplines are still embedded in the paradigms of therapeutic aid and socio-legal protection, but gradually the curricula change to reflect an orientation towards the paradigm of social environmental reform (see Brnula et al. 2011).

Following the Bologna Declaration (1999), the Bologna Process structured university social work education in Slovakia also into bachelor and master studies (currently ten universities/colleges offer social work studies) based on three pillars: theory, training in social skills and professional practice. Since 2000, doctoral studies (PhD) in social work exist as well.

[7] Social activities of Živena are described by Votrubová (1931).

[8] Emphasis is placed on the education and training of people with whom social workers work – the instigator of this paradigm in Slovakia was Anna Tokárová (2003).

Since 2012, it has been possible to study the subject Social Services and Counselling (taught at two colleges/universities), a discipline more focused on work in social services. Repková (2018) states that this field of study does not have the status of a science, and in the description of the discipline, she rather refers to the theories related to social work and social policy. The graduates (BA and MA) of this programme are prepared to apply their knowledge to the field of social services and within the framework of the socio-legal aid paradigm.

In the lifelong learning system after BA or MA education, social workers can be trained in accredited courses (including nonpublic accredited organisations). They may also complete additional pedagogical studies for social work graduates aimed at acquiring a pedagogical qualification. Lastly, sectoral education (i.e. education in the areas of competence of individual ministries – social affairs, education, health and home affairs) has also been implemented.

An important role in social work education is played by the Association of Educators in Social Work (established in 2001). It formulates concepts, descriptions of the field of study as well as giving consultations for its members, thereby improving the quality of education in the field. In 2017, more than 3 years of joint efforts of college teachers representing member organisations resulted in a common social work dictionary (Balogová and Žiaková 2017).

Research in social work was initially more focused on fields of pedagogy, psychology and sociology, as defined by those scientific disciplines with corresponding topics in theses until the first social workers graduated and by 2000 titles had to be linked to social work issues. Nowadays, this strict focus is being abandoned again, and the attention is directed to the broader context of the phenomena in social work, social services and social policy.

However, at present, the overall focus of education is more on the education economy than on the education society. Tížik (2014) comes to the conclusion that the education economy aims at the commercialisation and privatisation of public responsibility. He refers to a transition from a focus on the growth of education itself to the use of education and scientific results for economic gain. Buraj (2014) says that the quality of education nowadays is reduced to the immediate application in practice, which downgrades the value of a university education. According to the author, almost everything taught at schools is profit-oriented. Requirements for students are therefore low and students adapt and only want to get their diploma. This is not to claim that they are uneducated (i.e. that they lack education), but, as Liessmann (2012) finds, the current treatment of knowledge as a utility places it entirely outside the realm of education as we perceived it in the classical traditions of Europe.

Unfortunately, this trend can also be seen in social work, and it would be worth returning to the value of education, that is, to focus more on quality than on quantity. Likewise, in social work and social services, we should not succumb to economic power interests.

5 Conclusion: Current State of Slovak Social Work

In terms of economisation, it may be said that currently social work is performed in a service market environment or in a service society environment. Byung-Chui Han (2016) claims that the disciplinary society described by Foucault is a thing of the past. The world of institutions and their power over individuals has been replaced by a service society characterised by performance outcomes. The subjects of this society have to have power over themselves and seem cut off from external control and thus subordinate only to themselves. This is what distinguishes them from subjects of a previous 'disciplinary society' when they were cast as subjects of obedience. One may deduce from this that social work services should also change their orientation so that social work becomes more responsive to, beneficial and, most of all, effective for its users and for society. Voices calling for the use of theory and practice forms aimed at community-oriented decisions, the development of community work, community social work and the increasingly preferred preventive nature of social work (typical in Western countries since the 1970s) are becoming stronger. Curative social work is now becoming less visible and is being replaced by concepts of prevention. Furthermore, the focus of social work on performance is not limited to target groups that find themselves placed at the margins of society. In terms of Payne's paradigms, this is a transition from a paradigm of therapeutic aid and socio-legal protection to a paradigm of social work as the reform of the social environment; this transition is neither accidental nor targeted, but indispensable and necessary for a more effective practice of social work in contemporary society (Brnula 2018).

The basic 'turning point' in the perception of the existing social work services was the adoption of the Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic No. 219/2014 Coll. on 'Social Work and conditions for exercising certain professional activities in the field of social affairs and family'. It defined the responsibility for the performance of social work by means of 'professional titles': social work assistant (mandatory bachelor's degree in the discipline) and social worker (mandatory master's degree in the discipline). Among other things, it also brought the possibility of affiliating social workers with a professional Chamber.[9] The adoption of the Code of Conduct for Social Workers and Social Work Assistants (last revised in 2019[10]) also enhanced the status of the profession.

With respect to the three areas described above (social services, social policy and education in social work), in the present historical context, it seems necessary for the following period of public administration and social services to streamline forms of practice built on strengths (moving away from the repressive form of social work) and accessibility through the digitalisation of individual public administration bodies.

[9] Slovak Chamber of Social Workers and Social Work Assistants – www.socialnapraca.sk

[10] Professional Chamber in Slovakia

In the non-profit sector, the risk is posed by its current stigmatisation by various politicians (alleged conspiracies related to non-profit NGOs were rejected in 2018 even by the Slovak Government Council for NGOs), which may evoke mistrust among the population. At present, this sector is characterised by the development of community-oriented services and services that are accredited by various legislative measures. Hence, today they do not substitute public services as they did in the past, but they legitimately complement the services set up by public institutions. The cooperation of the public and non-profit sector is much broader and more interconnected.

In terms of the development of social services, Slovakia has enormous potential in the transformation of residential social services and the de-institutionalisation of social services. These are also supported by national projects funded by the EU. Great potential is seen in changing the services towards a human rights perspective. This may also be achieved by setting social services quality standards in 2019, following intensive professional discussion.

Education has become a rigid system in which flexible adaptations are almost impossible under the accreditation system. The continuing classical model of education (lectures – seminars – exercises, continuous weekly lessons, etc.) does not offer much room for flexibility either. Nevertheless, despite complicated bureaucratic procedures, academics try to innovate curricula and ward off the danger of losing the connection with practice (for instance, by the fact that only teachers with a PhD can be employed at a university). They promote service learning (innovative learning strategy), which is aimed at developing professional competences of social work students (Brozmanová et al. 2019). The enforcement of financing of professional experience from the national budget can be seen as a success in education. Furthermore, based on the minimum professional practice standards adopted by the Association of Educators in Social Work (AVSP), the students' professional experience must now be supervised (Vaska 2015).

Three decades after fundamental sociopolitical changes, social work in Slovakia is perceived as both a science and a profession (Brnula 2012, Mátel 2019), equally developed on both levels. The efforts of both theoreticians and practitioners in the field of social work and social services are geared towards cooperation and finding common intersections and challenges in favour of building social work based on identifying people's strengths, towards a creation of a resilience approach and new structural social work (Mullaly 2006).

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Lithuanian Social Work's Claim to Professional Autonomy vs. Authoritarianism in Popular and Political Culture

Jolita Buzaitytė Kašalynienė

1 Historical Conditions Affecting the Emergence of the Social Work Profession in Lithuania

Modern social support systems and professional social work are associated with industrialisation and a capitalist economy which in Eastern European countries developed later than in Western European countries (Bagdonas 2001).

Ethnic Lithuanian territories were captured by Russia and Prussia in the third partition of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1795. For more than a century, Lithuanian people then lived under Czarist Russian oppression. Lithuanian national identity was formed in the resistance against forced russification. After the Russian Revolution and the end of the First World War, Russia was weakened by civil war. Lithuania, as well as Latvia, Estonia and Finland, declared independence from Soviet Russia and established autonomous countries in 1918. Over the next 22 years (1918–1940), the Lithuanian Republic began to build its nation and economic, cultural and social support systems.

During this period social assistance in Lithuania was provided by nonprofessionals, mostly Catholic charity organisations, parishes, dioceses and secular nongovernmental organisations. Caritas, the Society of Catholic Women, Human Care, the Fellowship of Lithuanian Women and others founded the first shelters for sick, elderly persons, foundlings and orphans. They also provided benefits and education for people in poverty and took care of persons with disabilities (Žalimienė and Rimšaitė 2007). Discussions about the need for professional social workers began in 1939 after acquaintance with the training of social workers and social pedagogues in Germany and Austria. The Society of Catholic Women initiated the first

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professional social work courses for women (Žalimienė and Rimšaitė 2007; Žalimienė and Gevorgianienė 2018).

Lithuanian society was devastated by the First Soviet Russia Occupation in 1940 and by the Second World War. After 1945 Lithuania fell under the oppressive domination of the Soviet Union (USSR) for the next 50 years. Professional social work did not exist in the USSR and was 'silenced' in Lithuania (Bagdonas 2001). The Soviet social security (*socialinio aprūpinimo*) system did not tolerate and even prohibited religious nongovernmental organisations from providing social services (Žalimienė and Rimšaitė 2007).

The Soviet state sought to take over previous family functions such as caring for children, elderly and the disabled, without leaving families any choice. The institutional care system was centralised, run and controlled by the state instead of local authorities and based on segregation and medicalisation (Žalimienė and Rimšaitė 2007). Large institutions in remote places contained children, disabled and elderly people. Young delinquents were isolated in juvenile colonies or prisons for juveniles. Children with disabilities were taught in special schools, mostly residential. Mental illness was treated with medication in psychiatric hospitals, and patients were isolated in psychiatric institutions. Care institutions were staffed by professions other than social work such as psychiatrists, medical doctors, teachers and police officers, many of whom not properly qualified.

In the Soviet period, the prevailing ideology was that the state is responsible for everyone's welfare (Gedvilaitė 2006). Everyone was involved in compulsory employment, everyone participated in the social insurance system, and everyone belonged to trade unions. Only single mothers and multi-children families were targeted for social benefits. Some elements of social support and social services were provided by trade unions, institutions of health care or education, local executive committees and committees of the Communist Party. In the later period of the USSR, some of the bigger institutions and organisations had their own departments of social affairs (Bagdonas 2001). Lithuanian societies for blind, deaf and invalid people, prototypes of later NGOs, organised support and some services for members funded by the state (Bagdonas 2001).

In the communist system, social problems were commonly characterised in moral terms. The state saw itself as having a social obligation to provide all citizens with employment and housing. Some employment positions were not necessarily needed (or had no added value), but they were maintained in order to keep all citizens employed. Hence, unemployed people were assumed to be avoiders and 'parasites' of society. Social problems such as prostitution, drug addiction and child abuse did not officially exist because they did not fit the image of an ideal communist society. The Communist Party and trade unions saw themselves as responsible for morality. Their committees, for instance, would have moral 'educative' conversations with men who abused their wives, were caught drunk at work, got into street fights or showed other inappropriate behaviour.

2 Independence, Social Work Legislation and NGOs

The institutionalisation of the social work profession in Lithuania became possible after the country declared independency from the USSR in 1990. In the Soviet state, most spheres of life, e.g. health, transport, education, agriculture and others, were regulated by ministries, except social affairs (Bagdonas 2001). Hence a Ministry of Social Security had to be established following independence which over 10 years introduced social security in cash and kind and legally recognised social work as a professional activity.

New laws regulated the provision of social services with the statutory Catalogues of Social Services (1997 and 2000) and Laws on Social Integration of Invalids (1991), the Concept of Social Support (1994), the Law on Social Services (1996), the Law on Child Care (1998) and the Law on Special Education (1998). These laws created legal preconditions for the establishment of social work as a professional activity and defined concepts of social services with social workers as providers of social services.

This period of legal consolidation and expansion led to a boom of social work studies at universities and colleges, an infusion of financial support from international funds and professional knowledge via partnerships between organisations and universities across borders and also the establishment of the Lithuanian Association of Social Workers. At the end of the decade, social work was included in the system of occupations and qualifications and in the structure of positions inside organisations. Social work became regulated by statutory acts regarding qualification requirements and attestation procedures (1998), social workers training standards (2000) and the system of social work positions (2000).

Accordingly, municipalities began assuming responsibility for evaluating the needs of citizens for social support in cash and kind. They set up social support and social services departments. Municipalities recognised two groups as in greatest need of social services, dysfunctional families with children and elderly and disabled people and supported independent living arrangements for the latter. Because large social care institutions were distant and costly, it was argued that local domiciliary services were more efficient and reduced care costs.

It was still too early to talk about a unique Lithuanian social work perspective. A crucial change in social policy affecting the profession occurred in 1994 when the 'compulsory welfare' system was replaced by the 'liberal bureaucratic welfare' system (Gedvilaitė 2006). After 1994 neoliberalism, imported from the West, challenged ideas of citizens' universal dependency on the state and emphasised instead the principle of individual responsibility for welfare through voluntary participation in a collectively maintained social security system based on the principle of solidarity (Gedvilaitė 2006). Government support was targeted on families who did not have enough resources to meet their basic needs. The welfare system became more bureaucratised in order to differentiate between those 'deserving' social support and the 'undeserving' with more regulations to prevent clients' ability to 'trick' the

system. However, these efforts caused discontent among clients and extra work for social workers because it was often necessary to prove eligibility.

At the same time, social divisions accelerated by uncontrolled market liberalisation and privatisation in the shift from communist conditions where more or less all were equally poor to stratified economic classes of rich and poor under capitalism. Members of the Communist Party or those who had held high positions in government or the management of factories and industries used their influence and connections to their advantage in the privatisation of factories, strategic projects and industries. A small fraction of society became owners of big businesses, while many citizens, inexperienced in share dealings, lost their investments and jobs when industries went bankrupt. This uncontrolled process of privatisation and liberal capitalism did not lead to the formation of a stable social structure of Lithuanian society with a strong and financially capable social class of owners and a middle class. Instead, it led to social polarisation without a middle class (Mačiulskytė 2011; Norkus 2008, 2010).

Land reform policies also had unintended social consequences. Private ownership of land, which had been nationalised by Soviets, was partially restored, but in private ownership land was usually divided into relatively small plots causing returning or new owners, inexperienced in agriculture, to resort to primitive forms of farming which were not economically sustainable. Collective farms were eventually reorganised into capital-oriented farms, but this happened much later after Lithuania joined EU and only with huge investments from EU funds. Meanwhile, the destruction of collective farming infrastructures also led to the closure of kindergartens owned and funded by collective farms. The child-care service system was disrupted and has not yet been re-established in rural areas. Land reform caused high unemployment, poverty, alcohol abuse and ongoing migration from rural areas to cities or other countries, particularly from young people leaving school. The education system was forced to close schools due to falling numbers of pupils, while the demand for social services for elderly increased dramatically.

These socio-economic conditions had a contradictory effect on the development of social work. Society had to take care of growing numbers of unemployed, impoverished, imprisoned and homeless people, victims of human trafficking and other marginalised groups. However, while the need for social services and social support was increasing, the young state did not have the resources to increase funding for a corresponding social service system to satisfy all new needs. The ruling political parties, in order to attract pensioners as voters in elections, authorised increases in pension benefits but did not increase the salaries of social workers,

Around this time the revival of the nongovernmental (NGO) sector became an important factor for the development of social work. Under the umbrella of Sąjūdis, the Lithuanian Reform Movement established in 1988 as a social movement seeking the restoration of Lithuanian statehood, many NGOs were active in promoting ethnic culture, ecology, cultural heritage and education. Many children's and youth education organisations such as Girl Guides and Scouts, *Ateitininkai*, *Kudirkaičiai*

and *Gediminaičiai*[1] were re-established. Their value positions opposed Communism that had dominated for 50 years. After 1990 many pre-existing charity organisations which had been seen as dissident (Constable et al. 1999) such as Lithuanian Caritas and Lithuanian Red Cross were re-established, and new *Actio Catholica Patria*, Save the Children, SOS Children Villages Lithuania and others founded.

The growth of the NGO sector in Lithuania differed from the development of that sector in Western Europe where NGOs developed alongside mature, established government services and where collective action was valued in pursuit of common well-being. But in Lithuania, without long-standing institutions, the new NGO sector was propelled largely by neoliberal free market ideas sponsored by institutions like the World Bank, George Soros' Open Society Institute, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Ted Turner foundation with their liberal orientation.

But while donor NGOs and many Lithuanians valued neoliberal free market approaches, post-Communist Lithuanian society was still used to depending on the state. Citizens did not feel responsible for common concerns and traditions of volunteering and donating were unfamiliar. Instead of mobilising for communal action, most citizens would wait for 'someone else' to do things for them. Lithuanian society had been successful in mobilising against oppression from the USSR but not in building a community sense of solidarity. Bypassing the stage of civil society formation, it turned directly into consumer society. Lacking community social services and with the government providing almost no social services, opportunities opened for NGOs to fill the gap. At the end of 2004, there were 600 social service NGOs, although 40% of them provided institutional care (Jovaiša 2007).

Reliance on NGOs and individual and communal initiatives in the provision of social services did not necessarily improve the quality of services. The sector is highly diverse and is regulated by different laws in Lithuania. NGOs could employ professional social workers but were encouraged to make extensive use of volunteers; consequently their lack of professional and managerial competence in providing services led to distrust by politicians and by public institutions. Reliance on volunteers also led to the uneven distribution of services across the country (Žalimienė and Rimšaitė 2007).

The official view in NGOs' favour was that they could thereby provide cheaper services although many still needed funding for infrastructure and stable salaries for social work professionals who were training, coordinating and supervising volunteers. In addition, NGOs needed professional social workers for the work with more vulnerable clients. Some NGOs managed these challenges very competently and provided innovative and creative services for small, specific client groups such as women who had suffered domestic violence, victims of human trafficking, drug addicts and others although funding conditions often did not guarantee stability and continuity of services or adequate salaries for social workers (Gvaldaitė 2007). In each new application, organisations had to prove that they were indeed innovative.

[1] *Ateitininkai* is the Lithuanian catholic youth organisation founded in 1911; *Kudirkaičiai* is a patriotic youth organisation founded in 1988; *Gediminaičiai* is a youth organisation promoting Lithuanian history, ethnic culture and old religion founded in 1988.

In most cases co-funding was a necessary condition, which was not easy to obtain and led to uneven material conditions. All NGOs had to learn how to write good project proposals and to deal with the bureaucracy of project management. Some social service providers and their NGO partners managed bureaucratic requirements very well but did not provide high-quality work. Others did good-quality work but had low competence in administration.

3 Entry into the European Union

In 2004 Lithuania joined the European Union which resulted in changes in funding and legal conditions for the social sector. The subsequent lowering of unemployment rates also resulted in extensive emigration from Lithuania to Western European countries like the UK, Norway, Germany and others.

In 2006 a new edition of the Law of Social Services came into effect which introduced a new definition of social work and provided more specific and detailed descriptions of social services and how to provide them. This made the connections between social services and the social work profession stronger and more visible (Švedaitė 2007) and heralded a new period in the development of the social work profession in Lithuania which was marked by a more profound discussion about the quality and standardisation of social services and the need for social work supervision.

European Union structural and social funds (ESF) opened enormous possibilities and had a positive impact on the development of social work practices and infrastructure. EU funding evolved through different programming periods since 2004, each of which was officially planned and evaluated using research measurements of outcomes which were then integrated into programming documents. On the one hand, this meant huge investment in the social sector, providing possibilities for initiatives and the development of social work. On the other hand, social work now had to meet formal criteria and conform to bureaucratic rules of managing finances and cope with an enormous increase in ideas, services and indeed clients for which many organisations were not yet ready. Bureaucratic controls and recording of activities became more complex involving national EU agencies and ministries as well as partner institutions, all of which swallowed up resources which could have gone into services. This affected small NGOs proportionally more adversely than state services.

It meant, for instance, that social workers funded with EU money had to plan meetings with clients a month in advance and provide timetables of activities. Representatives from the National Agency could check if meetings were happening as planned at any time. Complying was an extremely hard task for social workers working in probation, with drug addicts, families at risk and young offenders. One could never guarantee that these clients would turn up at the agreed time or turn up at all. Nonetheless the National Agency had to be informed about changes in schedules a day before a meeting. Clients of social workers had to sign attendance sheets

every time they had a meeting with a social worker. This distorted power relations between clients and social workers and increased the risk of manipulation on the part of clients as some quickly learned that by coming to sessions, they were doing social workers a 'favour' because the social worker would not get paid without their signature. Managing training sessions for different client groups was a bit easier. Clients simply had to attend all sessions during the day and sign for each. However, participants would often want to get out of classrooms as early as possible. The effectiveness of projects was assessed by the number of certificates issued. Trainings were sometimes overly formal and real quality and usefulness for participants hard to evaluate. When a project was good at providing correctly completed papers but not necessarily high in quality, the impact of the training was impossible to evaluate, and many just wanted to cash in on the money. Ironically, while driven by EU requirements, this phenomenon illustrated a proverb about Soviet bureaucracy: 'paper can bear anything' (lith. *popierius viską gali iškęsti*).

There were also other side effects of the suddenly increased funding for the social sector. Fee increases for course trainers distorted the market. Many of them had left institutional employment, became freelancers and privately 'hunted' for European funding. Potential participants (including social workers) of the training schemes 'got spoiled' by the extent of training provided for free. They learned that all training must be for free. Later on, it was hard to convince them to pay themselves and invest in personal development. In addition, free training did not help to sustain high motivation of the trainees because what was given for free was not highly valued and even caused some sort of resistance to learning because the intention of training was not just to convey knowledge but to change values, attitudes and old habits. Finally, some projects created new services and addressed very difficult client groups, but even successful projects were not sustained after the funding period ended or taken over by municipalities that in turn wrongly expected funding to come from national budgets.

The expenditure compensation principles of EU structural funding were a challenge for NGOs because they often did not have much working capital and were forced to borrow money from banks as well as to make partnerships with several other organisations in preparation for applications. It meant that only the strongest and smartest could survive in this competition.

Overall however, NGOs in Lithuania proved to be flexible, open for innovations and creative in methodologies. They targeted disadvantaged groups that were ignored by governmental institutions, e.g. homeless people, children from at-risk families, disadvantaged youth, alcohol and drug addicts, ex-prisoners and victims of human trafficking. Forms of social work like street work or therapeutic communities only developed in NGOs. The first EU funding period taught the NGO sector how to fight for resources and survival, and at the end some of these got experienced and competent in project management. They grew, developed methods of working with different client groups, created networks with other service providers, managed to sustain services and proved they can be trusted partners.

EU funding also had a positive impact by imposing stringent requirements for cooperation and partnership building between organisations from different

countries and sectors, governmental and nongovernmental, practice and academia, and for coordination of social services delivery at national, regional and local levels (Swindell 2004). It helped to build networks for cooperation and enhanced the competence of service providers to negotiate with policymakers. Vilnius and Kaunas NGOs were active in voluntary advisory committees of municipalities trying to influence decisions at municipal level. Researchers and academics became more active in researching and evaluating policies and are now often invited as experts to assess the impact of national programmes and to participate in drafting legislation.

In 2011 the Lithuanian Council of Social Work (LCSW) was created by the Ministry of Social Security and Labour after a decision by ministry civil servants who realised the need for reforms, but at the same time recognised the lack of knowledge and expertise in social work theory and practice. The LCSW is a public advisory body on strategic social work issues under this Ministry to help set policies. Members are from policymaking, service-providing public institutions and NGOs, as well as researchers or other academics. By 2015 the main achievement of the LCSW was to change the legal description of social work to 'a professional activity that empowers people, families, communities and society by solving interpersonal and social problems, promoting social change, improving the quality of life and strengthening solidarity and social justice' in the Law of Social Services 2006 (Lietuvos Respublikos Seimas 2014, Article No 7).[2] It was a turning point; finally, social work was legally recognised as a professional activity. From January 2015 only persons with professional bachelor (from colleges) and bachelor or master degrees in social work (from universities) could be employed in social work positions (Lietuvos Respublikos Seimas 2014).

LCSW also drafted proposals for differentiated community-based services to deinstitutionalise mental health and child-care systems. It made a number of suggestions for addressing the issue of noncooperation between municipalities and nongovernmental social service organisations in their territory and mediated between the National Agency, the Ministry of Finance and the organisations implementing projects for the integration of persons at social risk in order to make the rules of project administration more appropriate to the requirements of target groups.

This triggered the transition from institutionalised care systems to community-based services for people with disabilities and mental health problems, older people or abandoned and vulnerable children, a principle to which Lithuania's Declaration of Independence had already made reference. The Law on Child Welfare of 2003 provided the legal base for de-institutionalising the child-care system, but implementation was delayed until 2016 due to a lack of political will to face the resistance of institutions, politicians and wider society. After the 2016 election, the Prime Minister, governing with a coalition of the Farmers and the Green Party, filled

[2] This is the definition of social work which has been in force since the adoption of the law in 2006 (Lietuvos respublikos Seimas 2006): 'Social work is an activity that helps the individual, the family, to solve their social problems according to their capabilities and participation, without violating human dignity and increasing their responsibility based on the cooperation of the individual, family and society'.

cabinet posts with experts instead of politicians and appointed as Minister of Social Security and Labour a BA- and MA-qualified social worker, member of LCSW who had worked as community social worker, had created an NGO for community services and headed the Social Centre of Vilnius Archdiocese Caritas. With this new impetus, EU funds were used for developing community services for children, families and disabled people. The reform was initially met with strong resistance not only from institutions but from society and also some social workers who cited difficulties in finding enough families prepared to foster children, especially 'not-wanted' children older than 10 years. Communities mobilised to protest against plans to house children or persons from closing institutions with mental disorders in their neighbourhood.

4 Leadership and Authority in Post-Authoritarian Society

While social work as a profession in Lithuania promotes less controlling and more empowering principles, Lithuania as a post-Soviet society has a distorted relationship with authority and authorities. Due to the experience of authoritarianism and totalitarianism, authority is predominantly experienced as dominating, controlling and prosecuting, and this creates difficulties in accepting and 'owning' organisations, state and governing institutions, where always a gap remains between 'us' as citizens and 'them' as politicians, civil servants and authorities. Gudaitė (2016) states that in the consciousness of many people, authority is associated with authoritarianism that signifies the captivity of the person and the dependence on the more powerful figures above them, a phenomenon that resembles the persistence of alienation in the postcolonial situation analysed by Frantz Fanon (1968). The effects of the experience of authoritarianism touch on various aspects of society and individual functioning: personal development and education, organisational management and human relations and societal and political systems. Swindell (2004) argues that in the Soviet period, decision-making was centralised by government with no opportunities for citizens to participate in planning and decision-making so that after 1990 citizens were used to not caring about what was happening around them as they believed that their opinion would not matter anyway. This fomented a lack of transparency in decision-making and allowed corruption to thrive.

Snieškienė (2007: 32) criticised social workers for lacking a sense of citizenship and identification with the state: 'When considering a bill on social services in the parliamentary social affairs committee the head of the municipal social support department with a master's degree in social work stated: "I don't understand why we are discussing this project of the Bill so energetically. Still we will do as the State decides." So it raises the question, what is the state and who are we?' Žalimienė (2017) argues that in the age of information technology, the visibility of the social work profession in the public sphere could become an extremely important attribute of power. While social issues are discussed and explained in these new media by various actors such as politicians, social administrators, psychologists or

economists, social workers are almost invisible in public discourse as advocates for human rights and social justice or experts on prevention of inequality, discrimination and other social problems.

Obedience and disobedience/liberation are fundamental topics in the analysis of the relationship with authority. Both might have positive and negative aspects. Obedience gives the group, community or organisation a sense of continuity. Disobedience might prevent authority from degenerating into authoritarian relations. People who understand the phenomenon of obedience and disobedience in their relationship to society are more aware of the importance of democratic values and feel responsible for upholding human rights (Morselli and Pasini 2009, as cited in Gudaitė 2016).

According to Gudaitė (2016), the splitting mechanism into 'us' and 'them' and 'good' and 'bad' provokes a constant search for enemies and readiness to fight them. Power is demonstrated in order to hide or compensate inner helplessness. This research on cultural trauma showed that authority, or holding power to act, unconsciously can get identified with being an aggressor. When authority is perceived as oppressive, controlling or punitive, this provokes a search for an omnipotent authority and in turn creates dependency, subservience, passivity and avoidance of personal responsibility. Unconscious inner aggression and anxieties prevent the formation of adequate relationships. This would require the restoration of inner authority as precondition for the development of rich and diverse relationships with external authority.

Buzaitytė Kašalynienė and Sher (2015) noted that the Lithuanian relationship to leadership is one of lacking trust in leaders leading responsibly. Lithuanian authority is regarded as bad, oppressive, controlling and uncaring. Public reactions to authority are to ridicule it, ignore it or acquiesce to it in the hope of obtaining privileges or sabotaging it through silent resistance. Citizens' inability or unwillingness to exercise their own authority and to step into leadership roles can be linked to the history of this country where leaders always got punished. These strategies support a conformist mentality and a behaviour whereby people split up what they think from how they act and how they speak (Snieškienė 2007).

Citizens do not trust authorities and institutions, and vice versa authorities and institutions do not trust their members, resulting in distrust both ways. Authorities are creating systems of control, and citizens are developing ways of bypassing them as in the example above of the National Agency managing EU structural funds and organisations responding to requirements only formally. Another example is widespread benefit fraud, which led to tight regulations and controls on recipients.

The Soviet legacy also means that citizens are dissatisfied with state interference in their private lives but at the same time have high expectations of state support and care (Žalimienė and Rimšaitė 2007) which Snieškienė (2007) characterises as learned helplessness.

In the period 2007–2016, the Lithuanian Civil Society Institute carried out research using the Civic Empowerment Index (CEI) nine times (Pilietinės

visuomenės institutas 2007–2019). The CEI consists of measurements of five aspects: (1) citizens' interests in public matters, (2) citizens' actual and (3) potential participation in civic activities, (4) perception of civic influence and (5) risks related to civic activities. It found that Lithuanian civic power is rather stable with a general tendency of a slight growth. However, it remains low at 34 points out of 100 in 2014 (in 2013 it was 36 and 37 in 2016). In 2014 the three most popular civic activities were donating to charity (56%), participating in environment clean-up (50%) and local community activities (33%). But a quarter of citizens are completely passive and do not participate in any of the 17 civic activities surveyed, and only 6% would take a lead on political issues. Yet, citizens attribute power to influence decision-making mostly to government institutions and businesses, less to the media, NGOs and communities. Ordinary citizens and the respondents themselves are considered least influential. Engaging in civic activities was seen as carrying high risks: 58% thought it was likely or very likely that civil activities would lead to losing a job, 57% to being publicly harassed, 55% to being seen as 'weird' or 51% even fear receiving threats (Degutis et al. 2015).

The Lithuanian Association of Social Workers (LASW) was established in 1993, and a Code of Social Work Ethics was adopted in 1998, although its effects on shaping the profession or taking up advocacy on behalf of the profession took time despite widespread membership. Activities were dependent on who was the President. These changed infrequently and tended to be managers or employers in institutions. Civic engagement research may explain this delegation of power to employers because generally older, lower-income citizens living in small cities are least likely to take civic power (Degutis et al. 2015) and this profile corresponds with LASW membership.

Specific research on social workers' relationship with authority in Lithuania was carried out in 2013–2014. It found that when authority in the form of leadership was experienced as repressive or stagnant, social workers used more resistant strategies to leaders, but resistance in the form of fear, passivity and avoidance. In these conditions they were not able to act with professional autonomy or use their authority to advocate on behalf of their clients. Feeling powerless themselves they could not empower their clients. These connections were observed more in statutory organisations and institutional care. Yet when leadership was experienced as enhancing professional growth, which occurred more in NGOs, social workers used more cooperative strategies based on trust with management and colleagues. In these circumstances social workers were open to reflection on practice, to take responsibility and show more confidence and autonomy. This also showed in them employing less controlling and more empowering interventions (Gvaldaitė et al. 2014; Buzaitytė Kašalynienė et al. 2016). These are indicators why social work professionals are still mostly depoliticised and employ predominantly person-centred interventions.

5 Social Work Education and Identity

In 1991 Medical College Utena opened the first social work study programme in Lithuania, followed by Vilnius University (VU) and Vytautas Magnus University (VMU) in 1992 and later by other universities and colleges (Bagdonas 2001). Social work education addressed two target groups: staff of existing social institutions and school leavers without work experience. The initial programmes targeted the first group with part-time studies and issued certificates of professional qualification, diplomas of high education or master degrees in social work, followed by full-time consecutive bachelor and master studies.

In spring 1992 the Ministry of Social Security signed a contract with Vilnius University for the retraining of 14 persons with 1 university degree and working in the field of social security, consisting of, e.g. specialists of the Ministry and social insurance departments or managers and administrators of social care institutions (Bagdonas et al. 2009). The first series of lectures in VMU Kaunas on social work were sponsored by Caritas with funding from the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB) of the USA and aimed at training for social work in NGOs (Constable et al. 1999). Their grant established the Centre for Social Welfare Professional Education at VMU in 1992 with the goal to educate the educators and leaders of the profession. The overseas founders of the Centre acted as codirectors with a Lithuanian assistant director until in 1997 the Centre was incorporated into VMU under Lithuanian leadership. More than 30 experienced social work teachers from overseas, mostly from the USA, Poland, Canada, England, Ireland, Australia and Germany, some with Lithuanian origins, volunteered to teach at the Centre. These circumstances led to differences in VMU's study programme from those of other universities (Constable et al. 1999).

At VU a different staff and orientation model developed when in 1994 the Social Work Study Centre (since 1996 Social Work Department) was established on the base of the Special Psychology Laboratory which had many years' experience working with various groups of people with disabilities, headed by an academic psychologist. The Social Work Department was then established at the Faculty of Philosophy in proximity to departments of sociology, psychology and education (Bagdonas et al. 2009). VU had its own academic staff specialised in special education, social policy and administration, labour market and psychological counselling. It attracted two Lithuanian staff members who had obtained their university social work degrees in Italy and Germany and one staff member who was a community service volunteer in the UK. These initiated long-lasting personal and institutional collaboration with universities of the three countries, which influenced teaching contents and research orientation. Later graduates of this Department joined doctoral studies and became staff members after having defended their doctoral theses.

Like in other countries, social work education was launched using internal and external resources pragmatically which led initially to different approaches and course characteristics. Soon the Ministry of Education and Science took the

initiative to regulate the curricula with a working group which confirmed the regulation of the field of study of social work in 2008, reformed in 2015.

International foundations and particularly European exchange programmes like PHARE, TEMPUS and ERASMUS but also national programmes of the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden (Mačiulskytė 2012) helped through cooperation; exchange of knowledge, expertise and ideas across borders; visits by teachers to Lithuanian academic and service institutions; exchanges of staff and students in both directions; provision of methodological literature; and supply of materials (Bagdonas 2001; Mačiulskytė 2012). The diversity of contact countries and partners regarding methodologies, practice models and conceptual traditions contributed to a considerable variety of curricula contents. In addition, not having a 'native' tradition of the discipline made social work courses initially dependent on scientific knowledge from sociology, education, medicine, psychology and others with consequences for an uncertain professional identity. This relates also to the different levels of academic institutions – as in many European countries, there are both universities and 'universities of applied science' (polytechnics) that offer social work in Lithuania, and it reproduced also the parallel between social work and social pedagogy. Although the number of social workers employed tripled between 1999 and 2006 to 6500, only 20% of them had a degree in social work, and another 10% worked while studying (Nazarovas 2007). Currently, there are 32 social work study programmes delivered by 8 colleges and 7 universities[3]: 8 professional bachelors, 7 academic bachelors and 7 masters. In 2010–2011 the Ministry of Social Security and Labour made the last investments in retraining social workers using EU funds. Since then the numbers of applicants to part-time study programmes dropped dramatically, and some Higher Education Institutes have terminated this form of studies, e.g. VU stopped admissions to part-time bachelor studies in 2011. Their self-evaluation report of the Social Work Bachelor study programme (Vilnius University 2014) showed that admissions were growing until 2000, remained stable until 2009 and then started decreasing to drop dramatically in 2013 and remain low. Similar tendencies were observed in all universities with social work programmes. The decrease of student numbers might be explained by the fact that available social work positions were already filled with professionals, although the turnover of social workers was high, so that additional reasons counted. The profession was initially attractive due to its novelty, but after 20 years everyone knows now that the profession is low-paid and the work difficult. The low status of the profession is not attractive for students with high achievements any more. Research on VU social work BA graduates from 1999 to 2017 revealed that only 36% were working in social work and 12% already left the field. The main reasons for leaving were low salaries (64%), no perspectives to be promoted (34%) and inappropriate management or leadership in organisation (28%). The main reasons for not choosing social work studies are low salaries and career prospects (Buzaitytė Kašalynienė et al. 2018).

[3] Social pedagogy was originally part of social work programmes but later was incorporated into education departments and developed its own specialisation.

6 Conclusions

Despite all the international exchanges, comparisons and incentives that accompanied this crucial period in Lithuania since independence, social work still fails to be recognised as a separate research field among Lithuanian academic disciplines; PhD dissertations with social work topics are prepared and defended before committees of sociology together with candidates from sociology, social policy and criminology. But this situation may be solved in future as growing numbers of graduates from VMU and Klaipėda University are now taking their PhD studies in social work at the University of Lapland, Finland (Mačiulskytė 2012).

Concerning the state of social work in relation to other professions, Varžinskienė's (2009) research found that it was rated lower than related traditional professions like psychology and social pedagogy but not in the lowest position. In 2007 salaries of social workers were approximately 40% lower than the average in Lithuania. But money was not the main factor of professional prestige. For instance, university lecturers were low-paid but ranked high in prestige. According to Žalimienė (2017), the loss of prestige is linked to specifics of social work clients who are regarded as 'bad' citizens who might even constitute a threat to the values of society. The turnover of workers was the largest of any profession in Lithuania. This turnover was another obstacle to the development of a Lithuanian social work tradition. New graduates are quickly absorbed by the labour market, but they do not stay long in the sector, get burned out and leave for better paid jobs in other sectors after a few years.

This is reflected in the results of Bogdanova's (2012) research on social workers' professional identity which revealed that social workers could not clearly define their role and position in society. Their identification with social work as a profession was weak, unstable and easily affected by external factors. They also tended to underestimate their achievements and take the blame for the lack of positive work results.

Many factors account for this picture of Lithuanian social work after 30 years of development. One has to do with the legacy of an ambiguous relationship with authority and the state in Lithuanian society generally which also affected social workers' confidence in their professional abilities and autonomy as discussed above. Aidukaitė (2004) suggests that the social security systems of the Baltic States that developed after Communism were intermediate between the liberal residual and conservative welfare regimes according to G. Esping-Andersen's classification. Social security programmes were relatively broad in coverage but at a low level, e.g. for pensions and social benefits; however, access to health care and secondary education is universal.

Nevertheless, the spread of neoliberal economic policies in the post-communist phase of economic reconstruction also caused widespread attitudes of social Darwinism concerning the social security system, implying that only the 'fittest' should 'deserve' to 'survive' and this by mobilising their own resources (Snieškienė 2007). Švedaitė (2004) argues that widespread poverty prevented the further development of social work. Because pensions and social benefits are so low and cannot

ensure that minimum needs are met, social workers instead of intervening comprehensively were forced to look for material support in order to ensure the minimum clients' existence. This is why attitudes towards social work as a charitable and yet morally controlling activity still prevail as they had in the early twentieth century, and these are related to the rise of neoliberalism. The terminology 'market of services' was introduced from the world of business forcing staff to think in economic terms, yet social work cannot be transformed into a business where the quality of a service is measured by user satisfaction. For instance, if children are removed from their families by a child protection agency, neither family nor child is happy or satisfied with it. In social work results cannot always be achieved quickly and exactly according to a plan (Švedaitė 2007). Future developments of social work as a profession and an academic discipline are therefore closely related to the direction social policy and general political and societal developments will be taking in Lithuania.

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Rebuilding Romanian Social Work Education After 1989: Benefits and Constraints from European Collaboration

Florin Lazăr

1 Brief Historical Background

Romania became independent in 1877 under the leadership of King Carol I who descended from the German House of Hohenzollern. After the First World War, in 1918, it was reunited with provinces which previously were part of the Russian and Austro-Hungarian Empires. In an effort to integrate the nation state, the Royal House continued the religious charity tradition of Mediaeval rulers and encouraged social initiatives (Lazăr 2015c). In 1924 a law on the establishment of associations and foundations was issued (which formed the legal basis for the revival of NGOs from 1990 until 2000), and in 1930 a social service law was passed (Mănuilă 1936). The interwar period is regarded as a flourishing time for the newly established nation state with extensive relationships between cultural elites and the Western world.

2 Historical Roots of Social Work Education in Romania

The first school of social work in Romania was established in 1929, the Principesa Ileana School of Social Work (Lazăr 2015c). Its creation was possible due to the efforts of several intellectuals and decision-makers of the time (e.g. Dimitrie Gusti, Sabin and Veturia Mănuilă, Xenia Costa-Foru, Henri Stahl, Mircea Vulcănescu, Iuliu Moldovan, etc.), who believed social work could contribute to the building of the young Romanian nation state. Sociologists, doctors and philosophers played an important role in the newly established school, alongside

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social work-trained teachers (trained mainly in the USA and Germany) and the Christian Women's Association (Mănescu and Epureanu 1996). It is also noteworthy that whilst men were invited to attend classes, only women were accepted as students (Văcărescu 2011, 2014), social work being then considered a women's occupation, as was the case also in other European countries (Healy 2012: 56). The importance of practice placements was visible in the structure of the curricula: social work students could choose their practice placements between Colțea Hospital and a community centre in a poor neighbourhood of Bucharest (Mănescu and Epureanu 1996).

The communist government, which in Romania took power in 1947, first downgraded social work education to the level of post-high school education during the period from 1952 to 1969, and this was accompanied by the imprisonment or (forced) emigration of some of the previous teaching staff. They were considered enemies of the newly established communist rulers or unwanted citizens who drew attention to the continued existence of social problems under socialism (Bucur and Miroiu 2018). Eventually, in 1969 social work education was completely abolished, and existing social workers were redirected to administrative tasks, mainly in residential institutions (Mănescu and Epureanu 1996; Lambru 2002). To our knowledge, there were no other social work activities or 'dissident' forms of social work during the last two decades of communism. The repression of the political leaders of the interwar period by the communist regime was followed by strict surveillance by the political police (*Securitate*). In order to increase the labour force and the size of the population, the communist party promoted a pro-natalist policy with a decree from 1966 which forbade abortion (combined with a lack of access to contraceptive methods); the dramatic consequences of this measure were illegal abortions, deterioration of reproductive health of women and many children being abandoned in residential institutions (Zamfir and Zamfir 1995). The continuous deterioration of standards of living (e.g. limited access to utilities, rationalisation of basic food, scarcity of goods, poor health care, etc.) contributed greatly to the December 1989 Revolution which, unlike in other Eastern European communist countries, was a violent one with more than 1100 deaths.

The early post-communist years were marked by the economic and social hardship of the transition from a centralised to a capitalist free-market economy. Economic restructuring was accompanied by high unemployment (officially recognised in 1991), inflation and the devaluation of purchasing power which led to high poverty levels, social polarisation and emigration. The political environment changed from a single (communist) party to a multipartite system with free elections carried out every 4 years. A new constitution, based on the French model, was approved in 1991 and established a semi-presidential republic. In 1995 Romania began its pre-accession process to join the EU which formally ended in 2007 when it became a member state.

3 Social Work Education After the Fall of Communism and the Role of International Partnerships

In this analysis of the evolution of social work education after communism in Romania, three phases can be distinguished, the reconstruction phase from 1990 to 2000, the transition phase from 2001 to 2008/2009 and the consolidation phase from 2009/2010 to the present. In each of these stages, we will discuss the influences contacts and exchanges with international and European partners had on the development of social work education in Romania. These observations are based on the still quite limited amount of information from documents and on personal experience of the author who witnessed some of these changes first hand.

3.1 The Reconstruction Phase: From 1990 to 2000

At the beginning of 1990, after the fall of the communist rule in December 1989, academics in Bucharest and Cluj-Napoca re-established the disciplines of Sociology, Psychology and Social Work with corresponding study programmes. In the first 2 years, social work was recognised as post-high school vocational education, but in 1992 this was changed to 4 years of full university studies, and in 1994 the first newly recruited generation of students graduated (Ștefănescu 1996). In 1991, similar study programmes at the universities of Iași and Timișoara were established, and the process continued into the following years with further new programmes. At all these universities, the first teaching staff comprised mainly sociologists and psychologists. From the same year onwards, some theological faculties installed social work programmes (Orthodox, Roman-Catholic, Greek-Catholic and Baptist), such as the ones at the University of Bucharest and at Babeș-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca. Two projects financed by the Dutch Government and exchanges through the Tempus programme (which included agreements with British, Dutch and Swedish universities) were the basis for setting up the 'Informatics' courses for social work students at the Faculty of Sociology, Psychology and Education at the University of Bucharest (Ștefănescu 1996). Similarly, Johnson (1999) describes the challenges of distance learning initiatives of social work students in the second half of the 1990s, whilst Bamford, Coposescu and Ross (2000) reflect on the experiences to set up a post-graduate programme within a Tempus project in Brasov between the University of Transylvania and the University of Ulster in Northern Ireland. In 1994, a doctoral school in sociology was established at the University of Bucharest with some of the social work graduates enrolling among the first cohorts. Volunteers and scholars from the USA, sometimes sponsored by the Fulbright Programme, were involved in training the first few cohorts of social work students alongside Romanian academics who obviously had to find first a scholarly and professional grounding in the new discipline of social work. For instance, the University of Bucharest collaborated with Tiffin University in Ohio, USA, and this resulted in the

establishment of a Master programme entitled 'Community Justice Administration', which later was transformed into a Master in Probation Studies to cater for this new branch of social work.

In 1995 in recognition of the importance of having available specifically trained supervisors for social work placements, a European cooperation programme financed by Tempus addressed this essential element of providing future professionals not just with knowledge but also with professional competences. Tutors from the Essex and Cambridge Social Services Department and from Anglia Polytechnic University in England developed an 18-day study programme for social work placement supervisors which was taught during three visits to the University of Bucharest spread over 5 months (Maisch et al. 1997). Maisch et al. discuss some of the challenges that arose during this knowledge transfer which concerned, for instance, reaching a common understanding of fundamental social work concepts and the implementation of newly acquired skills in the actual context of a practice programme, difficulties not untypical for the process of professionalising social work also in other countries (Cornelius and Greif 2005).

International contacts and exchange programmes played an important role in this crucial phase of development. Exchanges with other universities abroad were initially taken up by teaching staff and later on also by Romanian social work students who had the chance to study in other countries, mainly through the Tempus programme.

International contacts were also a motor for publications. In 1995, the first book on social policy in Romania, entitled *Social Policy – Romania in the European Context*, was edited by Elena Zamfir and Cătălin Zamfir. It was produced and published in the context of a joint project launched in 1991 between the University of Bucharest and the Hogeschool Sittard, Institute for Higher Professional Education in the Netherlands, and included also one chapter on Dutch and another on British social policies, apart from dealing with social policy developments in Romania (Zamfir and Zamfir 1995). This collaboration contributed to a Master programme in European Social Policy being established at the University of Bucharest, which continued until 2008.

At many universities collaborations with international partners were put in place, mainly through specific projects, not necessarily related with educational aspects, but rather dealing with practice in specific areas of social work (Dickens and Serghi 2000; Crawford et al. 2006). One such example is an edited book by Clive Sellick and Mircea Alexiu (2000) on social work in the UK and Romania, which was the result of a project focused on child protection involving the four big universities of Bucharest, Cluj, Iași and Timișoara and British partners from the University of East Anglia, Norwich. A particular Romanian phenomenon after the fall of communism was the rapid proliferation of about 40 private universities, some of which offered also studies in social work (e.g. in Oradea, Cluj-Napoca, Arad, Timișoara, Iași).

Overall, the main objective of international and mostly European collaboration projects in this phase after 1989, apart from instituting social work courses, was to build up the number and qualification of teaching staff for the discipline of social work who were coming through the Romanian academic system and to improve the

requisite infrastructure. Courses initially depended on donations of social work textbooks or finances for the translation of textbooks as there were very limited resources available and generally on the creation of a framework conducive to learning experiences of students. The teaching staff was initially made up of more experienced academics from other disciplines but was gradually complemented by newly qualified graduates who were enrolled in further or doctoral programmes and from there recruited to join the faculties (to our knowledge, already in 1999 the first doctoral thesis in Sociology by Doru Buzducea, a social work graduate, was defended). Exchanges of teaching staff and students (through Tempus and Erasmus European programmes) played an important role in this process of investing in human resources.

Goian (2013) found that the collaborations with US and Western European academics played an important role in the design and institutional growth of social work education in the Banat region of Romania (e.g. Timișoara, Arad). However, there were also cautious voices observing (e.g. Neamțu 2007) that at the beginning the curricula and specific course contents were too much based on the existing expertise of the teaching staff, coming from various disciplinary backgrounds often not directly related to social work so that these course programmes initially were not necessarily based on an analysis of the specific educational needs of the profession in these particular contexts of development. This accounts also for the split of Sociology and Social Work departments from Psychology and Education (at least in Bucharest and Cluj) towards the end of this phase, which suggests a struggle by these academic disciplines for independence and a reassertion of their separate identities.

A parallel difficulty to that in social work therefore accompanied the establishment of post-communist sociological education during the first few years as this discipline had previously also been subjected to heavy ideological restrictions. As Maria Larionescu (2007: 103) explains:

> In the first few years after the Revolution the process of creation of the sociological elite was sped-up due to the emergency to recover from the lagging behind of the old regime. Actually, in the first 4-5 years, in research institutes and university and high school education rapid career advancements from the bottom of the organisational pyramid to the top positions have taken place. However, in the second half of the decade the academic promotion process was regulated according to European type academic standards.

One of the distinctive features of social work education in post-communist Romania is the strong relationship with religious education, which is related to the now possible public recognition religious communities received. Since 1991, a considerable number of university theology faculties throughout the country have developed social work in combination with theological studies. This can be seen as part of a ‘reparatory’ approach mainly towards the Orthodox Church, to which the overwhelming majority of Romanians belong, as a means of compensating for the communist repression of religions (Preda 2012). However, other faith-based social work faculties were also created for minority Greek-Catholic, Reformed, Baptist and Pentecostal Churches in order to allow these specific churches to carry out their newly found social mission in society (Neamțu 2007). The number of students

enrolled was very low, and as George Neamțu (2007) points out, social work theological faculties prepared students mainly for activities carried out by Churches. However, the first research on the profile of social workers in Romania revealed that about 20% of those registered with the National College of Social Workers were theology graduates (Lazăr 2015a).

The strong drive to establish social work education on such a national scale was particularly significant in view of the enormous challenges that the social work profession was facing in this period of transition. It is internationally well known that Romania inherited a particularly acute crisis of children being in care (and frequently neglected) in large residential institutions. Whilst this crisis initially attracted foreign charitable and philanthropic organisations that came to operate in Romania, the responsibility for finding solutions and resources from within the country grew not least with the assistance of a professionalising social work body. The 1997 reform of the child protection system was a landmark in this regard and in turn led to attention being given increasingly to corresponding skills training in child protection on social work courses (Dickens and Serghi 2000). The overall reduction of the number of children in residential care in the first two decades after 1989 was in no small measure achieved also by a greater competence in community care approaches being represented in social services (Wehrmann 2005). During the late 1990s, social policies gradually also shifted the emphasis in the general area of 'care' from a medical to a social orientation which benefited particularly children with disabilities (i.e. in 1998 institutions for children with disabilities were transferred from the Ministry of Health to the Ministry of Labour). One of the negative consequences of a poor healthcare system in the last years of communism was a high number of children infected with HIV in hospital settings (nosocomial) in the late 1980s, which created the premises for the establishment of hospital social work since 1995–1996, especially in clinics and residential care institutions for children living with HIV/AIDS (Lazăr 2017). This first phase also saw the introduction of the first Social Welfare Law in 1995, drafted in collaboration with (but also under pressure from) the World Bank as a condition for further investments in the country and in preparation for the application for EU membership which finally was concluded in 2007 (Lazăr et al. 2019).

3.2 The Transition Phase: From 2001 to 2008/2009

The second phase of development begins around 2000. Social work education moves into a transition from the turbulent 1990s, which had been marked by ad hoc changes and initiatives that had a 'philanthropic' connotation (also on the part of foreign sponsors), to a more structured and independent period. Collaboration between social work academics and governmental actors expands, with some academics becoming actively involved in decision-making at the political level. Between 2001 and 2002, an Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Commission

(CASPIS in Romanian) was established with the support of the World Bank and the UK Department for International Development (DFID). For instance, at Bucharest University a College of Social Work and Social Pedagogy (Cozărescu 2012) was established in 1999 in collaboration with the Swiss Pestalozzi Foundation. Its aim was directed at existing social services staff and it provided them with a shorter education track of 3 years' full-time education. This course lasted until 2005, when due to the alignment of the Romanian academic system to the Bologna Process social work education changed from 4 to 3 years of study. Since 1999, public universities were allowed to have fee-paying places, which increased the number of students in social work schools, but also the competition between public and private universities (Andreescu et al. 2012).

The World Bank also supported the creation of a Community Social Work Programme as a college at the University of Bucharest in order to prepare existing social services personnel without proper qualification for more professional duties. These collaborations laid the ground for a course within the undergraduate programme in Community Social Work, Social Work with Children and Families and Social Policies. Collaboration with international partners (e.g. at West University of Timisoara with Germany, at Transylvania University of Brașov with Northern Ireland) continued (Walsh et al. 2005) in the context of a more stable socio-economic situation after 2000. As Flanigan (2007) states, the role of international NGOs and volunteer work continued to be relevant, especially with regard to social work practice. Dümling (2004), however, questions the beneficial impact of Western collaboration on Romanian social workers suggesting that a colonialist perspective was implicitly present and prevented indigenous approaches and traditions to be explored and developed.

The academisation process continued with the strengthening of publication opportunities of social work material, including research results, and the creation of academic journals specifically dedicated to social work. In 2002, *Revista de Asistență Socială* / Social Work Review (with support from UNICEF for the first two issues) was established at the University of Bucharest, under the leadership of prof. Elena Zamfir (then head of the Social Work Department) and with an editorial team comprising mainly of social work graduates (Adina Chelcea, Simona Preda, Iulia Mardare, Smaranda Witec, Ana Rădulescu, Florin Lazăr and Corina Popa). Since 2009, a new editorial team has been established (with Doru Buzducea as editor in chief and new executive editors: Theodora Ene, Florin Lazăr, Valentina Rujoiu, Anamaria Szabo and Cristina Tudor) and an International Advisory Board (that includes leading academics such as Lena Dominelli, Malcolm Payne, Annamaria Campanini, Karen Lyons, David Jones, David Howe, Bradford Sheafor, Darja Zaviršek, Kathryn Wehrman, etc.), transforming the journal from a generalist to an academic one indexed in international databases and published by one of the main publishers in Romania, Polirom. It is noteworthy that the journal continues the tradition of an interwar journal, *Asistența Socială* (Social Work) – Bulletin of Princess Ileana School of Social Work (see the journal website: http://www.revistadeasistentasociala.ro) and has as one of its missions to make publications since 1929 available online to underline the existence of a distinct social work tradition in

Romania. In 2003, another social work journal, *Revista de Cercetare si Interventie Sociala/Review of Research and Social Intervention*, was established at 'Alexandru Ioan Cuza' University of Iasi under the leadership of prof. Vasile Miftode and with prof. Ștefan Cojocaru as editor in chief, in collaboration with the Holt Romania Foundation (http://www.rcis.ro), an international foundation that specialises in support services for children and had therefore particular actuality in the immediate aftermath of the revolution of 1989. It covers a wide range of social policy and practice issues and has a broad international editorial board and since 2008 is indexed in the Web of Science, receiving, in 2010, an impact factor. The number of social work publications has been on the increase during this decade; a specific social work book series (with handbooks, monographs, scholarly textbooks and an encyclopaedia) edited by Doru Buzducea and Ștefan Cojocaru was created by Polirom Publishing House.

In parallel with the development of schools of social work, which peaked in 2006 when 24 universities offered social work education (Zamfir 2006), the profession itself matured during this period with a law on the statute of social workers being issued in 2004 (Law No. 466/2004). This law was made possible with the support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) which facilitated the professionalisation of social work in Romania since 1999 (USAID officially closed its activities in 2007 in Romania, after the country became a member of the European Union). This led to the creation of a professional body of social workers, called the National College of Social Workers (NCSWR), active since 2005. The first president of NCSWR was Florian Sălăjeanu (for 8 years), and since 2012 Doru Buzducea has been leading the professional body. Until 2007, when Romania joined the EU, USAID actively supported the professionalisation of social work by helping to set up the National Federation of Social Workers in 2003. One of the seminal achievements of NCSWR, apart from linking Romanian social workers to European and international representative bodies, was the drafting of the Deontological Code of Social Workers, designed on similar principles to that of NASW in the USA. This code was officially implemented in 2008 when it was published in the Romanian Official Gazette. Also, since 2007, NCSWR is the professional body recognised at the European level for the protected profession of social worker.

During the process of EU accession, which officially ended in 2007 when Romania joined the European Union, the social legislation was aligned to the *acquis communautaire*, but also substantial funding was attracted mostly to reform the child protection system (e.g. deinstitutionalisation of children, improved standard of living in residential care, regulations of various services, etc.). In this timeframe several international actors exerted their sometimes conflicting influences (e.g. EU, the World Bank, USAID, UNICEF), thus shaping the design of social policies (Lazăr et al. 2019). For instance, international adoptions have been virtually forbidden due to EU pressures since 2001, whilst American influences advocated for the contrary. The massive emigration from Romania, mostly to Italy and Spain in this decade, reached its peak in 2007–2008 (Sandu and Alexandru 2009). Overall, the

resident population decreased from almost 23 million inhabitants to little more than 20 million in 2011 (National Institute of Statistics 2013).

In view of all the developments, largely with international support, the transition phase of Romanian social work education can be considered to have ended in 2009–2010 when a National Association of Schools of Social Work was created by leading academics from the four main universities Bucharest (Doru Buzducea, Theodora ED Ene, Florin Lazăr, Anamaria Szabo and Valentina Rujoiu), Cluj (Maria Roth-Szamoskozi and Livia Popescu), Iași (Ștefan Cojocaru and Mihaela Rădoi) and Timișoara (Mircea Teodor Alexiu and Theofild-Andrei Lazăr) in recognition of the level of professional development and consolidation that had been achieved in Romanian social work education (http://www.asswr.ro).

3.3 The Consolidation Phase from 2009–2010 to the Present

The creation of a National Association of Schools of Social Work was facilitated by the collaboration of several Romanian universities with the European Association of Schools of Social Work (EASSW) and the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) during the conferences in Dubrovnik and the Joint World Conference on Social Work Education and Social Development held in Hong Kong in 2010. 2007 was particularly important for European schools of social work because it signalled the commitment of many members of EASSW to work together against the growing trend in social policy to curtail welfare benefits and social rights and to actively promote a more inclusive society,[1] a concern that unites Western, Central and Eastern European countries. In these 2 years, some Romanian schools of social work joined the European and international associations and developed a very active form of participation. The academic year 2009/2010 also witnessed some changes in the leadership of schools of social work with the retirement of some academics from the older generation who had initiated social work education at the beginning of the post-communist period. The 'old guard' is slowly being replaced by young academics who graduated in social work in the previous 15 years and were also partly educated in various Western European countries. After 18 years of leadership by a sociologist, prof. Elena Zamfir, the first social work-trained academics were elected as heads of the Social Work Department at the University of Bucharest (Adrian-Nicolae Dan) in 2010 and in 2011 at the West University of Timișoara (Cosmin Goian). At Babes-Bolyai University of Cluj, prof. Maria Roth, a psychologist, stepped down as chair of the department in 2016 after 15 years of leadership and was replaced by social work graduates (Mihai-Bogdan Iovu for a few months and then Cristina Baciu). In 2013, the first position of full professor was occupied by a social work-trained academic (Doru Buzducea) who also gained the right to supervise doctoral students (in the next years, a few others followed the

[1] See https://www.eassw.org/global-definition-of-social-work/ensact/.

same path), and the dean of the Faculty of Sociology and Social Work, University of Bucharest, was elected in 2015.

In terms of curricula, in 2009 at the University of Bucharest, a major revision was carried out to better align the courses and contents with the curricula of European and international schools of social work. An anecdotal incident refers to one of the social work graduates from the University of Bucharest whose BA diploma was not recognised by the national professional body of the country to which he had moved due to it having comprised too many 'liberal arts' subjects. This incident led to a reflective process at academic social work institutions on the content of the curricula, and a group of academics at the University of Bucharest with international experience who had graduated in social work made several proposals for change. The result was that instead of curricula containing more general subjects like Social Psychology, Sociology, Psychology or Social Research Methods, more specific social work topics were installed and with additional practice-related subjects like Human Behaviour and Social Environment, Sociology for Social Work, Psychology for Social Work, Evidence-Based Social Work, Social Work Research Methods and Counselling in Social Work. On the undergraduate programme, two new directions of specialisation were proposed, one on Clinical Social Work and another one on Social Work with High-Risk Groups. New Master programmes were also introduced as a result, one on Counselling and Clinical Social Work and another on High-Risk Groups and Social Support Services. It also meant that experienced social workers now became more involved as tutors for students and prepared a new seminar laboratory on coaching and mentoring in social work practice.

In 2012 the TiSSA conference (The International Social Work & Society Academy; see https://tissa.net/) was held in Bucharest under the leadership of Adrian Dan, bringing together over 100 European social work post-graduate students and academics. This gave a considerable boost to developments because TiSSA is devoted to promoting research in social work particularly in countries where the discipline is still under development by providing a platform for the exchange of research experiences and results between emergent and established scholars. In 2015, the International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (ISPCAN) held its European conference in Bucharest under the leadership of prof. Maria Roth (from Babes-Bolyai University of Cluj) and with the logistic support of the Federation of NGOs active in child protection. Since 2016, an annual international social work conference is being held at the University of Bucharest with many well-known European social work scholars having been invited as keynote speakers (e.g. Silvia Fargion, then chair of the European Social Work Research Association; Rory Truell, secretary of the International Federation of Social Workers; Annamaria Campanini, President of the International Association of Schools of Social Work; Nino Zganec, then President of the European Association of Schools of Social Work; Malcolm Payne; Karen Lyons; Iain Ferguson; Lars Uggerhøj; Judith Metz, chair of the European Social Work Research Association; Darja Zaviršek, chair of the subregional Eastern European Association of Schools of Social Work).

A further development of the social work research capacity is the creation in 2016 of a Social Work Research Commission within the National College of Social Workers. Under its umbrella several research projects were carried out: on the profile of social workers (Lazăr 2015a), on the human resources of local social services (Lazăr 2015b), on the situation of social workers in Romania (Lazăr et al. 2016) and on the image of social workers in the media (Lazăr et al. 2018). Since 2014, NCSWR has been organising a Social Work Excellency Gala where the contribution of social workers is publicly recognised, whilst carrying out national campaigns to promote social work (e.g. Stand-up for Social Work).

In 2013, the Association of Schools of Social Work in Romania sent an official letter to the Ministry of Education asking for the inclusion of Social Work as an area of doctoral studies. Although initially no official response was given, as more and more social work academics became members of ministerial bodies, the advocacy efforts resulted in 2017 and 2018 in two ministerial decrees that included social work as a (new) domain of doctoral studies. In response to these provisions, nine scholars from the University of Bucharest (Doru Buzducea, Ioan Durnescu and Florin Lazăr), the West University of Timisoara (Cosmin Goian, Patricia Runcan and Mihaela Tomiță), Babes-Bolyai University of Cluj (Mihai-Bogdan Iovu) and Al.I. Cuza University of Iasi (Daniela Șoitu and Ștefan Cojocaru) defended their 'habilitation' theses explicitly in the discipline of social work in December 2018 at the University of Bucharest. After receiving official confirmation by the Minister of Education of the 'habilitation' to supervise doctoral students in social work in January 2019, in April 2019 two requests (from the University of Bucharest and West University of Timisoara) to establish Doctoral Schools in Social Work were sent to the Ministry of Education and then to the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS). At the time of writing, the evaluation of the applications and a final decision are still pending.

A national evaluation of universities and study programmes carried out in 2011 revealed that 23 universities offered Social Work education programmes. In the 2019/2020 academic year, 21 universities with 38 faculties, out of which 14 of Theology (with about 1000 enrolment capacity), and 5 Distance Learning Programmes offered almost 3000 places (out of which about 300 for Distance Learning) in social work. The 5 private universities make almost 300 places available. About one third of enrolment capacity is in the 4 main universities of Bucharest, Cluj-Napoca, Iași and Timișoara (Hotărârea nr. 326/2019). There are no official data on the actual number of students enrolled each year and/or graduating. However, general higher education data show a sharp decrease between 2007–2008 and 2018–2019 in the number of students in tertiary education, especially in private universities (Ministry of Education 2018).

In this phase of the development of social work as a discipline and as a profession in Romania, the influence of international collaboration declined, as more and more Romanian social work academics gained recognition nationally and internationally reflected in the increase in numbers of publications in international peer-reviewed journals and of scientific, subject-related books as well as in a strengthened relationship with European and international partners and organisations (e.g. EASSW, IASSW, IFSW). Thereby Romania became a model for other countries of

Eastern Europe and Central Asia and in November 2018 hosted a regional conference organised with financial support from UNICEF and focused on the social services workforce (UNICEF 2018). In April 2020, the 10th European Conference for Social Work Research (ECSWR) organised by the European Social Work Research Association (ESWRA) will be held at the University of Bucharest (the local organising committee comprises academics from the four big universities), confirming the progress achieved by social work research in Romania.

4 Current Challenges

After the fall of the communist regime, Romania has experienced decades of profound and rapid change. On account of the experience with the very dogmatic pursuit of principles of authoritarian collectivism, the transition to democracy caused widespread disorientation. Furthermore, it was accompanied by the introduction of neoliberal market principles, which emphasised individual responsibility for which large parts of the population were not prepared and for which insufficient social support measures were being provided. The neoliberal principles were visible in the social policies at the beginning of the 2000s and continued to be promoted after the economic crisis of 2008 (Lazăr et al. 2019). One very noticeable response to this instability was the extremely high number of emigrants from Romania to other, mainly European countries, with Italy and Spain, probably for linguistic reasons, becoming the preferred destinations (OECD 2019). Recent Eurostat data show that with 3.1 million people aged 15–64 with a residence in another EU country (approx. 21% of the country population), Romania ranks first before Poland, Germany and Italy (Eurostat 2019a):

> […] emigration from Romania increased 287% between 1990 and 2017. High-skilled workers in Romania experienced the highest emigration rate, with 27% of the total stock of such workers living abroad in 2017. (World Bank 2019: 65)

The demographic decline during the first two decades after 1989 not only caused the proportion of elderly people to increase dramatically with all the associated social issues, leaving a diminishing workforce to cope with ever higher social costs, but emigration was also highest among skilled workers and women who sought employment as carers abroad whilst frequently leaving their own children in the care of relatives (Preda 2009). The high number of children being exposed to these challenges was a great concern for social service staff who were themselves subjected to reductions in funding owing to the economic stringency governments had imposed in response to the economic crisis (Lazăr et al. 2019).

Neoliberal principles of commercialisation also affected the education system at all levels. The widening poverty gap is not being compensated by adequate educational opportunities, and additionally school leavers and graduates seek employment opportunities abroad in large numbers. According to European statistics on regulated professions (European Commission 2019), Romanian social workers represent about half of all those in the rest of the EU who requested their qualification

to be recognised in another EU country between 2005/2006 and 2019 (4452 automatically approved against, 8884 at EU level), confirming that emigration extended also to social workers. Ninety-nine per cent of Romanian requests were for social workers applying to work in the UK (about 4000 in 2018). In 2015/2016, research on the situation of social workers in Romania (Lazăr et al. 2016) found that one in five registered social workers was thinking of leaving the country to work in another EU country as a social worker in the next 2 years, one of the main reasons being low salaries and lack of recognition. At the end of 2019, there were about 9200 social workers registered in the National Register of Social Workers.

As social work is not one of the more attractive subjects that would draw fee-paying students to private universities, their high number was affected most by the decline in students. In this regard, public universities are holding the line and still enjoy a good reputation but have also come under increasing pressure to 'perform' in terms of scientific production. The 2011 Education Act enshrined the principle of quantitative academic productivity measures. This meant that a ranking of the universities and study programmes was carried out and universities were divided into four categories: where A stood for advanced research and education, B for education and research, C for artistic education and D for education only. This division corresponded to financial allocations based on the ranking in a specific category. Only universities from categories A, B and C could now organise doctoral schools; those from category D were limited to Master programmes (Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sport 2011). This does not favour the situation of the discipline of social work described above which cannot count on a solidly established academic tradition in research and publications due to its forced restart after 1989. Also, research funding in general in Romania is very low at 0.51% of GDP, more than 4 times lower than the EU average in 2018 (the lowest percentage in EU28) and below the 2% target for 2020 (Eurostat 2019b).

5 Conclusion

Retrospectively, the development of social work education was influenced by different factors. The role of international partnerships with schools of social work was complemented by the involvement of dedicated scholars from Romania and from abroad. The external influences slowly decreased over the three stages of evolution and gave way to a more confident treatment of the specific needs arising from the national historical and political circumstances.

In the early years of the post-communist period, the role of international collaborations was vital in the shaping of the curricula, in the organisation of practice placements or in providing scientific literature to staff and libraries, as well as in the training of new academic/teaching staff. This was necessary on account of the very rigid prohibition on all social work activities in the latter decades of the communist regime which, unlike in some neighbouring countries like Hungary, had totally interrupted the linkages with social work developments of the interwar period.

Almost all current teaching staff in the main universities benefited from at least one learning experience abroad, both during their social work studies (through Tempus and Erasmus programmes in the EU) and as university teachers through scholarships, postdoctoral studies and Fulbright Scholarships in the USA and by attending international conferences or participating in Erasmus teaching exchange programmes. Towards the end of the second stage of evolution, the role of international collaboration changed from more direct and instrumental support to an indirect influence through projects and Erasmus exchanges (mainly) of students.

In the third stage, social work education became more independent and well established particularly thanks to the academisation process that reached full maturity with the establishment of doctoral schools. There is still a large variation in the development of schools of social work between the 'big four' universities and those from smaller cities, as well as between the theological social work faculties and the sociology/social sciences ones.

The progress made in the last 30 years in Romanian social work education is unquestionable as is the positive role of international collaborations, despite challenging social-economic conditions. The increasing role of research in social work practice and education needs to be backed up by adequate financing. In the context of reduced public funding for research, alternative sources need to be identified and attracted (e.g. practice-research, collaborations with social services providers/agencies and for-profit organisations, etc.). Collaboration with practitioners and employers/service providers should be enhanced in order to better prepare students to adapt to a changing labour market as well as to develop more post-qualifying education programmes for established social workers. More involvement of service users in social work education and adjustment of curricula to be more social work oriented in all other universities are other possible options in the near future. The National Association of Schools of Social Work could contribute to build the capacity of smaller schools to provide quality education in line with the international trends already present in the main universities. In order to increase the chances of social work graduates to find employment, social work schools could advocate more, alongside the professional organisation, for better working conditions for social workers and payment, incentives to reach remote/rural and disadvantaged areas, but also for reducing mass emigration of qualified social workers. Overall, the collaboration and partnerships with European and international schools and academics are likely to expand, as the Romanian experience could be a model for other countries in the region, in the process of developing social work education.

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Social Work Between Civil Society and the State: Lessons for and from Hungary in a European Context

Gabor Hegyesi and Katalin Talyigás

1 First Period: 1968–1989/1990

It can be said that due to the absence of higher-level social policy (and social development) up until the period of communism in Hungary this actually paved the way for professional education in social work. Before the Second World War, personal services in Hungary were mostly performed by charitable organisations, and only few among those carried out work to professional standards (Csizmadia 1977). Such organisations were the National Ambulance Service, the Stefánia Infant Rescue Service, the Green Cross (Gayer 1991) or the deliberately 'imported' settlement that operated in Újpest (near Budapest, which after 1950 became the fourth district of Budapest) from 1912 until 1948. Later, the latter became the National Institute of Social Policy that at the same time played the role of the practice placement agency of the Institute of the Social Policy Department of the University of Economic Sciences (Hilscher 1991).

The settlement movement was not widely distributed in Hungary, but the standard of their work was very high, especially due to the practical and theoretical work by the sociologist Dr. Rezső Hilscher (Hegyesi 1980). As a part of this professional quality orientation, the first social education programme started on 1 October 1937 at the National Institute of Social Policy within the framework of the so-called Social Academy, which was established at the same time, offering seven courses of different length and content for students of different backgrounds and interests on various social topics, including a 2-year course of social work with training in family life, with three semesters of lectures and one semester of practice.

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The introduction of professional and higher social work education in that period, often in collaboration between settlements or other social initiatives and universities, resembled courses in England, the United States and Germany. If democratic social developments had continued after 1945, human service professional education would have reached graduate level (Balipap 1990; Esztergár 1934). But instead, the Institute of Social Policy was closed in 1949 by the communist government (Balipap 1989), along with the other voluntary church and secular social organisations, altogether approximately 15,000 of them (Kuti 1992), and only the most essential care institutions were left in operation, dealing mainly with disabled and elderly people. The system of state social policy was reduced to exclusive state activities.

In 1972, after huge political pressure by the 'old guard Moskovit' communist leaders on János Kádár, Secretary-General of the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party, the government partly withdrew the reforms of 1968 and reinforced the classical Stalinist state social policy system in an attempt to meet the growing needs of people. However, it was more and more obvious that all three pillars of the 'welfare', or social support system, were facing a crisis.

Stalinist socialist social policy was based on three pillars:

The *first pillar* was the *system of benefits in kind* consisting mainly of state price subsidies. But with ever-increasing influences of market economy principles even under communism, this was a structural contradiction with the demands of the market. This required cash solvency, but with wage supplements provided in kind as price subsidies, the system became less and less desirable for workers and for industrial leaders who wanted to create liquid cash markets. In fact, this arrangement was favourable for those making 'extra-profit' in the black or grey economy or through private work, and those who could acquire scarce goods through personal connections.

The *second pillar*, the system of *social security*, was also facing a structural crisis. It was based on the assumption of achieving full employment by integrating new social groups into paid employment through the planned increase of the population with therefore ever-increasing social security revenues. However, despite continuous demographic directives and better maternity benefits, the ageing of society could not be stopped, and public expenditure rose. By 1975 the proportion of pensioners in the whole population was 20%. According to statistics, the mortality rate exceeded the birth rate by 1984 (Baló and Lipovecz 1987: 169).

The other assumption concerning the social security system was almost zero inflation. The 2% inflation of the 1960s did not put the value stability of financial funds in jeopardy. However, in the late 1970s, owing to indebtedness after the oil crisis, inflation rates started to increase. Although 2% and later 5% indexation of pensions was introduced, value stability could not be recovered ever since. Therefore, the social security funds faced a constant deficit, and due to the constantly devaluated money insufficiently replacing such funds, these were unable to provide adequate support for the increased needs of the population in spite of the fact that social security contributions were significantly raised.

The *third pillar* of the social policy system refers to *personal human services*, or *social work.* The neglect and abolition of social services was a political and professional strategy from the beginning of the 1950s. First, it was expected that social problems would disappear on account of the causes (capitalism!) having been eliminated 'officially'. However, social problems were generally not solved, and the demand for social services intensified in the 1970s. As Lorenz (1994: 28–29) comments: 'The existence of social work during the period of state socialism in East European countries, albeit in a variety of disguises, is further evidence, that a state, even a socialist totalitarian one, requires the assistance of additional "steering mechanisms" in the form of welfare structure and personalised support.' The problems of elderly people who were left without family support; the difficulties of 'children with keys round their necks' wandering between an empty flat (due to parents working full-time) and low-quality, crowded day care centres; the high rate of suicide, alcoholism and other forms of deviance; high divorce rates (with all associated problems of housing and mental and physical exhaustion); the practice of maintaining full employment by forcing people to retire prematurely; and the absolute poverty which was again visible by the end of the decade – even though its public declaration was still prohibited – made this field of social policy explosive.

In view of these growing signs of crisis, the most decisive reform intentions, scientific proposals and improvements in education were formulated in relation to these problems, and through this an opposition group was formed named SZETA in 1979 (Fund to Support the Poor, Solt 1989), which later constituted the basis of the Association of Free Democrats, as one of the leading opposition parties in 1989.

These observations highlight the significance of developments before 1989 which more or less directly paved the way for the early introduction of social work training in one college in 1989 and then in four universities and six colleges in 1990, the year of the political changes. Hungary was the only socialist country where social work education was introduced even before the political change of the system, and not as the consequence of it. It had meaning in a specific political context, of course: the reform of social policy and the introduction of studies of social policy in 1985, and social work in 1989, would have served the reform of the socialist regime. This plan failed, but the curriculum of social work education was published on 7 February 1990. This document is called the 'Sopron Standards of Generalist Social Work Education' (Esély 1990/4: 62–75; Talyigás and Hegyesi 1990: 59–61).

1.1 The Role of Civil Organisations in the Field of Human Services

The opposition group SZETA was the first real, modern, civil, democratic organisation to emerge in Communist Hungary after 1979. In the beginning, its members mainly wanted to perform direct social work, but because they were banned by authorities in 1981, their activity became more and more political and critical.

1979 was the year when signatures were collected in support of the members of Charta 77 in Czechoslovakia and of the beginning of the underground press. As Ottília Solt, one of the founders of SZETA, remembered (Solt 1989: 86.), this group consisting of 'writers and sociologists' was 'almost yearning for a practical activity' and searching for a possibility of action. Their members were still legally participating in the Conference on Sociology in 1980, and since the central subject of the conference was 'disadvantaged situations' and the problems related to 'poverty', SZETA came closest to assuming legality in its history. SZETA almost became an official organisation dealing with poverty, but because of its solidarity with the Polish Solidarność movement, in the form of a summer camp for Polish children in Hungary in 1981 (Solt ibid.: 86), SZETA was forced into illegality as part of the suppression of Eastern European alternative organisations, and it remained illegal until 1989 when it started to operate as a foundation (Morvai 1991).

The other civil initiative was the LARES Human Service Small Co-operative established in 1981 (Gayer et al. 1992) by a professional group wanting to create a non-governmental organisation that offered family services which were not provided by the state at that time. The year 1981 has an outstanding importance in understanding the country's development. Until 1981 all types of social services were monopolised by the state because, according to socialist ideology, the total state ownership of social services and the one-party system together assured that there would be no capitalism and consequently no social problems.

However, there were very serious economic and social problems in Hungary (Konrád 1969). Two concepts to overcome these problems were fighting each other inside the party. There were the 'Leftists, or Moskovits', who wanted to continue the rigid, centralist one-party and almost 100% state-owned system. They forced the part-withdrawal of the economic reforms in 1972. The 'Reformists' however fought for the unbroken search for economic reform. They were behind the introduction of a kind of market system in January 1968 as the New Economic Mechanism. After the oppression of the Prague Spring, the chance of social reforms in the Soviet Bloc countries was minimal, and the 'Reformists' lost ground in 1972.

With the subsequent global oil crises, the whole situation changed in Hungary. Prices jumped sky high, and the Hungarian budget suffered huge losses. The state debts became so steep that Hungary was close to national bankruptcy. Representatives of the economic reforms were invited back to power positions by János Kádár, and Hungary became a member of the World Bank and was able to get loans to finance her debts.

The 'Reformists' then achieved the next step with the Acts of November 1981 as part of a policy to enlarge the market economy which was meant to create money reserves for the renovation of the system. These Acts allowed for the establishment of small private enterprises, whereas the 1968 measures had only introduced market-type measures into the planned state sector. Furthermore, although non-profit civil organisations were not legally introduced and only economic and not societal reform was permitted, the first non-governmental social service and a theatre were established. Their historic role was to break up the state's monopoly in providing social and cultural services. A series of similar social organisations were established

in the course of the 1980s, with names such as Minerva, Tolerancia, Pszichoteam, etc. (Győri 1988: 269). They had to fight for survival, since only the last socialist government led by Prime Minister Miklós Németh in 1988 was willing to accept the concept of non-profit organisations and to grant them various financial supports and tax relief which were important steps towards a Western-type liberal democracy.

The main outcome of the 1980s was the acknowledgement of the existence of social problems (such as growing poverty, high alcoholism and suicide rates), and this gave further impetus to the preparation of social work education. Furthermore, it was realised that a significant part of such social problems needed *personal (or human) services* for which no professional education was available at that time and that these problems could not be solved by state social policy alone (Szalai 1988; Ferge 1989; Hegyesi 1989a; Lévai and Széman 1993). These facts demanded the reform of the most conservative parts of the whole institutional state system which had not changed significantly since the 1950s.

This shows that democratisation and the reform of social policy went hand in hand in the last years of the 1980s. The Act on Associations of February 1989 was the most important political step because it allowed the establishment of parties and civil organisations as a civil right. When the Hungarian Association of Social Workers was established in 1988, organisers had to acquire permission from the Minister for Social and Public Health prior to preparing for the founding conference. In the following year SZETA and LARES became a foundation without needing to ask for permission, because they just used their rights – Hungarian democracy was re-established!

1.2 The Role of Academic Research in the Reforms

Since the 1980s some sociologists put forward structural reasons for the increase in social inequalities (Ferge 1985; Bánfalvy 1991). Many important research projects after 1968 revealed often embarrassing facts concerning unexpected problems of Hungarian society, which completely contradicted the self-image of the political leadership that wanted to see a society without any structural problems. Examples were studies on everyday life at home (Szelényi and Konrád 1969), or in the world of labour (Hegedűs 1966; L. Márkus 1968; Héthy and Makó 1972; Laky 1982; Héthy 1983). These helped to integrate the theme 'democracy inside the factory' into professional and social common knowledge (Kolosi 1977, 1982; Szamuely 1979; Tolnai 1975). There were further significant studies on social stratification, structure and mobility (Andorka 1982; Ferge 1968; Halay 1979; Kolosi et al. 1980; Kolosi 1982), on the special problems of living in the countryside (Juhász 1975), on the transformation of the economy (Kornai 1980), on societal policy (Ferge 1982), on the anti-democratic operations of schools (Ferge 1976; Ladányi and Csanádi 1983), on the situation of the Roma population (Kemény 1976), a sociological study of the life of workers (Solt 1975), the social and genetic connections of disability

(Czeizel et al. 1978), on the discovery of the 'second economy' (Gábor 1979) and on community problems (Hankiss 1983).

As a result of growing crisis signs and based on such research findings, two large-scale studies were launched in 1980 within the framework of the Institute of Sociology and the Institute of Psychology of the Hungarian National Academy of Sciences and under the direction of Zsuzsa Ferge and Ferenc Pataki on the 'Reform of Social Policy' and 'social adaptation disorders'. The published reports became well-known in professional circles through, for instance, the special issue on the 'reform of social policy' research in the Social Policy Bulletin 1983/2 (Gayer 1983), the book entitled *Social Policy Today and Tomorrow* (Ferge and Várnai 1987) and the summaries of the 'social adaptation disorders' research (Münnich and Kolozsi 1986), with special focus on the analysis of deviance and socialisation. They all agreed that an organisational reform in social services was necessary. As a result, the regional network of the Family Assistance Service was established in 1985 to take up general social tasks. And finally, the Ministry of Social and Public Health in 1988 ordered the preparation for the introduction of social work education. The survey which formed an integral part of the research 'Reform of Social Policy' included aspects of professional social work education (Hegyesi and Talyigás 1984) and identified a group of sociologists, psychologists, doctors, special education teachers, 'social workers' and teachers who were available both as lecturers and as field instructors of social work. The members of this group had the appropriate concepts and knowledge of what constituted the profession of social work. The proposed curriculum for a 3-year programme by correspondence was based on the interviews made with future participants of the study programme, on their own practical and education experiences (see below) and on knowledge of international curricula. Many characteristics of this curriculum in terms of philosophy, objectives and structure found entry into the Sopron Standards in 1990 (ibid).

The generalist social work study programme included as main subjects (Hegyesi and Talyigás 1984: 48):

1. Theoretical foundation: sociology, psychology, social-psychology, social policy, law and social-pedagogy
2. Theory and practice of social work:
   (a) Theories of practice of social work: history, practice models, problem solving and crisis intervention, dilemmas, etc.
   (b) Skills and methods: interviewing, appropriate communication, case and group work, community development, mediation, consultation, conflict resolution, etc.
   (c) Methods of the arrangement of human services: preparation of a social map, familiarisation with local needs and resources, structure and administration of social institutions, organisation of local/community social policy, methods of data collection, methodology of social work research, etc.
3. Self-knowledge and self-education
4. Professional and individual values, analysis of cultural differences

1.3 Preparatory Educational Initiatives

Before 1988, the first formal qualification that promoted a version of 'social work' was the so-called social organiser training at the Bárczi Gusztáv College for Special Education in the form of a part-time course in 1972, under the leadership of Viktor Göllesz. The year is significant because it followed the introduction of the New Economic Mechanism of 1968. As mentioned before, this new type of planned economy intended to force leaders of factories to be professionally well educated, to be able to make good decisions. In the previous system plans were issued by the Central Planning Office, and the task of the managers was to be loyal to the Party and only to act according to planning. Now directors and managers had to start learning, including directors of social institutes for the elderly, children, for rehabilitation, etc. Against this political background, training for social organisers was established in 1972 at the Bárczi Gusztáv College for Special Education. At that time, the concept of social work was already known again in Hungary (Szalai 1972), but it was not allowed to be used for the new training of the Bárczi College due to political reasons. The word 'worker' was the problem and 'social organiser' was used instead (Kemény 2007).

In the second half of the 1970s, extramural programmes were provided for family care workers who worked, for instance, in Child Guidance Centres. Then in 1979, a course called 'social work' was introduced also at the Bárczi Gusztáv College for Special Education under the Department of Psycho-pedagogy under Anna Aczél, who then became the first Head of Department of Social Work there in 1990 (Aczél et al. 1992). This was the first time in post-war Hungary that this title was used in a tertiary educational institute. (The teacher of this course was one of the authors, GH.)

In parallel, a social-pedagogy programme was launched at the Department of Adult Education of Eötvös Lorand University, Budapest (ELTE), in 1980 which aimed to reform adult education training. The curriculum (Vankó and Talyigás 1984) included subjects concerning acute problems like loneliness, alcoholism, family crisis, problems of child care and homelessness. One module also mentioned 'social work' in its title. (One of the authors, KT, was working here at that time.) Adult education seemed to be an appropriate environment for the opening towards social work for two reasons. On one hand, the concept of the Stalinist culture revolution – which was the leading concept of adult education in the 1950s and 1960s – had lost most of its sense during the 1970s. Social work, together with community work, seemed to be a good new concept. On the other hand, the practice of Western countries' community organisations also employed mostly community developers and social workers, though under different names.

In the 1970s and 1980s, there was also a significant movement in the field of adult and public education, mental health and psycho-culture (Jobbágy and Péterfi 1987: 38–40; Szabó and Várhalmi 1987: 36), regional provisions (Telkes 1987) and community mental health (Gerevich 1987) focusing on the development of methods and skills of helping in personal, social and psychological problems. The Institute

of Adult Education (later called the National Institute of General Education) had a pioneering and leading role in promoting methods of mental health care through regular publications and courses (Fodor 1987: 7–9). ELTE in 1985 also launched a study programme at the Department of Social Policy established within the Institute of Sociology and offered a degree in social policy through a 3-year part-time programme closely related to the social policy research activities of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences which proposed the introduction of social policy education. The first form of this education was a postgraduate programme in social policy from 1985 which consisted also of a 1-year course in social work (Ferge 1985; Hegyesi and Talyigás 1988).

The various types of education experiments were transformed during the 'age of reforms' into a system in preparation for social work education, when pursuant on a resolution of November 1986, the then Minister of Education Béla Köpeczi established three executive committees for the reform of the education of social professionals in 1988. Their report formed the basis of the work carried out by the Committee of Social Professional Education (hereinafter referred to as the *Committee*) established at the end of June 1988 by the Ministry of Social and Public Health and chaired by István Bánfalvi, the Secretary of State at the Ministry (Darvas 1989). Members searched for new partners, principles and instruments for the solution of the serious problems of a society in ever-deteriorating conditions. The Ministry soon obtained the support of the professional field for this reform plan as well as from circles of reformists outside and within the party. Their work formed the social basis of the reform as the condition of democratic reforms. Their reform objective was to replace bureaucratic socialism with a democratic socialist society (Bihari 1987: 168). In the second half of 1989, the *Committee* discussed the necessary steps for the introduction of education for social professionals (Hegyesi 1989b, 2009). The Ministry of Social and Public Health planned and earmarked the costs of the programmes which were supposed to be launched in 1989 and 1990.

Three types of higher education institutions were interested in the proposed study programmes: medical colleges, pedagogical colleges and the sociology–social policy departments of universities. There are very profound differences between these disciplines with regard to personnel, approach and scientific development. The initial phase was marked by conflict between the medical and the sociological approach over a biological or sociological basis of the professional education concept.

Subsequently three concepts developed involving different disciplines:

– Specialised education of a medical approach
– Specialised education of a pedagogical–sociological approach
– General education of a sociological approach

The Ministry wanted to pursue its own interests through favouring the sociological approach in the form of general education for professionals mostly related to the programme of the Department of Sociology at ELTE, and social sciences with specialisation only at the post-graduate level, a genericism which later facilitated social workers who could work in different agency contexts (Talyigás 1989). The position

of the Ministry was also influenced by the international trend of generalist social work education at a time when the government was trying to open up towards the most developed study models of the world and to find new international connections.

In the first week of February 1990, the Ministry of Social and Public Health organised a 1-week work symposium for all interested parties to discuss matters related to social work programmes in order to set up standards – this was the Sopron Conference. And the outcome became the so-called Sopron Standard of social work education which since has become the basic curriculum for every school of social work in Hungary. Several studies were prepared for the conference. Judit Nemes, the secretary of the *Committee*, and the Department of Social Policy of ELTE – which was about to launch a university (5 years) and a college (4 years) programme – prepared the general framework material on the basis of the proposals of the *Committee*. The report of the college executive committee under the direction of Dr. Judith Veres and the Bárczi Education College prepared the proposals of the reform curriculum. The social organiser programme was prepared by Viktor Göllesz and Ferenc Kemény. The resulting curriculum was subsequently discussed by the members of all work groups, and controversial matters were clarified. The final material (with slight modifications) was published in the issue 1990/4 of *Esély* (Chance, a monthly journal of social policy) under the title 'Curriculum guidelines of the general social work education programme' (Az általános… 1990).

The conference set the duration of studies at 4 years which corresponds to the term of similar university programmes in the USA, Israel and Australia and the college programmes in Germany and is longer than the college programmes in Austria, Britain and France at the time. The conference designed a programme of high quality, providing compatible and convertible intellectual knowledge open towards international professional experiences. Thus, the influences of the Anglo-Saxon concepts of social work education were very strong, especially due to Peter Boss, Robert Carew and Herbert Bisno from Australia; Katherine Kendall, Charles Guzetta, Richard Steinman and Margaret Yaekel, Terry Hokenstad and Dick Edwards from the USA; Shula Ramon, Colin Pritchard, Walter Lorenz and Antonin Wagner from various European universities; and Ronald Woods from South Africa. Richard Steinman and Margaret Yaekel, retired university professors of social work, were in Hungary at that time on Fulbright scholarships and were actively participating in the education of field instructors, the preparation of curricula, the preparation of the Sopron conference and in the discussions held at the conference. Ronald Woods, who emigrated from South Africa to Hungary and who had an MA university degree in social work, participated in the preparations of the conference and in the establishment of the final version and structure of the curriculum as a teacher of ELTE (Woods 1990). The introduction of the education programme was monitored with significant international attention; the International Association of Schools of Social Work, the International Association of Social Workers, the professional groups of various countries and the groups of professionals assisting the Hungarian programme all supported our efforts. Also, many internationally recognised Hungarian experts, teachers and researchers, and professionals trained or teaching

abroad, participated in the preparations and disseminated international trends in Hungary. This international atmosphere facilitated the creation of a curriculum which complied with the international concept of social work education and provided a solid basis for a nationally co-ordinated, but flexible social work education system (Talyigás and Hegyesi 1992).

The details of the curriculum were the following: theory of social work (400 h), social policy (250 h), social science (200 h), law (200 h), public health care (120 h) and psychology (200 h). The minimum amount of theory hours was 1720, while the field practice was set at a minimum of 1420 h, 1000 of which had to be performed by the students in field work. Consequently, the core courses covered two thirds of the total available hours of training; the remaining time could be used at the discretion of the individual institutions for specialised courses. The same proportion was set with respect to the internal structure of the curriculum (basic training 65–80%, specialised training 20–35%).

With respect to the time proportions – pursuant on the proposal of the Commission – the presence of social sciences was emphasised more (650 h) than human sciences (320 h). Within the latter category, psychology was the most emphasised along with a 210 h 'psychology lab'.

Finally, the Curriculum determined the minimum requirements of the individual subject groups. It summarised the required knowledge and professional norms in each subject group. It specified the personal features which are necessary for social work, and in the case of the psychology subject group listed the skills to be attained for the sake of self-knowledge as one of the objectives of the programme.

2 The Second Period: 1990–2010

Since the programmes were launched in February 1990, the above structure is continuously being evaluated. The following opinion of the three authors of the Bárczi Education College is probably an opinion shared by other college and university trainers (Aczél et al. 1992: 72): 'The social work education programme of our college is adjusted to the so-called "Sopron standards", but it carries the signs of the special characteristics of our college. Our programme is more closely related to pedagogy, special education and rehabilitation'.

The Sopron conference still has a positive effect on the system of Hungarian social work education today. Isadora Hare, the Head of the Department of International Relations of the American National Association of Social Workers, assessed the significance of the conference in 1993, based on personal interviews, analysis of works by Hungarian authors and her personal experience as follows: 'Subsequent to long debates, the participants of the conference have reached an agreement in the field of a national plan of social work education' (Hare 1993: 11).

The 1990s can be described as full of optimism, the end of the Cold War a historic change which the post-WWII generations had been waiting for. Those who

had the chance to live through these years would never forget the absolute optimism of those years.

Of course, there were political conflicts from the beginning and enormous social problems. Some of the most important ones were the following: (Hegyesi, Talyigás, Van Til 2015: 107)

- Hungary lost approximately 30% of her workplaces.
- Almost every Roma person lost his/her job.
- Inflation was as high as 30%.
- Hungary lost very important markets in the Soviet Union.
- Lots of factories were privatised, then closed down by new owners.
- Most of the agriculture cooperatives were dissolved.
- The Hungarian agriculture lost its effectiveness.

Still, people were very satisfied and were sure that these problems were unavoidable consequences of the political change. They were ready to pay this price for freedom, for getting rid of the Soviet occupation, for the promise of becoming a member of the European Union and of NATO, for a better life, for higher living standards, for democracy. The basic hopes and promises came true. In 1990 Hungary had her first democratic election, and a new formation, the MDF, the Hungarian Democratic Forum, a conservative, Christian party was able to form the first democratic government. In 1991 Soviet troops left Hungary. The country became a member of NATO in 1996 and of the European Union in 2004. Meanwhile, in 1994 the Hungarian Socialist Party surprisingly won the election and formed a coalition with the Hungarian Free Democrats, the official Liberal Party.

In 1998, FIDESZ, the Association of Young Democrats won the election, and Viktor Orban became the youngest Prime minister of Hungary at the age of 31. But in 2002, FIDESZ lost the election, and the Socialists, together with their coalition partner, the Free Democrats, won the election again and were in government until 2010. Democracy was working in this second period.

In the meantime, venues and platforms like clubs and associations emerged that gave the professions public exposure, also in relation to the social field. An important event was the creation of the Hilscher Association of Social Policy at the end of the first period in 1988, which helped explore publications and find theoretical responses to societal dilemmas. The association launched the periodical *Esély* (Chance) under the auspices of Katalin Lévai as editor-in-chief. Further associations ensued for social workers, for schools educating social workers and for professionals in family assistance. These mushrooming organisations hand in hand with their local branches gave rise to a professional chamber (Union of the Social Professional Organisations, in Hungarian '3SZ') in 1995, in order to reinforce professional identity and self-governance, to establish a Code of Ethics, to establish protocols of professional supervision and to influence policy making.

The composition of social services changed significantly during these years. Until 1982 social services had been strictly statutory as a state monopoly, except for very few church-based homes and some non-statutory social organisations. After 1990 there was a surprisingly quick growth inside the non-profit sector. While there

were 8796 so-called state-controlled non-statutory non-profit organisations in Hungary in 1990 (like sport clubs, associations of anglers, choirs, etc.) (Kuti et al. 2002: 51), by 2010 their number jumped to 64,987, and 8.8% of them namely 5719 organisations offered various social services (Statistical Mirror 2011: 1). It was also a good sign of democratisation that the concept of non-profit or civic engagement, the culture of giving and the philosophy and practice of volunteering became more and more accepted among people (Kelen 2001).

From 2000 onwards and with EU accession, both education and practice opened up towards European partners who all helped to shape our professional profile. As for issues of standardisation, BASW in England and personally J. Warwick acted in a twinning manner over many years. Mention must also be made of Suzanne Stanisiere (Strasbourg), of Dagmar Hosemann and Winfried Seelisch (Darmstadt) as partners in our early project aimed at determining the curriculum for social managers and in adopting EURODIR standards in quality assurance. Projects financed by the PHARE programme sourced local centres, and important new contacts were established through Nol Reverda (Maastricht) and Sue Lawrence (London). These programmes brought in many new aspects from outside, centring on community social work.

The turn of the millennium gave rise to the hope to advance the country and professional working environment closer to the best European standards. In 2002, a new government even announced a welfare reform and institutional policy changes towards equality of opportunities. Somewhat later, however the concept of a welfare state was dropped, a political direction unfortunately not unique in Europe. As social policy remains the remit of EU member states according to the principle of subsidiarity, Hungarian policies got more and more contradictory. An Act for Affirmative Action was passed and a programme announced for the integration of Roma people. Due to deteriorating economic conditions and the global crisis, the principle of means-testing was promoted together with deep cuts in all fields. Priority was given to tasks of administration; all aid became subject to conditions; sanctioning became an important instrument. From 2010 on we encounter labelling of the poor, criminalisation of certain clients with chronic difficulties, the overall endeavour to control these groups. Prejudice was elevated to the level of official political discourse. Hopes turned into disillusion, and these disastrous trends taken together put in jeopardy what our profession had achieved.

3 The Third Period: 2010–2019

It is not possible to discuss the status of social work and social work education in Hungary during this period without a deeper analysis of the political situation in the country after the election in 2010, when FIDESZ won by a two thirds majority, and Viktor Orban became Prime Minister for the second time, initiating a period of autocratic, unchallenged and self-styled ‘illiberal democracy’ that challenges liberal democracy and European values (Zakaria 1997; Hegyesi 2018).

This political philosophy and practice has many consequences for societal and social policy, for the civil sector, for social work and social work education. Naturally, the wider context, e.g. the crisis of the welfare state all over the globe, the uncertain state of the European social model and the relative freedom of the member countries in how they deal with their own social problems, has brought about a particularly difficult situation here. Some of these difficulties caused for social work are:

– Social workers are prevented from dealing with practical problems according to professional standards; e.g. homeless people are now considered illegal and social workers are obliged to assist police in removing them. This makes it almost impossible to follow the Code of Ethics of Social Work and goes against all the professional principles learnt on social work courses (Misetics 2019).
– The government does not discuss any issues with civil associations that represent the profession. This is the result of a struggle for complete control over civil society, which Orban set out to win. As Köver notes, in Hungary 'the Fidesz government practically dismissed the civil society organizations, replacing the formerly existing ones with a "new" set of loyalists, rooted in and grown from deeper levels of party-created and -controlled civic circles. The underlying efforts of these new players are found in the historically based tradition of a strong central state, the restored (or rather surviving) authoritarian hierarchies that successfully hindered the emergence of civil independence and autonomy' (Kövér 2015: 89).
– This control of the Third Sector is described by Van Til as follows: 'In the brave new world of the Hungarian third sector, grants may be received from sources outside the government, but only if they are managed by the government and are directed to organizations it approves' (Van Til 2015: 381).
– The wages of social professionals became the lowest among public servants. This shows that solving social problems, such as homelessness, poverty (Kozma 2020), territorial inequality, the underclass status of the Roma population (L. Ritoók 2020), the deepening problems of public education and public health and the financial problems of people living with physical or/and mental deficiency, is not a government priority (Conference on poverty 2019; Bajomi et al. 2020; Ferge 2018; Gyarmati et al. 2018; Orosz 2018: 3–24; Török and Mihály 2019; Ladányi 2019).

With EU membership we fostered the hope of relative welfare for everybody, proper schooling, health care and other services, but this vision was definitely waning when from 2010 onwards conservative principles prevailed that meant that social work's full establishment could not be realised. The poor got poorer, and the decreasing budget for schooling, health care and social work prompted widening inequality, so that churches and families had to care for the needy. The current governance of social services and the low level of financing impede quality social work by professionals. Neither a minimal level of social security nor the ready availability of social services has been achieved, and professionals are often prevented from performing at the necessary level, as experienced in child care, in providing shelter and care of the elderly and disabled. Civil society and trade unions lack the strength

to achieve change. We appreciate the contribution of our social work graduates who continue to participate in this quest for improvement. They stand up for a fair redistribution of resources, for the rights of the disadvantaged and for encompassing quality initiatives that promote the inclusion of the most vulnerable sections of society.

In many ways we find ourselves where we were 30 years ago: we reiterate those ideas and fight for them in a hostile environment. We can still educate new generations of students although the autonomy and the budget of universities have diminished. These cohorts of young professionals are still taught by internationally acclaimed colleagues to uphold and value human rights, democracy and liberty. And there are achievements, too. Contrary to the financial difficulties, the illiberal governmental policy and hostile societal policy, social work education has a good reputation embedded in the international world with teacher and student exchanges (Balogh et al. 2020); there are professional associations and professional conferences**,** e.g. one that annually celebrates the Day of Social Work. There are researchers, teachers and practitioners who systematically participate at international conferences and present papers. There are now two professional social work journals**,** the *Esély* ('Chance') and the *Párbeszéd* ('Dialogue'). There are many professional publications, and there are PhD programmes leading to a title of doctor in social work. And in 2018, social work and social policy were accepted as semi-independent Academic Committees under the auspices of the Sociological Committee of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. The first book on social work research with the title 'Scientific thinking and research in social work' will be published in 2020 with approximately 40 contributors to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the introduction of social work education in Hungary.

The world, Europe and Hungary alike are challenged to decide between a peacefully co-operative, value-oriented or a self-centred, confrontational direction of development where one's own nation comes first. Will inequality keep on growing or can the aspiration of unconditional belonging still prevail? Although social work professionals give their utmost in difficult working conditions, it would be of great help if policy making at the overall European level took a welfare providing, value-based direction where quality was more appreciated, and democracy could remain strong.

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When Europe's East, West, North and South Meet: Learning from Cross-Country Collaboration in Creating an International Social Work Master Programme

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1 Introduction

This chapter considers the shared learning about international social work generated through participation in a multi-country collaborative project in social work education. It focuses on the critical reflection generated by comparing social work systems and education approaches in different partner countries during the design and delivery of a joint Master programme in international social work. With academic partners from 5 different EU countries: Denmark, United Kingdom, Portugal, France and Poland and 149 students from all around the world attending the programme from 2013 till 2024, the Erasmus Mundus Master programme 'Advanced Development in Social Work' (ADVANCES) presents a unique opportunity to capture the starting points of creating a joint international study project as well as the learning that has occurred during this process of planning, delivering, assessing and creating social work teaching.

Our stimulation to consider this issue arose from discussions around the request of the editors of this volume to consider the role of a Polish/post-social-

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ist partner in the collaboration. We found it challenging to relate to this request given that our collaboration does not assume that partners represent or contribute particular regional-level content or styles – and indeed we challenge ideas that the Polish partner should be regarded as distinctively 'post-socialist' from the outset. Each partner country has specific histories and systems of social welfare provision that mean Poland does not seem particularly unusual. The chapter therefore seeks to reflect on how the nature of the international partnership meant that country-level differences are not strongly accentuated. We are conscious that many social work collaborations involving Poland and indeed Central-Eastern Europe have placed these countries in the role of 'recipient' or 'beneficiary' of the supposed expertise and experience of Western European partners. Such approaches inevitably cast Poland as 'East' or 'other', and we are mindful of critiques within policy studies and international development that a continued focus on 'post-socialism' risks perpetuating neocolonial and orientalising understandings (Wedel 2001; Ghodsee 2006). Much of the social work literature on international collaboration focuses on *differences* between national partners, implying that national borders are important. Our experience of creating a joint Master programme was that national differences lost much of their significance when incorporated into a wider international frame of social justice and local-global practice.

To explore these issues, the first section outlines the design of the Erasmus Mundus Master programme 'Advanced Development in Social Work' and the cross-country collaboration in social work education. The case of participation by a Polish university is then considered in depth to give the perspective of a partner from Central-Eastern Europe, which joined the EU project with a different history and policy trajectory of social work development. The third section draws on views of colleagues from the United Kingdom and Denmark to explain how building a joint and coherent Master programme required lots of discussion about social work and university education in partner countries. The perspectives from different countries helped the consortium team to gain greater criticality and reflexivity on social work education and practice at local, national and international levels. This critical stance supported the development of a shared identity in the cross-country team that has been one of the strongest aspects of the partnership. There are of course national differences which have to be part of the programme profile, but throughout the planning and implementation of the programme, one of the consortium goals has been to incorporate national differences into a common approach based on social justice and local-global practice. The final section explains how discussions and comparisons of national systems concretely benefited teaching practices in the joint Master programme. The conclusion then gives lessons for future international collaborations with the suggestion that the notion of diversity may be beneficial to rethinking the role and impact of global, national and local perspectives.

2 European Collaboration to Develop a Joint Master in International Social Work

The ADVANCES Master programme is part of the Erasmus Mundus scheme offering joint Master degrees delivered by consortia of at least three European Union universities together with global industry and higher education partners.[1] The Master programme is designed for experienced social workers who wish to upgrade their skills and internationalise their practice. By combining the knowledge of universities from five European Union countries (France, United Kingdom, Poland, Denmark and Portugal), this programme emphasises the possibility to transfer and use knowledge of social work from various local contexts at an international level. It thus seeks to help students address global social issues in local context, as explored in an article for *Social Work Education* (Rasell et al. 2019). Scholarship funding from the European Commission makes it possible to support students from around the world with approximately 25% students from European Union countries and 75% from outside, mostly Global South contexts. Admission criteria include a bachelor's degree in social work (or a closely related subject for candidates from countries without specific social work training), at least 1 year of full-time employment in the social welfare sector as well as a very good command of English (IELTS 6.5).

During the 22-month programme, students study at the five different EU partner universities and benefit from the knowledge and experience of guest professors from outside the European Union. Students take part in field trips or short placements in each semester to deepen their understanding of practical issues of social work activities in different national contexts. For the fourth semester, students are assigned to individual partners of the consortium in order to conduct their own research projects in the field of social work. The partners of the consortium implementing the ADVANCES training programme are School of Health and Social Care, University of Lincoln (United Kingdom); Department of Sociology and Social Work, Aalborg University (Denmark); Faculty of Educational Sciences, University Paris Nanterre (France); Faculty of Education, University of Warsaw (Poland); and Institute for Social and Political Sciences (ISCSP), University of Lisbon (Portugal).

The study programme is structured in such a way that each partner university offers modules related to its research and practice competences. The programme's first semester at the University of Lincoln (United Kingdom) offers a common foundation in leadership skills, professional ethics and critical concepts in international social work. Semester 2 at Aalborg University (Denmark) provides in-depth analytical training about power relations and perspectives of multiple social work actors, the problem-based learning approach (PBL) and research methods and ethics. A summer school alternating between the University of Warsaw (Poland) and University Paris Nanterre (France) focuses

[1] Further information on the ADVANCES programme is available on our website at http://socialworkadvances.aau.dk/. Accessed 15 Jan 2020.

on innovation in social work. Semester 3 at ISCSP, University of Lisbon (Portugal), offers advanced training on current topics such as social entrepreneurship and environmental social work along with consideration of global social work actors and project planning. The fourth semester can be spent at any partner and involves completing a 25,000-word primary research project in international social work with a strong focus on practice implications. The programme ends with a research conference where all students meet and present their thesis/research projects. The research conference is combined with the summer school and hence alternates between the University of Warsaw (Poland) and University Paris Nanterre (France).

The idea to create the ADVANCES programme arose from cooperation of academics from Paris Nanterre University and the University of Lincoln who wanted to extend their European collaboration after working together on an EU-Tempus project to develop social work education in Russia from 2009 to 2011. Colleagues at the University of Warsaw joined the team through their Erasmus exchange experience with Paris Nanterre, whilst colleagues at Aalborg and Lisbon universities responded to a mailing list call for consortium partners. A series of meetings were held to design the Master programme for submission to the Erasmus Mundus scheme, first establishing the overall aim and concept for the Master before considering the curriculum and a wide range of student support issues. The creation of a joint Master in social work involving partner universities from different countries also aimed to take social work education beyond national borders. Bearing in mind the assumption that social work has always had an international dimension (McDonald 2006), from the very start, it was planned to consider different views on the definitions and meanings of internationalisation in the field of social work. The task was to design a joint transnational educational project for exchanging diverse knowledge and skills between practitioners from different countries (cf. Gray and Fook 2004; Midgley 2001). This raised questions about the programme's intended impact: Would the programme promote a universal view of the dimensions and values of social work, for example, as defined by IFSW and IASSW during the 2000s? The planning meetings for the joint Master took place in 2010–2012 just as calls for indigenous social work were becoming stronger (Gray et al. 2008) and highlighting the risk of Western neocolonialism in social work as outlined earlier by Midgley as 'professional imperialism', which we could see as a potential danger in an EU-funded education programme for global cohorts of students.

Considering the different approaches, histories, local conditions and institutional frameworks of social work in individual countries, there was a need to create a Master programme open enough for discussions about the present and future of social work and its dilemmas in local and global contexts. This approach was preferred by the ADVANCES team to a top-down universalisation of the content, definitions and evaluation of local social work practices. Importantly, it was not the idea to build a European programme for non-Euro-

pean students that would create artificial assumptions of globally imposed education (Dominelli and Hoogvelt 1996; Askeland and Payne 2006). Instead, the programme sought to respect diverse cultures, values, contexts and institutions by being a platform for the exchange of thoughts, not necessarily about how social work operates today but how it could work. The aim was to build the capacity of practitioners to analyse and understand social work in varied international contexts. The competences and experience gained in the Master would help graduates to better implement assistance taking into account the 'glocal' (Swyngedouw 2010) nature of contemporary social issues, mass mobility of people, including professionals, and the various roles that can be taken in the field of social work.

From the very start of the programme, ADVANCES consortium partners faced the challenge to achieve a balance between going beyond borders and at the same time using the richness of traditions within social work in participating countries. Our experiences show that the possibility for doing this emerged from first deciding the overall aim of the programme – and hence a joint platform – before looking at specific characteristics of the participating partners. The team could then look for distinctive knowledge and competences from each partner university to integrate into the programme instead of emphasising differences between social work in different countries. Much attention and time were devoted to discussions and meetings that led to a better understanding of partners, their expectations and potentials. At the same time, our exchanges revealed that the diversity of approaches resulting from the specificities and traditions of social work in individual countries could determine the richness of the programme. We were surprised by the considerable differences in social work practice and education between countries. For example, the role of NGOs in delivering (state-funded) welfare interventions varies greatly between the five countries of the partnership as does the balance of theory and practice in Master-level programmes and the range of job roles for Master graduates. Instead of trying to deliver a standardised programme in social work, the ADVANCES team decided to emphasise the diversity of social work within and between countries through teaching by a multinational team of teachers and practitioners of social work open to dialogue. This is conducive to in-depth reflection and critical approach of students and lecturers who, instead of adopting 'universal' solutions, try to understand the implications of choosing specific theories and practices based on consideration of social work values and local socio-political conditions. This multidimensional and heterogeneous approach in social work education also shows the need for beyond-borders thinking in practical application and ethical foundations. It is against this background of seeking to use knowledge from different universities and at the same time not looking specifically at national issues that we now consider the experience of the University of Warsaw as a Polish university partner before discussing the critical reflexivity emerging from comparing social work practice and education across countries.

3 Learning from and Contributing to ADVANCES: The Perspective of the University of Warsaw as a Central European Partner

Despite having shared goals and inspiring team meetings, the ADVANCES project was a different challenge for each consortium partner. The University of Warsaw accepted the invitation to participate in the joint Master programme with a view to learn how to implement international programmes and deepen the understanding of so-called internationalisation of teaching in higher education. After 2004 it was expected that as a country joining the European Union, Poland would also join the European Higher Education system. It was quite a difficult task due to the fact that for over 50 years, the political reality was as a distant 'other', which led primarily to avoid cooperation with Western European systems. Whilst there were some notable examples of collaboration at international level during the socialist period – for example, Polish influence on discourses of children's rights in the United Nations – social work theory, education and practice in Poland (based mostly within the discipline of social pedagogy) were largely isolated from developments in Western Europe and other parts of the world. In 1989, social work in Poland was confronted with the consequences of the fall of the past doctrine of the welfare state and the supposed utopia of voluntary actions for the citizens in socialist-built democracy. After the initial economic and social chaos of the 1990s and the strong pro-West reorientation at the end of the twentieth century, which involved seeking Western European standards as another salvationist vision of a better world, Polish social work found itself at a turning point requiring a different reflection than the previous one. Polish social work was forced to formulate its own perspective against dichotomous debates about what is better: socialism or capitalism, East or West and private or public. The accession of Central and Eastern European countries to the European Union and learning to cooperate within the European community required solutions that were different from the previous Polish standards of social work created in the 1960s, but also not copying Western patterns (Brenk 2014: 233–245). Nowadays, social work in Poland is shaped by the intertwining of multiple agendas and values around human rights, social inclusion, neoliberal retrenchment in the 1990s and 2000s, populism and 'traditional' values.

In the European Union, on the one hand, there was an acceptance of diversity and different national traditions, on the other, a number of integration activities were undertaken, aimed at developing common standards both among EU countries and also with those on the way to EU accession. Especially in the period before accession in 2004, many EU projects involving Poland were unidirectional, automatically regarding Poland as a recipient of 'expertise' and 'good practice' from 'established' EU member states in contrast to two-way collaborations where Polish partners could contribute and have more equal roles. Collaboration within the ADVANCES consortium was therefore refreshing in regarding the University of Warsaw as an equal contributor to an international project whose context meant it would provide critical insights on the development of social work. In the case of

social work, EU activities in the 2000s had concentrated on building universal principles of European social services in order to ensure similar experiences of citizens in getting social assistance. The equal rights of all European citizens were the key focus of reforms and adaptation efforts. At the same time, there was a search for Polish social work's own identity in the face of the opening of international borders for the ideas and education exchange. The first question concerning the nature of social work as such was to what extent did the American models that were rediscovered (Szmagalski 1996) help contemporary social work to rethink the formula of good practices? A second question is related to the tradition of Polish social work and regaining knowledge of its roots both in the achievements of Polish social thought (Theiss 2006, 2018; Żukiewicz 2012) and its European heritage (Frysztacki and Radwan-Pragłowski 2009). In Poland, there was also a deeply rooted tradition of assistance represented by social pedagogy developed since the 1920s, which was the mainstream of reflection on the role of social work and assistance activities in Poland considered as Polish. Social pedagogues were also the first initiators of changes in the development of social professions related to higher educational training of social workers 'in the environment' (e.g. Ewa Marynowicz-Hetka, Jerzy Szmagalski and Barbara Smolińska-Theiss among others), referring to the concept of the founder of community work in Poland, Helena Radlińska (1879–1954). Her ideas and persistence in developing social services and social work education led to the establishment in 1925 of Socio-Educational Work Studies (Studium Pracy Społeczno-Oświatowej) at the Institute of Social Services (Instytut Służb Społecznych) of the Free Polish University (Wolna Wszechnica Polska) (Theiss 2006).

In 1990, the Polish Association of Social Work Schools was founded, which primarily was associated with university departments that trained social workers. From 1990, the intensive development of social work schools began, and requirements for the qualifications of social workers were established. A Master degree in social work became compulsory for professional practice in Poland, and universities developed the relevant study programmes (at the end of the 1980s, only 3.5% of social workers had a MA diploma – see Brenk 2014: 245). An important aspect of Polish social work's search was also the reform of social services in Poland and the introduction of the Social Assistance Act in 2004, followed by the start of structural changes in the professionalisation of social work. A number of publications were made about the development of social work and social services in Poland after 1989 (e.g. Szmagalski 1996; Marynowicz-Hetka 2006; Kantowicz et al. 2011, 2018; Kromolicka 2003; Marzec-Holka 2005; Smolińska-Theiss 2007; Rymsza 2012). These background factors shaped the perspectives and experience that a Polish university could contribute to an international Master programme in social work, particularly on bottom-up innovation and major reforms of the profession.

The Faculty of Education at the University of Warsaw, with a long tradition of developing theory and practice in social work and social pedagogy, joined the Erasmus Mundus Master consortium through its existing Erasmus and staff collaboration with University Paris Nanterre. The joint implementation of an international master programme allowed for shared learning in the development of social work

theory, practice education and university teaching. It is important to highlight that the University of Warsaw was neither regarded as nor allocated the role of contributing a 'post-socialist' or 'Eastern European' perspective in ADVANCES. Partner universities and individual colleagues were not representing their countries but contributing specialist input around core themes of analysing social issues, generating innovation in social work through diverse intervention approaches, developing locally relevant practice influenced by international norms and learning from other contexts. Along with its specialist topics of family interventions and social pedagogy, the University of Warsaw's team contributed important expertise on community development, social activism and non-governmental services, given these foci of Poland's social sector in the 1990s and 2000s. Each ADVANCES partner was able to contribute equally to such goals, and this united the individual consortium colleagues rather than isolating them by country. We learnt that social work in every country is influenced by its history and system of social welfare, so in fact Poland did not feel so distinctive or 'other' as would be assumed through a lens of 'East-West' or 'post-socialism'. Interestingly, many students – from both inside and outside the EU – knew very little about Poland, especially its socialist past, and, in fact, were surprised that there is not a single 'European' model of social work and considerable diversity between welfare systems across the EU. Of course, the nature of the ADVANCES collaboration shaped these dynamics – the project directly aimed to build a joint partnership and programme rather than 'transfer' knowledge and skills between countries.

The discussion and development of ADVANCES at the University of Warsaw was not an easy task due to the language competences of researchers, teachers and practitioners in the field of social work in Poland (which was also a challenge for other non-English-speaking countries such as France, Portugal and Denmark). Many years of education and conducting research primarily for Polish audiences restricted international access to the ideas and practices of Polish academics, who had a lot of experience and knowledge. At the start of ADVANCES, a lack of English language skills was the main limitation on the Faculty of Education's possibilities to supervise master dissertations and teach classes for foreign-language groups. Use of guest lecturers and discussion-based teaching activities (as opposed to lectures) were primary ways to overcome the challenge of language barriers. Over time, it turned out that this challenge (like on other Erasmus and international programmes) has become an impulse for change, and now several programmes are implemented entirely in English both at the Faculty of Education and the wider University of Warsaw, which had the ambition to expand opportunities for students from other countries.

In addition to language barriers, ADVANCES was also a challenge for administrative staff and academic teachers. However, it became an opportunity for interesting meetings, discussions and the dissemination of knowledge in the field of international social work. Cooperation with other faculties and universities that would like to run similar programmes was initiated, and international curricula are planned in more places based on our positive experience. In retrospect, it can be said that the benefit of this partnership is multilateral and the potential of each country

greater than originally assumed. First of all, gaining experience of year-round cooperation in terms of content, administration and teaching has reformulated many processes at the Faculty of Education, including the implementation of international partnerships, the preparation and planning schemes, teaching spaces and staff potential. Instead of mercantile considerations of 'income' for the university and sometimes for individual staff, international projects are now regarded as opportunities for professional and team development. The experience gained in conducting new forms of training, such as international summer schools or supervising master dissertations of students from various non-European countries who want to learn about the problem of social work in a given country, is also extremely valuable. The ADVANCES programme also helped to learn how to incorporate practitioner experience into university education, which is still a considerable challenge facing Polish higher education – social workers have significant experience, valuable skills and knowledge that are important but underutilised resources for university programmes focused on preparation for practice. The ADVANCES programme gives an opportunity for practitioners to participate in research projects completed by our Master students, gaining experience, competences and sharing their understandings of internationally relevant aspects of Polish social work. The programme thus showed that relating to the Central-Eastern European university as an equal partner brings beneficial results in matching each other with the diversity of local traditions without triggering stereotypes.

4 Reflexivity and Criticality Through Cross-Country Comparisons: Perspectives from Great Britain and Denmark

ADVANCES partners come from five different countries that have distinctive welfare and social work systems – different levels of state-NGO involvement, professional autonomy, approaches to risk/empowerment, training for social workers and models of administration/new public management. Comparing the differences led to significant discussion and reflection on the nature of social work practice and teaching that was then embedded in the programme. However, it is important to underline that no country was considered a lead country in social work, and hence no voice could or should claim final authority in discussions. Likewise, the geographic or regional affiliation of each partner did not have specific weight when developing the programme. Naturally, national history, culture and traditions have influenced the programme. The aim has not been to develop a programme where national characteristics were erased but rather to develop a programme where country-level traditions, cultures and history were visible but incorporated and connected to each other in a coherent programme for students. Instead of referring to Western, Eastern, Southern or Nordic perspectives in Europe, the focus was rather on the specialist knowledge of partner universities. An interesting aspect of the

Polish approach, for instance, was not the East or post-socialist background but rather the strong position of social pedagogy in social work which could widen the scope of the programme. An interesting aspect of the Portuguese approach was not the Southern European cultural background but the strong influence of NGOs in social work, which was very different from the high levels of state intervention in Denmark.

Establishing a joint programme containing different flavours of social work is not simple. The development of ADVANCES required lots of discussions about differences in social work education and practice between our countries. Of course we did not agree all the time. The programme team had complicated discussions and occasional disagreements. There are several explanations for how we overcame them. One is in fact that we did not see each other as representing different European regions like East, West, South and North. Returning to the overall programme aim of creating a Master programme for experienced professionals seeking to internationalise their practice let the team focus on how each partner could bring something different and inspiring to the programme. Another factor in ensuring the unity of the international partnership is that we respected national issues that could create big problems for a partner if neglected. The development of the programme raised many logistical, administrative and procedural challenges, and many processes were altered, but changes should not put a partner in a difficult position. A third explanation – and maybe the strongest – is that the main aim of discussions was not to persuade partners about the right way to do social work but rather to understand why partners were doing social work differently and educating future social workers in different ways. From this position it was possible to put together a puzzle containing different experiences and approaches towards social work. Finally, a fourth explanation is that we, all the way through, had a saying: we may disagree, but we have to find a solution – if not, the programme will disintegrate. International collaboration certainly involves compromise, but this does not mean dissolving or 'averaging out' the positions of different partners.

From the discussions we learnt that there is lots of diversity in social work, which makes it important to consider the purpose of particular approaches in practice and education. We also discovered that social work systems in all countries have 'dark' and 'missing' sides, for example, the inflexibility and individualisation of Danish social work interventions that challenge the highly positive rhetoric about the success of Nordic welfare states. Similarly, we learnt about significant innovation in countries not discussed in English-speaking literature (e.g. France, Poland, Portugal). At the level of theory, we found out that the analysis of social work is framed by different concepts in different countries, for example, a strong focus on 'power relations' in Denmark, 'service user participation' in the United Kingdom and 'enterprise' in Portugal. Such country 'specialities' prompted reflection about why these concepts are preferred and helped colleagues to share the value of such approaches with each other, accept the critical thought of others and reshape their entire thinking of these concepts vis-a-vis others from the perspective of an international team. Thanks to the ADVANCES programme, we realised that social work concepts help to give clarity and logic to teaching, but they can also oversim-

plify the complex picture as well, preventing it from being seen as a diverse phenomenon from the perspective of a school window (particularly if it is only one school in one country).

These discussions helped us to become more reflexive and critical about social work and education because we were challenged to question existing processes and their fit with the key aims and values of social work education and practice. The consortium developed increasing confidence about asserting the importance of the 'local' in social work and being contextually relevant in terms of the compatibility of interventions with different welfare systems, societal values and practical issues like language. This reflexivity based on discussions of social work approaches and systems at country level became a very important aspect of the collaboration and source of a shared identity in the team based on a critical approach, commitment to social justice and the view that social work practice indeed has international dimensions but must be relevant to local contexts. These processes of exchange helped to highlight that labels like 'East', 'West', 'North' or 'South' were not very helpful for understanding practice and to value the possible contributions of partners from different European countries. Based on the team's experiences, ADVANCES teaches that it is crucial to contextualise social work when practising internationally. This learning translated to more global discussions that value the social work knowledge and practice experience of all countries, especially those historically marginalised at epistemological, political, economic, cultural and social levels in contrast to predominant yet narrow Anglo-American or European perspectives (cf. Connell 2007 on southern theory and Sousa Santos 2014 on epistemologies of the South).

5 Using International Collaboration to Innovate in Social Work Education

The ADVANCES team discussions about social work and education in each partner country directly benefited the Master programme's content and teaching approach. ADVANCES was a bottom-up project, and the team had significant freedom to design the programme without the constraints of national regulations or systems. The aim to be internationally relevant meant that we were not presenting 'national' models of practice or a 'master in European social work'. Colleagues agreed that the programme goal was not to teach about social work systems in our countries, so there did not need to be high input around 'Polish', 'English' or 'Danish' social work systems. Instead, specific practices and social work competences from different universities were included in the curriculum to highlight wider analytical points that would be useful for the learning and understanding of international social work. For example, the power relations frame was taught mostly based on the Danish welfare system, whilst questions of complex decision-making could be presented using serious case reviews of children's deaths in England. This approach was a challenge to students who wanted to know 'how it is' in Poland, the United Kingdom,

Denmark and other countries. Instead, we offered the cases to prompt critical thinking, go beyond cross-border comparison and challenge ideas that certain countries might represent 'best practice' given that interventions need to be contextually relevant. The global approach, in our case, required the openness to see such examples in the light of a complex mix of universal values, international influences, national political and legal powers, local implementation, societal factors and individual decisions. This holistic view requires constant discussion among all partners (including service users, citizens, students, researchers, practitioners and university teachers) to create a platform for collaboratively discussing social work. Thinking in this 'advanced' way is not easy but has been supported in ADVANCES teaching approaches emphasising multiple perspectives and the local diversity of social issues and practice responses.

Comparing teaching approaches in the consortium's universities generated significant reflection on pedagogical aspects of the Master programme. Based on our own internal discussions about the nature of social work practice and teaching in our countries, we knew that the ADVANCES programme required 'active' and 'transformational' forms of learning involving critical discussion, enquiry and the exchange of students' own experiences to encourage reflection about the diverse nature of social work. In the assessment of student work, we could see clear differences between countries and institutions in approaches, and some of this diversity was valued and deliberately incorporated into the Master. For example, Denmark and Portugal tended to assess through oral discussions of written work in contrast to the separation of presentations and written work in the United Kingdom. The project-style assessments (compared to academic essays) used at the University of Lisbon were regarded as very useful preparation for social work practice. Yet, there were certain processes where we could see the benefit of harmonisation, for example, in grading based on learning outcomes and ensuring some consistency in the amount and type of feedback given to students. A standard system of quality assurance was introduced across all partners, combining practices from a range of partners, for example, mid-semester reviews with students and scrutiny of teaching and assessments on all ADVANCES modules by external experts, which was a novelty for four of the five partner universities but became highly appreciated for the excellent feedback to lecturers about their work.

6 Conclusions and Lessons for Future Collaborations

When challenged to look at post-socialist or East/West influence within ADVANCES, we realise that we have tried to avoid simplistic categorisations in the understanding of different approaches and hence the development of the programme. We are not blind to the fact that post-socialist experiences and East/West issues influence social work, as explained in many chapters of this volume. We have, however, been conscious to avoid assuming that 'post-socialism' and other labels automatically define the participation of each partner because this could create divisions and turn discussions into bigger disagreements. It has been important to mirror the development of

the programme in what we were teaching. Internationally oriented social workers need to be open, curious and ready to embrace learning from new contexts rather than view it through pre-existing and potentially judgemental discourses.

From the experience of ADVANCES, we suggest that international collaboration means going beyond 'national' systems to establish a shared, reflexive and critical approach with sufficient flexibility for national specificities. We discovered for ourselves that global social work can be both a beautiful idea and a great stereotype, myth and challenge for our knowledge and understanding of a diverse world. There is hope and possibility that the encounter between East and West and North and South will turn into something more than a benevolent understanding of otherness. Thanks to meeting people and sharing tasks with them, joint studies became an opportunity to change expectations, teaching programmes and practice experiences. In our opinion, meeting people is what builds European and international social work by resulting in new ideas, aspirations for change and contacts. It is possible to make a new generation of social work professionals realise that different country perspectives can be combined when students see staff from different institutions working and thinking together, not separately. Collaboration at the level of ideas is crucial in an international partnership.

International collaborations therefore need to consider the local, national and international spheres altogether and not see them as separate levels. Understanding that there is no homogeneous social work model and that its various implementations depend on traditions, history, politics and social expectations led students as well as lecturers and practitioners participating in the programme to constantly redefine the concept of social work in Europe and in the world. It becomes obvious to us that not only talking about differences but discussing them with people from all continents drives the fact and reality that this concept of social work is alive and full of richness. It is the diverse content and forms of social work practice that determine the value of what we bring with us as individuals pursuing the goals of the profession.

These reflections lead us to recommend that teaching approaches towards international collaboration in social work should not be 'additive' – treating the 'international' as an added element to 'nationally focused' curricula – but also not too 'universal' in suggesting one single approach. Both ways limit the discussions, tensions and challenges of the 'glocal' (simultaneously global and local) nature of social work. The ADVANCES programme has made us realise that there is a need to change discourses dividing social work into geopolitical fractions that limit the perspectives of how, where and by whom social work should be developed as an international academic and practice discipline. Differences between countries are more complex and nuanced than implied by labels like 'post-socialist' or dichotomies like East/West and North/South. We learned from such international collaboration that we should not start from preconceptions that partners represent distinctive national systems of social work or contribute 'national perspectives' to international projects. Our ongoing collaboration and project is itself a challenge to overcome these divisions and an occasion to face and conquer social work myths through mutual work and experience.

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Nordic-Baltic Co-operation in Social Work Researcher Education: A Finnish Perspective on the Impact of Scientific, Historical and Linguistic Similarities and Differences

Helena Blomberg and Christian Kroll

1 Introduction

In this chapter, we will attempt to draw a picture of Nordic-Baltic co-operation in social work academic training, highlighting the influence of and interplay between scientific universalities and national historic-cultural particularities as they appear from the perspective of observers in one participating country.

Since the Nordic societies, but also the Nordic-Baltic region as a whole, is marked by a very long history of numerous common, as well as profoundly diverging developmental traits, any attempt at looking at present-day co-operation between actors in this region unavoidably comes soon to reflect on the relative impacts of such different historical, cultural and ideational factors on the present joint activities. The plethora of such alternatives on offer sometimes makes it tempting to highlight those that seem to fit one's own arguments or ambitions the best, thus also indicating potential methodological pitfalls.

Taking such a risk, and choosing inter-university co-operation as the point of view, one may, for instance, start by searching for possible influences of institutional commonalities dating back to the foundation of the region's first academic institutions as one of the factors affecting present-day joint researcher education. Here, one may point out that the common historical roots of the first universities both in present-day Nordic and Baltic states lie in the European catholic university tradition (Klinge 2010: 52), while already the reformation came to affect them in partly different ways (e.g. Universitatis Vilnensis 2004).

However, the above-mentioned factors may not be considered manifestations only of the constant, yet varying influences Nordic and Baltic societies have had on each other, but also of the equally important influences from wider cultural areas on

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the development in the Nordic-Baltic region, a region often characterised as a periphery in a wider European or global perspective (Allardt 1991). As we shall argue below, such general dualities seem to have been a central characteristic of the co-operation in social work researcher training also – first in co-operation between the Nordic countries and, later, also regarding joint Nordic-Baltic researcher training efforts – at least when the development is viewed through Finnish lenses.

It is also important to underline that the phrasing '*a* Finnish perspective' in the chapter title is to be taken literally, meaning that the prerequisites for the task at hand have not allowed the authors to strive for presenting *the* narrative that would be representative of the views of the body of Finnish scholars and others involved in Nordic and Baltic co-operation – not to mention the understandings of the matter among those involved from other participating countries.

Our narrative should, thus, primarily be seen as personal conclusions drawn by the authors based on various written sources, including also material produced in connection with researcher training co-operation projects and events and, in addition, on informal discussions during the course of working on this chapter with several professional academics at Finnish universities who had varying roles and types of experiences regarding inter-Nordic and/or Nordic-Baltic researcher training. Moreover, we talked to former Finnish doctoral student participants in Nordic-Baltic researcher training events. Finally, in critically analysing information we have also drawn on our own experiences of various types of academic co-operation in the region during the last three decades.

Furthermore, we cannot claim to have been following any particular 'method of analysis' when drawing conclusions from our material. But we have been inspired by Sunesson's (2003: 78–79) adaptation of Smelser's (1968) ideas on possible factors enabling change in social entities. In our case, these have been formulated as the general structural (including institutional) conditions for co-operation; the actors, drivers and the mobilisation of necessary (material and social) resources; and forces obstructing the co-operation process (e.g. opposition and/or obstacles of various kinds).

Since we are not aware of any other systematic attempts at reflecting on this particular Nordic-Baltic co-operation, it is our hope that our endeavour could still be considered informative and perhaps serve as an inspiration to others investigating the issue in future.

The chapter has the following outline: in the next part, we reflect on what we see as the prerequisites for later initiating a multilateral *Nordic*-Baltic Doctoral Network in Social Work and intra-Nordic co-operation in research and researcher training from the beginning of the 1980s onwards. The various aspects identified in relation to this development are, later on, used as a basis for reflecting on the Nordic-Baltic co-operation. We then turn to the main question in the chapter, Nordic-Baltic co-operation in researcher education. After considering some general structural and institutional factors assumed to be of importance for co-operation, we move on to examining, in more detail, the founding and development of the most comprehensive attempt at multi-lateral co-operation regarding doctoral education in social work in the Nordic-Baltic region, namely, the Nordic-Baltic Social Work Doctoral

School (NBSW). By way of conclusion, we reflect on possible lessons to be drawn from this Nordic-Baltic co-operation concerning the dynamics of developing social work research and education, with a special emphasis on the relevance of scientific, historical and linguistic similarities and differences.

2 The Nordic Prelude to Nordic-Baltic Researcher Training

While Nordic co-operation between institutions, initially providing vocational training of social workers, had had a longer history, (through the Nordic association of schools of social work, *Nordiska socialhögskolekommittén*, founded in 1964), the question of researcher training in social work seems, not very surprisingly, to have arisen as a result of the gradual strengthening of social work as a discipline in its own right at (some) Nordic universities during the 1980s. The conferences of the Nordic schools of social work, at the time with economic support from the Finnish Ministry of Education and with the Swedish School of Social Science in Helsinki (incorporated into the University of Helsinki as an autonomous unit in 1984) as a central organising partner, seem to have offered one of the earliest forums for young (Finnish) researchers on social work issues to present their work and come in contact with Nordic senior as well as junior colleagues (Mäntysaari 2005).

In all Nordic countries, the strengthening of the discipline of social work was related to general social policy goals aimed at developing and expanding the Nordic type comprehensive welfare state model (e.g. Blomberg and Kroll 2017; Dellgran and Höjer 2011). However, this common 'driving force' did not result in a similar development of social work as an academic discipline at universities in individual countries.

In Sweden, social work became a university discipline in the late 1970s, early compared to the other Nordic countries, comprising all levels from bachelor to PhD. Professors and other academic staff were, and still are to an extent, recruited from other, established academic disciplines, primarily, but not exclusively, sociology. Research in social work in 1980 was characterised by Harald Swedner, one of the pioneering professors (and a sociologist by training), as 'applied and interdisciplinary in nature' (see Brettschneider 1989: 143). In Finland social work at the university level evolved within the already well-established discipline of social policy (not a separate discipline at Swedish universities), eventually resulting in professorships as well as lower academic positions in social policy specialised in social work. In addition, some existing institutions educating social workers were transformed/incorporated into universities. Social work only became an independent university discipline around the middle of the 1990s. This resulted in what could be characterised as a special, sometimes conflictive, relationship with its former 'mother discipline', with attempts at consolidating it as a distinctive discipline and a strong legacy of social policy approaches to social work-related issues (e.g. Blomberg and Kroll 2017).

In comparison, in Norway, and especially in Denmark, the role of social work as an academic discipline at universities was, and has remained, less pronounced. In Denmark, the first 'social counsellors' (*socialrådgivare*) were graduated already in 1938, but social work education is still given only at Bachelor level (mainly by University Colleges) (Socialrådgiveren 2008). Doctoral studies in social work can be pursued only at the University of Aalborg and as a part of a broader Doctoral Programme. In Norway, social work education also has long historical roots back in 1920 when the Norwegian Women's National Council started a one-year 'social course' for women. The first state education of 'social workers' was established in 1950, reaching the Bachelor's level in 1967. Social work PhD education has been less discipline-specific in Norway than in Sweden or Finland, forming usually part of broader PhD programmes in Social Science, with only the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) offering a specific social work programme. In Iceland social work education was integrated into university (University of Iceland) studies in 1981. In 1998, social work became a major subject, and in 2006 the university of Iceland was authorised to offer a doctoral programme in social work (Högskoleverket 2009).

To sum up, one cannot talk about a common Nordic model of social work education, neither on the basic nor the researcher education level. Sweden and Finland, as well as Iceland, have, for a considerable time, had a stronger scientific/research-oriented emphasis in their respective social work education, including social work-specific researcher training, than have Norway and Denmark (e.g. Juliusdottir and Petersson 2003).

Despite these historical differences in Nordic social work education, there apparently was a perceived need for strengthening common research and researcher education efforts in social work in all the Nordic countries at the time when the efforts of incorporating social worker education into universities had begun in the early 1980s: the first Nordic so-called researcher course was presumably arranged in Trondheim, Norway in the autumn of 1984 (see Swedner and Walls 1986). Its characteristics may serve as an example of many aspects of Nordic researcher education efforts more generally: The moderate size of 35 participants in the event from all the five Nordic countries reflects the small number of researchers in the discipline in these countries at the time. Of these, roughly half were reported to have either conducted research in social work or closely related disciplines or were estimated by organisers to be on their way to entering a research career (Swedner and Walls 1986: 191–192), and indeed a few of those later became professors of social work. The remaining attendees seem mainly to have been teachers from schools of social work not actively conducting research of their own.

The course, which was funded by the public Nordic body '*Nordiska forskarkurser*' (Nordic research courses), had the emblematic title 'Social problems, social policy and social work – interrelationships and research', which reflected the emphasis on the main role of social work seen as a tool for advancing social policy goals. In other words, the ambitions of strengthening the academic nature of social work were motivated, at least in part, by the importance social work was to have in the public welfare system (see Nergård et al. 1986: 9–11).

According to a published report from the meeting (Swedner and Walls 1986), it seems that the intended emphasis in the course was placed on the issue of the relation between research and practice in social work generally. In practice, however, the organisers found that the main subject of discussion came to revolve round *the differences* in the relationship between practice and research in the various Nordic countries. This issue, rather than being interpreted as a failure of the concept of Nordic researcher meetings, seems to have remained on the agenda to some extent ever since.

Therefore, this Nordic course and subsequent events, seen from a Finnish perspective, were indeed considered *the* way of both enhancing academic skills in general and of bringing together various international impulses and new perspectives. They were also readily supported 'politically' and financially by governments as well as university administrations. While the importance of these Nordic gatherings was probably enhanced to some extent also by the limited funding possibilities for broader international co-operation at the time, they seem to also have been perceived as a very 'natural setting' for co-operation with a special 'overtone' of commonness within Nordic social work despite all existing differences between countries.

This is hardly surprising since a feeling of a special kind of closeness and kinship among the Nordic countries, in our experience, continues to be a common notion among scholars and others. Its origins are multi-faceted and complex (e.g. Karlsson 1991), being a result of a long and continuing history of close interaction on various levels and in most fields of life (for present-day political-level co-operation, see, e.g. Nordic Co-operation 2019).

This notion, arguably, goes far beyond linguistic commonalities, which are a limited factor. Today's main languages, Swedish, Norwegian and Danish, are closely related North Germanic languages, while Icelandic, though also related to them, is more different. On the other hand, Finnish is part of the Uralic language group, together with Estonian, and is not linguistically related to the Scandinavian languages at all. Furthermore, the areas in which these languages are spoken by native speakers are not identical with modern state borders; for instance, Finland has two national languages, Finnish and Swedish, while there are speakers of Finnish in Sweden as well as in Norway.

At the time of the first Nordic social worker researcher courses the usual language policy for such Nordic gatherings was that the three Scandinavian languages, Swedish, Norwegian and Danish, or informal mixes of them, often called 'Scandinavian', were used, with English being used only more recently. The level of interest in these social work meetings among some Finnish-speaking participants is therefore demonstrated by the fact that some of them took Danish lessons (organised by their employer) in their spare time in order to facilitate their full participation in discussions. One important driving force behind the keen interest for Nordic co-operation among research students from Finland seems to have been a strong 'Nordic' orientation among participating Finnish senior scholars. Nevertheless, Finnish participants interacted probably most closely with Swedish colleagues, who

shared views on social work most similar to their own, and shared common research interests.

During these early events at least, interaction did often not lead to collaboration on joint projects, but they were primarily considered an (important) opportunity also for doctoral students to present personal research ideas and papers as well as obtain comments from Nordic colleagues.

Over time, the Nordic researcher courses were completed or substituted by other institutional co-operation and training programmes like those at the NORDPLAN-institute in Stockholm, financed by the Nordic Council. Resulting social work researcher courses around 1990 were taught by distinguished international scholars like Agnes Heller, Richard Sennett, Scott Lash and Mike Featherstone (Mäntysaari 2005).

In 2000 the National Associations for Social Work Research in Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden set up a joint umbrella organisation, FORSA-Norden, which, together with the Nordic Association for Schools of Social Work, organises biannual Nordic social work conferences which include PhD students. They also jointly publish the Nordic Social Work Research Journal.

Summing up, Nordic co-operation could be viewed as an integral part of the development of social work as an academic discipline in its own right, albeit with varying impact on the institutions and countries involved. Both the fall of the Iron Curtain, and later on, Finnish and Swedish EU-membership (1995), resulted in changed constellations as regards social work research collaboration, which according to some observers weakened Nordic co-operation also regarding doctoral training (e.g. Mäntysaari 2005). One new form of wider international co-operation emerged as the Nordic-Baltic Social Work Doctoral School.

3 The Way to Nordic-Baltic Social Work Doctoral Education and Co-operation

In this section, we focus on the prerequisites for and benefits of joint efforts in this Nordic-Baltic researcher education; what were the purpose and drivers behind this researcher education? What were the themes and scientific emphases? What were the outcomes?

The conditions for Nordic-Baltic co-operation in social work were of course even more demanding than the conditions for intra-Nordic co-operation had been, due to major differences in the stage of development of social work. Social work in the Baltic countries in the 1930s, when the first social work (social assistant) education started, was mostly based on the Central European social pedagogy tradition. The Soviet era between 1940 and 1991 put an abrupt end to social work education as well as to social work as a profession. After the independence of the Baltic states in 1991, professionals from other sectors, tasks and disciplines (teachers, nurses and former trade union workers) started to work as social

workers (e.g. Tamm 2010 for the Estonian social work development). At the same time, academic teaching in social work was developed. In Estonia, academic teaching started already in 1991 at Tallinn Pedagogical University (and a year later at Tartu University), education that was much in line with social work education in Central and Eastern European countries. Doctoral education started already in 1997/98 (Tamm 2010). In Latvia there are no doctoral programmes in social work, while Master students in social work in Lithuania can continue their studies in doctoral programmes. In contrast to the Nordic countries, the official support for social work education after 1991 was not as strongly tied to and motivated by the policy to develop a specific welfare model.

Immediately after re-gained independence, there seem to have been some moves towards developing Nordic-type social policies in the Baltic countries, with Sweden as the general paragon, but with Estonia looking also to Finland, considered a role model during Soviet times. However, soon interest in other systems emerged also, not least the German one. In addition, Baltic public opinion on social issues proved very individualistic compared to Nordic attitudes, which indicated that development towards comprehensive, redistributive Nordic-type social policies was unlikely (Aidukaite 2003). Accordingly, the result so far has been rudimentary and divergent social policy systems in the three Baltic states (Aidukaite 2003, also Tamm 2010). More generally, there is some doubt as to whether the Baltics consider themselves as a distinctive 'group of nations' along the lines of the Nordic countries at all (e.g. Rauhala 2007).

3.1 Purpose and Aims

The Nordic-Baltic Social Work Doctoral School (NBSW) started as a joint project carried out between 2009 and 2013. It was funded by NordForsk, a new organisation (Nordforsk 2019).

The initiative for establishing a Nordic-Baltic network came from the Finnish National University Network for Social Work (SOSNET), co-ordinated by the University of Lapland, which had already decided in 2007 to apply for NordForsk funding. The decision to 'go international' was much linked to the establishment of the Finnish national post-graduate school for social work in 1995, which aimed in its strategy at the internationalisation of Finnish social work research, which was also a general trend in Finnish education and research development. The explicit focus on Nordic-Baltic co-operation was a prerequisite for receiving funding in a special call from NordForsk. From a Finnish perspective, the possibility to revitalise Nordic co-operation was seen as an important driver for applying for funding since the experiences from the intra-Nordic co-operation in the 1980s were very positive; the Nordic co-operation had been perceived as an important prerequisite for the academisation of social work and the development of social work as a research discipline. In addition, the memories of past Nordic co-operation generally appeared to be gilded; it had been characterised by enthusiasm and a 'go-ahead spirit'. The

new form of funding from NordForsk was also considered to be an opportunity to involve new generations of Finnish scholars in Nordic networks. However, established contacts with some Baltic academics and previous experience of co-operative networks with social work units in North-West Russia and other Eastern European countries also served as a basis for the application. Many of these joint projects had been carried out in co-operation with SOSNET (Sosnet 2019a).

After receiving funding for preparing an application, a Nordic-Baltic scholar meeting took place in Finland at the University of Helsinki in March 2008. Many of the Nordic scholars taking part in the meeting had previously been actively engaged in Nordic co-operation during the 1980s and 1990s. From the Baltic states, two Lithuanian universities – the University of Klaipeda and Vilnius University – participated (both of them had been involved in previous social work joint projects co-ordinated from Finland). The two other Baltic countries were asked to join the network after the planning meeting, as was Iceland. During the meeting, the main themes for the NBSW activities for the whole project period were determined. Both Finland and Sweden took a leading role in the planning of the contents and themes, which was partly due to their already existing experience of co-ordinating (national) doctoral schools.

The network application was successful, and NBSW started its activities in 2009. In accordance with NordForsk's aims, NBSW aimed at enhancing the quality of research education in the Nordic-Baltic region through internationalisation. This was reflected both through the contents and themes for the doctoral summer schools and through the invited lecturers, of which many were internationally well-known scholars from Anglo-Saxon countries. The network aimed at increasing opportunities for doctoral students in social work to participate in high-quality research education. The network also furthered the idea of 'internationalisation at home', which meant that there should be a low threshold for young doctoral students with family obligations to participate in the network activities. Thus, if network activities took place either in one's own or in a neighbouring country, this was supposed to lower the threshold for participating.

Another aim with the network was to join together the different paradigms of social work research in the participating countries, enrich the theoretical and methodological training provided for the doctoral students and establish links both regionally between the Nordic-Baltic research traditions and researchers as well as internationally. It was also argued that co-operation between Nordic and Baltic social work-related research institutions had so far been rather random and limited to certain themes in social work, while the creation of NBSW would offer a forum for creating more comprehensive, competitive and long-term doctoral education. A further aim was to 'create a forum for interactive criticism, support and development of joint research projects and comparative approaches' (Sosnet 2019b).

The NBSW network was coordinated by SOSNET, which had also been the initiator of the project. The NBSW network consisted of partners (universities, national doctoral schools, other institutions) from all the Baltic countries and from four out of five Nordic countries; the Finnish participating partner was the Finnish national post-graduate school for social work (consisting of the six universities offering

social work education in Finland and the National Institute of Health and Welfare). Finnish participation at this initial stage seems to have had the aim of broadening knowledge about social work in the Nordic-Baltic region (according to the unpublished minutes of the planning meeting in Helsinki in 2008 this included 'Wishes for network: get broader sights – get a chance to know what is going on in other countries'). It was also argued that the frame for Finnish research was very national; research publications were often in Finnish, and they were also to a great extent based on Finnish rather than international studies. Sweden participated in NBSW through its national doctoral school (the Research School in Social Work, RSSW) which was also newly founded in 2008. The aims associated with Swedish participation were internationalisation and the strengthening of the educational quality and co-operation both among teachers and among doctoral students. According to the minutes, there were also wishes for 'getting good visitors from abroad'.

In Denmark, network activities were carried out by the social work research group (as a part of the Doctoral school of social science) at Aalborg University. From a Danish point of view, according to the minutes of the planning meeting there were expectations that NBSW would act against national blindness and open up towards other Nordic and Baltic countries and emphasise user perspectives and empowerment. From Norway the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), University of Trondheim, and Oslo University College participated with an interest in strengthening the national research education through specific social work PhD-level courses for students.

From Estonia, Tallinn University (and later on the University of Tartu) joined the NBSW network, and from Lithuania the Vilnius, Klaipeda and Vytautas Magnus, Kaunas universities. The two first-mentioned Lithuanian universities were the only ones already participating in the initial planning activities of the network, and they expressed an interest in strengthening their doctoral education through possible joint degrees in the future. There were also hopes that the network could offer students study materials and the possibility to work in thematic groups around important social work issues. Iceland chose not to join the NBSW, while Latvia – lacking a social work PhD programme – did have a member in the steering group of NBSW but no PhD students taking part in the activities. The NordForsk project funding for NBSW ended in 2013, and after that the network continued its activities with other funding, mostly from university institutions and networks. The activities still consist of annual summer schools, while there are no longer separate research courses.

3.2 Contents and Outcomes

The activities of NBSW started in 2009 with the summer school 'Between Conflict and Consensus: Challenging the Dichotomy' (Vilnius, Lithuania) and three courses, one of which was a research course called 'Identity and History of Social Work' (Tallinn, Estonia). They had the clear ambition to pinpoint the importance of cultural contextualism when discussing the history of social work in a Baltic, Nordic

and European perspective and social workers' professional identities. In addition to lectures and literature focusing on these aspects, the course also included a panel debate about 'History as a resource for Nordic and Baltic social work'.

Much of the activities of NBSW circled around issues concerning the relationship between theory, different types of knowledge, and social work research, most prominently at the Summer School in 2013 (Riga, Latvia). Other issues concerned the tensions between theory and practice. For example, the summer school with the theme 'Practice research in social work' in Tartu, Estonia, in 2016 contributed to the discussion on the relationship between theory and practice and proposed experience-based and practice-related research as a solution for the tensions within this relationship. Another type of social work-related dilemma was discussed at the summer school in Kuopio, Finland, in 2015, namely, the tension between internationalisation and academic excellence on the one hand and national or local needs on the other. The social work dilemma is whether to deliver relevant practice-oriented and often national or even local research/knowledge or strong, specialised, internationally recognised knowledge (see also Dellgran and Höjer 2012).

Other summer schools and courses focused more clearly on research ethics, methods and methodology; these included, e.g. ethics in social work research and methodological approaches within the qualitative research tradition (in 2014), the possibilities and challenges of multi-disciplinarity from the perspective of the social work discipline (2018), and evidence-based approaches in social work (2019).

Since one of the central aims with NBSW (and also with NordForsk) was to further internationalisation (see also Leskošek and Matthies 2017), the working language within the network was English. One of the research seminars – arranged in 2012 – focused in particular on improving the quality of academic writing and to advance the international profile of social work research in the Baltic-Nordic region. The speakers included, among others, the editors-in-chief of the British Journal of Social Work and of the newly founded journal Nordic Social Work Research.

The keynote lecturers and teachers within NBSW came to a great extent from Finland and Sweden and from Anglo-Saxon countries, but some teachers from continental/southern Europe were also included in the programme, especially at the beginning of the doctoral school activities. The number of keynote lecturers from the Baltic countries was limited but seems to have increased in the last years.

Of the students participating in the activities during the actual funding period, 15 came from Denmark, 90 from Finland, 30 from Norway, 60 from Sweden, 34 from Estonia and 21 from Lithuania (each participant has been counted per year, regardless of how many activities she/he attended during one year). The proportion of participants from the various countries reflects both the size and traditions of doctoral education in the respective countries but also the 'geography of the course events': many of the events were arranged in the Baltic countries or Finland due to economic reasons (less expensive travel and subsistence costs for Baltic PhD students). While the core of NBSW consisted of students and teachers from Nordic or Baltic institutions, it should be noted that in practice the scope was broader and

more international, which further explains why formal activities were carried out in English. Several of the 'Nordic-Baltic' PhD students came from other countries (Cameroon, China, Ghana, Iceland, Mozambique, Nepal, Russia and Ukraine).

In the light of the aims of NBSW presented, many of the expected outcomes were realised during and after the project period. NBSW contributed to the development and internationalisation of doctoral education in all participating countries in a variety of ways. The external funding enabled the participation of keynote lectures with internationally renowned social work researchers. For many of the doctoral students, including the Finnish ones, NBSW was the first international event where they had the possibility to present their work to a larger, international audience. The organisation of summer schools in the different countries also contributed to the profiling of social work research education. For example, the summer school organised in Aalborg, Denmark, was the first in social work to be organised on the doctoral level in Denmark. Another example of strengthening the development of doctoral education was the initiative by the steering group of NBSW in supporting and promoting Master-level social work education in Latvia, which had not been able to fully participate in the NBSW activities due to the lack of Master (and doctoral) education in social work. This was later realised, e.g. by the co-operation between Latvian and Lithuanian universities.

Other aims of NBSW mentioned in the application were the creation of a forum for comparative approaches and mutual learning aspects concerning various research traditions. These aspects do not seem to have been as prominent in NBSW's activities as the internationalisation aspect. The summer schools and courses provided a general framework for a certain meta-theme, and the key lectures then provided various international (mainly Nordic/Anglo-Saxon), perspectives on this theme. Thus, it was mainly the doctoral paper sessions as well as some panel discussions that offered a platform for mutual learning through discussions of differences and similarities between the Nordic-Baltic countries and their societal context, as well as their research traditions. These possibilities for linking Nordic-Baltic perspectives were realised to a varying extent. For example, the socio-political context of each participating country was reflected in the doctoral projects, but at the same time it was rather seldom brought up for critical discussion or comparisons. Some of our informants experienced the different societal contexts and developments in the participating countries as a 'no-go-zone' which could not be discussed during sessions since there was an anxiety that critical cross-country comparisons would make the Baltic doctoral students feel uncomfortable. To some extent, this anxiety was based on the perception that the Baltic doctoral students themselves were uncomfortable with the societal development but that they had difficulties in raising their voice in their respective home countries. Also, the theoretical and methodological foundations of social work research in the Nordic and Baltic countries were perceived as rather different and also as rather vague and 'under construction'. This was, however, not very often brought up in discussions, since these aspects were also seen as sensitive. Thus, discussions of the different paradigmatic research

perspectives in the participating countries were perhaps the part of NBSW's aim that became the most difficult to achieve.

Still, in a more implicit way, NBSW seems to have contributed to the awareness of how different the prerequisites for social work are in a European context, how culturally context-sensitive research in social work can be, and to an understanding of how differently concepts can be understood and research carried out. As one informant put it, it was rather the theme of differences, not sameness, that was somehow present in the network activities.

When it came to the Nordic 'dimension' within NBSW, there was a stronger shared notion about the societal similarities between the Nordic countries but also a shared notion about certain theoretical and methodological similarities within Nordic social work research. Also, common Nordic linguistic roots were of importance for some of the Finnish participants, particularly for those who had good skills in the Swedish language. As one of the doctoral students we interviewed stated, she felt like the Nordic students shared a common language in many different respects, societally, theoretically, methodologically and linguistically.

NBSW was of course not the only form of co-operation between Finland and the Baltic states. For example, the academic social work interaction between Finland and Estonia started already in the middle of the 1990s. After the Estonian declaration of independence in 1991, Finnish scholars were actively invited to Estonia, giving, e.g. courses in Finnish about social work, which were translated into Estonian. Some Finnish academics also held positions as (guest) professors at Estonian universities (Tartu University, University of Tallinn). Several academic social work theses by Baltic doctoral students were presented at Finnish universities, in particular at the University of Lapland. These theses were written in English, but reference lists commonly include Finnish titles, indicating the advantages of linguistic kinship.

Since social work and social work education in Estonia and the other Baltic states in practice had to be built up from almost nothing after independence (see Kiik and Sirotkina 2006), Baltic academics as well as officials were also actively seeking to adapt various welfare and social work models. Initially there seems to have been an interest in the Nordic welfare model, including the position of social work within it, but it soon became apparent that the Baltic states were not going to follow a path resembling that of the Nordic welfare states. Instead, there was a shift from what Tamm (2010: 10) calls a dictatorship of a totalitarian society to a dictatorship of the free market economy, which in turn resulted in rapidly growing inequality, polarisation and poverty. According to Tamm (ibid.), the past experience of state control makes it difficult to raise a voice against the dominant market forces.

It is also important to remember that the co-operation between Finland and Estonia and the other Baltic countries was not restricted only to co-operation concerning university social work. Baltic social work-oriented academics, of which many represented a social pedagogical tradition within social work, created contact areas, for example, also with educational faculties and programmes in Finland.

4 Discussion: The Epilogue to Nordic-Baltic Research Training?

The picture that emerges from the above narratives on Nordic and Nordic-Baltic researcher training efforts and co-operation in social work, respectively, is characterised in many respects by similarities, but these two types of training also show fundamental differences in the 'working logic' when viewed through the lens of the factors listed by way of introduction: the general structural and institutional conditions for co-operation, the underlying forces and the mobilisation of material and social resources, including obstructing forces.

The practical and institutional conditions for academic co-operation between the Nordic countries seem to have been favourable during the late 1970s and the 1980s. The Nordic welfare states and especially the public welfare services expanded and, as part of this development, professionalisation of social work through academisation (and research training as a part of this process) was an important goal. In this general societal development, common to the Nordic states, a need for co-operation in order to strengthen the academic basis for social work, and for learning about and from other Nordic countries, was perceived as important for academic, political and administrative actors alike.

The policy goals also guaranteed the necessary material resources, but it seems co-operation would not have started without the Nordic academic 'driving spirit', with the firm conviction that the Nordic dimension was important in developing academic social work in one's own country. In addition, the administrative leadership of universities and other institutions responsible for providing financial resources for academic activities strongly supported and encouraged Nordic co-operation in social work. Furthermore, the common linguistic roots in the Nordic countries (including bilingual Finland) enabled an understanding of research in the various Nordic neighbouring countries at a time when studies in social work were published almost solely in the national language(s). At least in Finland, it thus seemed as if all forces were pulling together on this issue at the time.

For geopolitical as well as economic reasons, Finland apparently regarded it as particularly important to be associated with the Nordic countries at this point. Creating a Nordic welfare state model through this association was a priority in a global political climate dominated by the rivalry between the societal models of the neighbouring Soviet Union and the USA respectively (Kettunen 2008). But the common Nordic platform was not only about the (political and cultural) needs of this period. Factors contributing to the continuous special interest in Swedish policy solutions include the special Finnish legacy of a centuries-long common history with modern-day Sweden as part of the same kingdom from the Middle Ages up until 1808 when Finland was seized by the Russian empire (until Finland's independence declaration after the Bolshevik revolution in 1917), obtaining a fairly high degree of autonomy by keeping its old (Swedish) legal system and the privileges of societal groups and languages during Russian rule. As a result, social policies in Finland and Sweden are regarded as being among the most similar ones to be found among developed countries (see Blomberg and Kroll 2017; Karvonen 1981; Kroll 2007).

As we have seen, the Finnish-Swedish similarities seem to have been salient as regards the views on the role of research in social worker education, too, as also indicated by today's relatively strong national researcher education in these two countries. These similarities also include the theoretical basis used in Sweden and Finland when researching social work issues. According to available data – Dellgran and Höjer (2012) for Sweden and Mäntysaari and Haaki (2007) for Finland – the impact of sociological theories on social work doctoral dissertations has been substantial; during the timeframes studied, about 70% of dissertations in Sweden and about 50% in Finland were based on sociological/social policy theories, while only less than 10% were based on theories from other disciplines such as psychology or pedagogy. About 10% of the social work dissertations in Sweden and 20% in Finland were based on theories developed within social work. This does not mean that the theoretical basis would look more similar at a closer look. For example, the so-called linguistic (social constructionist) turn in social work (Pohjola et al. 2019) never gained as strong a position in Sweden as it did in Finland during the 1990s. However, though education and research in social work retained a rather national focus in the Nordic countries, and political priorities have changed and with them the various options for financing (researcher) education co-operation, the relevance of including a Nordic perspective on issues does not seem to ever have been questioned in any fundamental way among academics. Nevertheless, co-operation efforts have become less institution-based, more fragmented and dependent on research project funding while bringing together researchers with interests in similar issues.

The very positive prior experiences from earlier Nordic (informal and formal) co-operation, and ambitions to revitalise it, constituted one important trigger for the later efforts by Finnish academic 'key players' to engage in Nordic-Baltic researcher training. Here, as in the case of earlier intra-Nordic co-operation, the economic incentives provided by Nordic funding instruments that emphasised co-operation with the Baltic states was also important for this particular co-operation, as was the relatively new demand placed on social work education and research in Finland to become more internationalised.

The aim of the NBSW activities was precisely to 'go international' (in a broader sense), which in practice came to mean primarily relying on Anglo-Saxon research perspectives in addition to Nordic approaches, within teaching in this doctoral school. As within earlier Nordic co-operation, the papers written by PhD-students within NBSW largely remained embedded within the national context of the students' home countries. Some of the NBSW summer schools and courses that were organised even emphasised the importance of considering the embedded character of social work in national social and political contexts. Even so, the considerable differences in socio-political development within the Nordic-Baltic region were seldom debated explicitly or systematically, nor were the prevailing differences in research paradigms and foundations. Thus, in these respects, the focus of activities differed significantly from intra-Nordic co-operation several decades earlier, when also differences between national views and conditions often formed a focus of the discussions. As is often the case in comparative settings, perhaps it was easier to

discuss the more relative differences prevailing within the more limited Nordic framework?

At any rate, the setting of course content was much more diverse in the NBSW as regards, e.g. dominant societal conditions, prevailing popular attitudes towards social issues, social policy frameworks defining the role for social work, the role of different academic disciplines in social work studies and the position of social worker education in the national education systems. Furthermore, there were differences also as regards the influence of Central European traditions on social work in the Baltic states, while these influences remain much less pronounced in academic social work in the Nordic countries where Anglo-Saxon influences remain central.

These insights made us reflect more generally on the potential of comparisons between more diverging 'models of social work'. Might a strong focus on national historical-cultural particularities in education, research or structural preconditions for social work practice at the outset perhaps divert from important potential lessons that could be learned by applying a comparative perspective also on strongly diverging cases? Through a comparative analysis that distinguishes between various dimensions of social work one could perhaps detect common logics at some levels of practice, for instance, which may be dependent on other factors than those which are system-dependent in one way or another (see, e.g. Blomberg et al. 2010). Such findings, we believe, could prove important for improving the understanding of the relationship between social work and its societal conditions.

It remains to be seen whether the preconditions for making international comparisons part of doctoral education projects or research in social work in general are improved by the latest developments regarding funding policies, which in many countries now seem to stress an (even) broader 'internationalisation' of activities. From the point of Nordic-Baltic researcher training, this has meant diminished funding possibilities, and (again) a diminished interest in a particular type of geographically targeted programmes. International co-operation has become diverse and multifaceted, and the new generation of scholars more often aims at taking part in doctoral training in countries that are more distant.

In Finland as elsewhere, ever-increasing New Public Management-type attempts at measuring and steering the use of staff working hours and defining which activities are valued and which are not, often constitute a major obstacle to new types of curiosity-driven cross-country co-operation. The valuation only of formalised co-operation agreements and a focus on (externally defined) 'academic excellence' also impinge on possibilities for opening up new types of co-operation and activities.

At the same time, we would argue that the above development and challenges do not necessarily mean an end to Nordic or Nordic-Baltic educational and research co-operation. NBSW still continues to organise research training, and new intra-Nordic or Nordic-Baltic initiatives have emerged during the past few years (obviously more due to renewed academic interests than new funding possibilities). One example of this is the Nordic social work conference, a joint conference by the Nordic National Associations for Social Work Research/Nordic Social Work Research Association and the Nordic Association of Schools of Social Work (NASSW), which is arranged every second year. After some years of diminishing

participation of scholars from the Nordic countries, the conference we hosted in Helsinki in 2018 attracted 270 participants from 18 countries (of which Baltic scholars were the largest group participating from 'outside' the Nordic countries). Many of the participants were also doctoral students, which seems to indicate that Nordic conferences and gatherings can also attract new generations of scholars. Another activity we have been involved in is the conference 'Towards resilient Nordic welfare states', of March 2019 in Helsinki, the first in a new biannual Nordic European Social Policy Analysis Network (Nordic EspaNet) conference series. Though having a broader focus on issues of social policy, these gatherings could prove to be of interest to coming scholars in social work as well – especially since there will be a strong focus on researcher training. A further example, though not explicitly focusing on research training in social work, are the plans to establish a Nordic-Baltic resource Centre (promoting education and research in North-Western Europe, including not only the Nordic and Baltic countries, but also other countries in this European region such as Russia, Poland and Germany) as part of the International Social Work Association's activities.

Perhaps such new Nordic and Northern European initiatives can be seen as a sign of a more general (re-)discovery of the usefulness of forums focusing on more regionally specific questions and perspectives, as a complement to the broader international types of organised activities in social work and social worker education that have been evolving during the last decades.

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Lost in Translations, United in Diversity or Based on Common and Critical Understandings: The Border Region of South Tirol as a Laboratory for European Social Work?

Urban Nothdurfter

1 Introduction

From its very beginning, the history of social work shows its necessary anchoring in local contexts of welfare production, its development in the course of national welfare traditions but also a tradition of international networks among pioneers and educational institutions. Nevertheless, it was first and foremost the framework of the national welfare state that made possible the consolidation of social work and the expansion of its fields of practice in Western European countries. Since the 1990s, the growing together of a Europe divided by the Cold War and the process of European integration created a new frame of reference also for social work and new opportunities for the development of its European dimension. However, what has become of a European social work project? Has it been limited to networking of its academic representatives while practice, despite the increasing transnational character of challenges and life courses, is again more strongly involved in drawing boundaries and exclusions under the increasing pressure of nationalist populism? Should a European dimension therefore be more strongly considered in the substance of the subject and, if so, what challenges does such a project face? This chapter addresses these questions and the challenges of arriving at a common understanding and a European dimension of social work through the example of the multilingual border region of South Tirol. Studying and encountering different welfare contexts and academic traditions provide the opportunity and give the impetus to develop a common critical understanding of social work. This opens up a real European space for thought and action in social work practice, education and research precisely when applied in local contexts.

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2 Social Work: Local, National, International … and European?

The history of social work begins with the upheavals of industrialisation and the question of how social solidarity should be organised in society under the new conditions of industrial capitalist modernity (Lorenz 2006). Depending on the line of tradition, the 'friendly visiting' of the poor in their homes or the settlements within the communities of disadvantaged districts were the local settings for the provision of the corresponding answers on the part of early social work. In this sense, the origins of social work can be localised within the milieus of, indeed, local answers to the social question. In these contexts, elements such as the personal encounter and relationship, the proximity to people in need and knowledge of the local community have been underlined as important aspects of social work as a professional and necessarily 'local' activity (Fargion 2009).

At the same time, social policy and social work in Europe have been closely linked to the nation state project from the very outset. The pacification of social tensions and investment in a state-mediated system of assistance should contribute to the stability of the political order in the emerging nation states. Depending on the political ideological framework, however, ideas about the role and extent of state responsibility varied greatly between European countries. In this sense, the institutional frameworks and practice conditions for social work in the European countries have been very different due to underlying political ideas, scopes and architectures of the national welfare state arrangements. Accordingly, the development of the social professions also resulted in a very heterogeneous picture between countries. These differences are not so much signs of arbitrariness and a lack of professionalisation rather than the expression of the 'nature' of social work as a social profession and its close interdependence with social and political conditions and the frameworks of the national welfare state. In this sense, the development of social work can be understood as a strongly national project (Lorenz 1994, 2006).

Nevertheless, the professionalisation of social work is also characterised by the striving for a certain degree of independence and professional autonomy from structures and agendas conveyed by the state. This autonomy was regarded as an essential characteristic of the profession to be guaranteed by its scientific foundation and its value base and ethics. In the context of these efforts at professionalisation, an international dimension can be observed from the outset, in which early (mostly female) pioneers of social work engaged in the international exchange on scientific foundations and early models of social work education as well as in making connections to the political concerns of the international women's, and peace workers' movement. The origins of today's international social work organisations, such as the IFSW and the IASSW, date back to these early international contacts and efforts of cooperation after the First World War (Hering and Waaldijk 2003).

The picture of early social work is, thus, characterised by its practice in the local context, its essential framing by the traditions and structures of the emerging

national welfare state as well as simultaneous international professional and political impulses. This international exchange was interrupted in many parts of Europe by the *caesura* of Fascism and Nazism in which contexts social work itself became part of regime politics, and this represents the darkest chapter in its young European history.

After the Second World War, social work experienced a new upswing in Europe in the course of redemocratisation and reconstruction processes, also within the framework of international reconstruction efforts. In Italy, for example, the establishment of a modern welfare system and the professionalisation of social work were explicit objectives of the international reconstruction programmes (Stefani 2011). In this period, social work in many European contexts had been strongly influenced by the import of US-American textbooks and methodological models and to some extent subject to a top-down external standardisation and the adoption of foreign terminology and concepts, not least as supposed guarantee for neutrality, professionalism and scientific integrity. In this sense, also social work within Western Europe experienced the import of social work models, methodologies and terminology and the risks of professional imperialism, which will later be criticised by social work in non-Western countries. However, the broad welfare state consensus and the expansion of benefits and services in Western European countries permitted the consolidation and development of social work in Europe. Against this background, professionalisation and academisation advanced considerably and social work was gradually able to establish itself as a recognisable and (more or less) recognised profession and discipline in many country contexts. The profession thereby (re-)discovered its own traditions, terminologies and places in both practice and academia. At the same time, the development of social work in Europe provided a necessarily heterogeneous picture. Different welfare state traditions and path dependencies but also various academic and disciplinary connections led to a variety of professional forms and titles of social work, to different theoretical approaches and to different training and research traditions of social work in different European countries (Lorenz 1994).

With the advance of European unification and the ending of the division of Europe into East and West, a stronger European debate also developed within social work. Since the 1990s, new opportunities for networking and cooperation, encouraged by European exchange programmes, but also new challenges in dealing with different traditions and cultures within a European professional and scientific community led to a fruitful debate on European social work (Lorenz 1994; Lorenz and Seibel 1999; Elsen et al. 2002). This debate was mainly driven by those who knew how to deal with the diversity and heterogeneity of social work in Europe and who recognised therein its peculiarity and strength as a social profession and tried to bring it together in a common but not homogenising European perspective.

Such a perspective underlines the necessary openness which allows social work ‘to engage with specific (and constantly changing) historical and political contexts while at the same time striving for a degree of universality, scientific

reliability, professional autonomy and moral accountability' (Lorenz 2001: 12). In this sense, the project of European social work is exactly not about giving a superficial picture of unity or of easy convergence as this would miss out on the central characteristics and ambiguities of social work as a social profession. At the same time, this does not mean that social work can be seen just as a random set of local practices or as based on an 'anything goes' understanding of professionalism. Being related to different historical and political contexts and shaped by different welfare regimes without allowing itself to be totally defined by such external circumstances and contingencies, social work as both profession and discipline requires a critical and border-crossing debate about its foundations, professional standards and criteria of appropriateness and accountability in different contexts (Lorenz 2001).

It is no coincidence that such a debate has become necessary but only possible where cross-border encounters between traditions and languages of social work have taken place. In this context, the active promotion and participation in exchanges of social work educators and students, after 1989 now also with their colleagues from Central and Eastern Europe, were particularly important in order to develop a project of European social work that recognised and engaged with a common grounding in scientific research on the one hand and in a practice orientation acknowledging differences in national, cultural and political contexts as well as local practices and forms of knowledge on the other (Lorenz and Seibel 1999; Elsen et al. 2002). Recently, about 30 years after 1989 and in light of the deep crisis of the European integration process, the debate on European social work has gained new momentum but is also seen as critical stocktaking (Chytil and Keller 2019; Kessl et al. 2020a, b). Looking critically at available conceptualisations, Kessl et al. understand European social work, 'as a forum of a historically defined space for a critical examination of the appropriateness and limitations of nationally defined principles and practices against an available range of alternatives that can be related back to a common heritage of ideas. (…) Such a concept would open up a dimension of social work, that is not restricted to determinants of practice on a national, federal or local level but can question these critically' (Kessl et al. 2020a: 11f).

3 Border Regions as Laboratories of European Social Work: The Case of South Tirol

In this regard, European border regions can play an important role as they can, ideally, become privileged places of encounter and dialogue in such a perspective and, in this sense, laboratories for European social work.

An interesting example for this is the autonomous province of South Tirol (*Südtirol – Alto Adige*) in Northern Italy. As the southern part of the once united county of Tirol, this predominantly German-speaking region had been part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire until 1918. After the First World War, South Tirol was

occupied by Italy and annexed to the Kingdom of Italy in 1919. With the rise of Italian Fascism, the new regime pursued the aggressive 'italianisation' of South Tirol banishing the German language from schools and public institutions and actively advancing immigration from other Italian regions. As a consequence of the alliance between Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini, these dictators agreed that the German-speaking population be transferred to German-ruled territories forcing citizens to opt either for staying in fascist Italy and to give up their language, culture and identity or for leaving South Tirol and moving to Nazi Germany. Only the outbreak of the Second World War prevented the majority of the German population from being resettled after having opted for the Third Reich. In 1943, when the Italian government signed an armistice with the Allies, the region was de facto annexed to Nazi Germany until the end of the war. After the Second World War, the Allies decided that the province would remain a part of Italy under the condition of a significant level of political autonomy in order to protect the German- and Ladin-speaking minorities. Italy and Austria negotiated a first agreement in 1946 which applied, however, to the whole region 'Trentino–South Tirol', a territory where the Italian-speaking population still held the majority. As this agreement was not seen as satisfactory by many German speakers, it became a cause of significant friction between Austria and Italy, making the question of autonomy and cultural identity both an international matter taken up by the United Nations in 1960 and an issue of terrorist actions. The issue was politically resolved in 1971 with a new treaty that granted the status of autonomy to the province of South Tirol resulting in considerable levels of self-government and large financial resources for the provincial administration (Peterlini 2012). Today, the population in South Tirol amounts to about 530,000 of whom 62.3% have German as their first language, 23.4% Italian, 4.1% Ladin and 10.2% other languages (ASTAT 2020).

Social solidarity in South Tirol, as a prevalently rural area, was for a long time characterised mainly by the support of traditional family structures and through charitable institutions of the Catholic Church. The same can be stated for the entire Italian context. During Fascism, Italy saw an expansion of policies of the fascist 'social state' including the establishment of national social assistance agencies that were organised by categories of need, centrally administered and oriented on fascist regime politics (Giorgi 2014). The professionalisation of modern social work in Italy started only after the Second World War, after the end of 20 years of a fascist regime and in the aftermath of the war (Diomede Canevini 2013). At the Tremezzo conference in 1946, a conference organised by the Ministry of Post-war Assistance and the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, both the establishment of a modern and decentralised welfare system and of social work education programmes were highlighted as important priorities for the reconstruction and the democratisation of the country. The conference brought together politicians and experts from Italy and abroad and is usually seen as the launch of modern social work in Italy in a version influenced by foreign, mainly US-American, social work (Stefani 2011). As Angela Zucconi, an important Italian social work pioneer and community worker, remarked in her memoires, Europe felt to be very

close in these early days of Italian social work (Zucconi 2000).[1] However, both the establishment of a modern and decentralised welfare system and the professionalisation and academisation of social work in Italy involved cumbersome processes characterised by institutional inertia and reform backlogs. Only during the late 1960s and the 1970s, the course was set towards a decentralised and territorial system of social services, while social work itself experienced a period of professional innovation with critical impulses in the context of the 1968 movements (Fargion 2009; Diomede Canevini 2013). However, the academisation of social work in Italy continued (and continues) to be a challenging process with a price to pay for the full entrance of study programmes into academia, with impediments in relation to the recruitment of academic staff with a social work background and difficulties to define curriculum contents of social work degree programmes according to professional standards and requirements (Fazzi and Rosignoli forthcoming). The formal recognition and definition of the social work profession by the state was given only in 1993.

As to social policy and social services in South Tirol, with the coming into force of the second statute of autonomy in 1972, the autonomous province of Bozen/Bolzano obtained the primary legislative competence in the fields of social assistance and social services. This was the starting point for the development of a local welfare system able to adapt to specific circumstances and to respond to local needs. Contrary to other policy fields such as education, local social policy in South Tirol has always been a field of interethnic and cross-linguistic political competence. Nevertheless, both policy development and practice in the local welfare system have been characterised by different legal, political, structural, cultural, linguistic and professional challenges (Frei and Karner 2003; De Santi et al. 2001). As to the legal aspects, local social policymaking has to respect national constitutional foundations and framework legislation leading, especially on the level of policy details and implementation, to issues and needs of clarification between the provincial and the national level. From a political point of view, social policy and social services as an important field for responding to citizens' (and voters') needs has seen different positions and priorities defined by a political party system organised mainly according to language groups. Moreover, needs and their interpretation as well as resources have differed between the urban centres where the majority of the Italian-speaking population resides and the rural areas inhabited prevalently by the German-speaking

[1] 'A rileggere le pagine degli *Atti del Convegno* (di Tremezzo U. N.) stampati nel 1947 si nota una cosa straordinaria: per molti problemi c'erano allora pacchetti di proposte concrete, praticabili e aggiornate sull'esperienza di Paesi più avanzati del nostro. L'Europa era allora davvero vicina: Ogni relazione era chiaramente frutto di varie settimane dedicate alla raccolta di dati e di idee'. (Zucconi 2000: 85).

['Re-reading the pages of the *Proceedings of the Conference* (of Tremezzo U. N.) printed in 1947, we notice an extraordinary thing: for many problems there were then packages of concrete and practicable proposals updated on the experience of countries more advanced than ours. Europe was really close then: each report was clearly the result of several weeks dedicated to the collection of data and ideas'.]

majority. These differences sometimes form fault lines and taken together with cultural and linguistic differences constitute particular challenges in social policymaking and service provision aimed at strengthening social cohesion in this complex region. While the competence for the provision of services has been devolved to the municipality level at the beginning of the 1990s, it is the provincial level that has to address these very specific challenges (alongside general tendencies and current challenges such as demographic change, etc.) in its strategies and priorities of local welfare development and innovation.

As to social work, the context of South Tirol has for a long time been characterised by a shortage of professionally qualified social workers, which led to other professional groups being employed in social work fields and a lack of recognition of social work as a specific profession (and discipline). Being a social worker has been mainly understood as a specific function foremost in the field of child protection rather than of a professional with a distinct profile who can be employed in different practice fields. Furthermore, as most social workers had only a 3-year degree, it has been rather difficult for them to move up into management positions in social services which were traditionally held by other professionals such as pedagogues, psychologists or lawyers. However, the positioning and recognition of social work as a profession has been difficult also due to the inconsistencies of different languages, traditions and professional cultures. While both Italian- and German-speaking professional social workers of the province were educated prevalently in the Italian context, most of them in the long-standing school of social work in Trento, the majority of other German-speaking professionals had studied in a German-speaking context, mostly at Austrian universities. Therefore, any inter-professional encounter has been influenced not just by different professional and educational backgrounds but also by differences in language and terminology. This became evident in often very specific local translations like that in German social work professionals came to be called '*Sozialassistenten*' ('social assistants'), a direct translation from the Italian '*assistenti sociali*', which however carried connotations of a position inferior to that of a 'full' social worker in German. In this particular context, being able to develop a common understanding has been a challenging but crucial task. It meant bringing different perspectives, professional approaches and languages into exchanges with each other in order to find common denominators, taking into account local knowledge and contextualising professional action according to local conditions and needs.

This therefore forms a central challenge in social work education at the Free University of Bozen/Bolzano, a university founded in 1997 for the specific purpose of bridging the language divide and of promoting equal recognition of and competence in the languages Italian, German and English on all study programmes of its five faculties. Very soon after its foundation, the Free University of Bozen/Bolzano opened a degree programme in social work as one of its first study courses. This priority stemmed on the one hand from the lack of social work professionals in the region but represented at the same time the attempt to

take up precisely these specific communicative challenges, to work on them at the academic level and within the wider framework of an integrated and European perspective of social work and social work education. By and by the Free University has widened its offer of study programmes for the social professions to a degree programme in social education (*Sozialpädagogik, educazione sociale*). This was followed by a master's degree in social work and the possibility for graduates in social work and social education to get a doctoral degree in the faculty's PhD programme of educational sciences.

However, providing social work education in this context has brought further challenges which can be summarised in the following questions. How to fulfil the specific needs of professional social work education within a faculty and an academic context in which social work risks to be dominated by 'stronger', more established disciplines such as sociology or pedagogy when curricula prescriptions at ministerial level were dominated by the lobbying of those disciplines which made it very hard to have an exchange with these disciplines at eye level? How to design a curriculum of social work in these conditions and an academic context not very suitable to combine a solid grounding in theory and research with elements of practice and reflexive professional development? And in addition to these already challenging issues, how to provide a trilingual social work programme without getting lost in translations and creating confusion for the students? How to go beyond merely descriptive juxtapositions of subject matters in the different languages to arrive at an understanding of what lies behind the linguistic differences in terms of epistemological traditions? Which literature to use in teaching to strengthen such a multicultural learning perspective? How to educate social work professionals to become able to work and argue their case in different languages and to refer to different debates and professional discourses with the right terms and on the basis of a transversal understanding of how the core issues of social work configure in different contexts, traditions and debates? How to do all this in a just 3-year BA programme? How to find social work educators and professors who are ready and able to deal with these challenges and who do not take risky shortcuts by abstracting always from concrete contexts or who promote instead professional and disciplinary imperialism from their taken-for-granted viewpoints?

During the first 20 years of this endeavour at the Free University of Bozen/Bolzano, academic staff have been wrestling with these issues but benefitted from the presence of several permanent or visiting scholars who combined a strong international orientation and experience with a keen interest in the local context. However, the experience shows that all these questions cannot be answered once and for all but have to be raised and debated again and again in everyday contexts, for instance, when new students with different language and cultural backgrounds join and when new colleagues are called as contract lecturers or permanent faculty members. Although this may feel so often like having to start from scratch, it is probably only in addressing the minutiae of daily decisions over issues of learning, comparing and communicating in cross-cultural and cross-national discourses that competences develop that meet

ultimately the requirements of social work education in a European border region with all its cultural and political baggage. But it is precisely this kind of assiduous commitment to detail that lays the basis for a competent European discourse of the discipline and the profession of social work and thereby for a European social work identity.

4 Enquiring the Meaning of Differences and Similarities and Engaging with Historical and Political Contexts: The Perspective and Agenda of European Social Work

How can the challenges outlined above therefore be systematically dealt with and what is required by and implied in a European social work perspective? Following recent debates on European Social Work (Kessl et al. 2020b), the following outlines a perspective and agenda of European Social Work by showing how the issues of social work and social work education in the border region of South Tirol indeed both require and invite such a perspective and approach.

First of all, social work has to be understood as contextualised practice in relation to different welfare regimes and traditions, their development over time and their present stage and ideational alignment in terms of their underlying current priorities and strategies of intervention (Kessl 2009; Kessl et al. 2020b). For all social work and social work education, but all the more in a border region that is influenced by tendencies and debates from different national contexts, this requires a solid understanding of welfare state development in a comparative perspective. Comparing hereby cannot be limited to describing differences but must mean to critically examine them in order to understand how current tendencies of social policies in Europe affect both national and local welfare contexts and as a consequence also social work practice. Such an orientation is the basis for a European perspective in social work education and must be developed, in the case of Bozen/Bolzano, independently from what is the language in which social policy courses are taught or the national and linguistic background of the professors in charge.

Secondly, a comparative approach must not be limited to the general structural context, but enter into the discussion of social work practice fields and professional perspectives. A comparative approach at this level shows, on the one hand, the close connection between the institutional form and funding structure of social services and how the responsibility for providing answers to social problems and questions is realised in different welfare state arrangements. On the other hand, such a comparative perspective permits also a critical engagement with questions of access to social services and with their role as part of an apparatus and a governmental project that processes ideas, intentions and, indeed, people as citizens and ‘target groups’ of welfare state intervention (Clarke 2018). In this sense, a critical and common understanding makes it possible to see how services, local practices and uses of discretion contribute either to the promotion of social support, protection and participation or

to the categorisation, policing and disciplining of people as service users and citizens (Nothdurfter 2020). This requires intricate knowledge of local welfare contexts and deep insights into actual social work practices combined with knowledge about whether and how these questions are dealt with in different national social work debates. In this regard, the example of South Tirol shows also on the one hand the risk that specific local systems and discourses tend to be self-referential and complacent by isolating themselves from external questioning. On the other hand, taken up within a broader analytical perspective, the specific local practices of a border region represent a constant invitation to analyse them from such a comparative and critical angle.

This relates to a third aspect of European social work, namely, cross- and transnational theoretical and methodological discourses. As Kessl et al. (2020b) point out, specific topics have been increasingly shared as 'travelling knowledge' in social work, both on the professional and the scientific level. Furthermore, there is an increasing interest in sharing theoretical concepts and approaches to social work within a European debate, not least related to the questions of how to further develop and legitimise social work in the face of rhetoric and political onslaughts concerning its de-legitimation. At the same time, certain approaches and perspectives in social work have never been only arising from local or national contexts but linked to international movements and transnational causes and concerns. However, what has dramatically changed for social policy and social work in the era of globalisation and new global challenges is the confrontation with transnational issues of immediate practical and political relevance and impact (Schröer and Schweppe 2020). In this regard social work is challenged by the contradictory situation in which, on the one hand, transnational perspectives and approaches become imperative, while, on the other hand, these very transnational phenomena and challenges lead to new demarcations of borders and closures even in the European context. For example, the border region of South Tirol recently made the experience how fast the increased presence of migrants and refugees can lead to the re-establishment of borders between neighbouring European countries that had supposedly been abolished. Furthermore, being part of Italy, South Tirol is also affected by events at the European external borders and by the political instrumentalisation of the migration and refugee question by national and local politics.

Last but not least, this leads to a fourth aspect of European social work not just as an analytical but also a political project. The development of a European social work perspective has been made possible also by EU exchange programmes. Furthermore, EU support programmes and regulations, such as the opening of social services to a European market, have had a notable impact also on many social work contexts. At the same time, stronger supranational European foundations of social policy and social work have not been developed. Social work is still regulated mainly by nation states and based on national policy frameworks, while the dearth of European social policies has also contributed to the deep crisis of the European unification project during at least the last decade. However, European social work is also 'relating to our (European) tradition of constituting subjectivity

in members of a modern society as a process of emancipation and liberation under conditions of justice and equality which need to be secured on the political level' (Kessl et al. 2020a: 15). In this sense, European social work has also a political mandate to contribute to future perspectives of social work in Europe and to a strengthening of European social work not only as a project of academic elites but also as a common endeavour to critically engage with social and political questions in an again changing Europe.

5 Transnational Interconnectedness and Exclusionist Ideas of Right-Wing Nationalist Populism: Current Challenges for European Social Work as a Political Project

As stated above, social work is increasingly confronted with transnational challenges. As Schröer and Schweppe (2020) point out, not only specific social groups, such as migrants, but also the everyday lifeworld of large parts of the European population are transnationally intertwined. Increased mobility, new communication technologies, shifting incentive systems in the context of institutions and also individual competences (such as the ability to speak different languages) contribute to increased labour mobility, transnational interconnectedness of families and transnational lifeworlds and biographies. Furthermore, care needs and arrangements, especially the care of the elderly, rely on an increasingly transnational care market that reaches deep into the everyday life of many people. Additionally, the one-sided focus on European market integration has also caused severe social problems, while social protection systems are still stuck in nation state containers. In this sense, social policy and social work in Europe are still largely nationally regulated affairs, while both social risks and increasingly also everyday lives are characterised by border-straddling transnational constellations.

At the same time, the crisis of the European unification process and the rise of nationalist populism all over Europe have pushed the dream of a more social Europe a long way off. While the defence of national borders and the nostalgic evocation of national institutions and sovereignty are at the centre of populist rhetoric and politics, transnational challenges and responsibilities tend to be largely ignored. In this political climate, social work risks also to 'seal itself off from Europe in its supposedly "good old" institutions and ignore the cross-border entanglements in the transnational everyday lifeworlds of people' (Schröer and Schweppe 2020: 344).

Particularly within national and local welfare contexts, right-wing populist politics question the very foundations of inclusive welfare. Principles such as universalism, social justice and inclusion have come under massive attack, not just on the level of rhetoric but also on the level of resources made available and work practices aimed at supporting people who should, according to exclusionist ideas of welfare, not be entitled to get welfare support. Right-wing populist positions increasingly reject the idea of equality of rights in favour of the idea of a society in which some

people have more rights than others according to their citizenship, origins, spoken language or skin colour (Fazzi and Nothdurfter forthcoming). So far, the social work literature has discussed the consequences of this rise of right-wing populism mainly as an external threat (Ottmann 2017; Ife 2018; Noble and Ottmann 2018; Thiessen 2019). However, can we be sure that social workers themselves are immune to such ideologies, even when they are increasingly exposed to precarious working conditions and to a climate of de-legitimation of 'the social'?

Against this background, what is the mandate of European social work, not just as an analytical scholarly but also as a political project? As Kessl et al. (2020a) state, 'a critical European approach to social work carries the message, there are alternatives, and they are contained in the unrealised dreams, hopes and coping capacities of people who make up the diversity of a common European heritage together with the repertoire of distinct intellectual and political concepts of a society worth living in which is still inherent in the variety of European "welfare regimes"' (Kessl et al. 2020a: 14). In this sense, a project of European social work means to constructively connect these ideas and efforts and to engage with the question of how the professional mandate of social work can be made effective under different and often adverse political conditions. European social work as a political project also pursues the ambitious goal of defending, negotiating and re-establishing the importance of a social dimension in its engagement with current conditions and political contexts. However, this cannot be just a project of academic or European elites. European social work means fostering critical and European thinking that helps social workers to develop practice perspectives and strategies on different levels. In this context, social work education is of crucial importance, and especially privileged places of encounter and debate should use their potential of becoming bottom-up laboratories of social work that is, in this sense, European.

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Intra-national Similarities and Differences in Social Work and Their Significance for Developing European Dimensions of Research and Education

Griet Roets, Koen Hermans, Martin Wagener, Daniel Zamora Vargas, Nicolas Jacquet, and Rudi Roose

1 Introduction

In this chapter we reflect on interesting intra-national similarities and differences in social work research, policy, practice and education in Belgium and their significance for developing Belgian as well as European dimensions of social work research, policy, practice and education. In the context of this volume and its various reflections on the impact of political border issues on social work, Belgium can serve as an interesting example of an internal linguistic border leading to quite different approaches to social work and social work education. The discussion is embedded in the vital debate on the recognition of the status of social work as an academic discipline in international circles (see, e.g. Ramsay 2003; Hare 2004;

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Green 2006; Lorenz 2008). The emphasis on the academic and scientific underpinning of social work has been taking place for decades but strongly re-emerged in Belgium in the slipstream of the development of the global definition of social work by the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) and the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) (see Sewpaul and Jones 2005; Ornellas et al. 2018) and of developments during which the Bachelor/Master structure as a unified framework for European higher education was introduced and implemented following the Bologna agreements (Lorenz 2008). Whereas social work has been recognised in the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium as a specific academic discipline during the last 15 years, which has led to the development of a Bachelor/Master structure in the universities of Ghent, Leuven and Antwerp, social work has not received full recognition on a university academic level in the French-speaking part of Belgium. Social work has been consolidated in the French-speaking part of Belgium on the Bachelor level, and the French community government preferred in 2013 to create a new professional Master in social work and engineering[1] at the University Colleges of Applied Sciences (see *Hautes Ecoles*) which were linked to newly recognised (but not financed) 'applied' research centres (Laloy 2019). However, on the academic level, social work finds expressions in the French-speaking part of Belgium only in 'bordering disciplines', in sociology, anthropology and social, economic and political sciences. There is no specific social work curriculum, but students can choose different courses related to social work and social policy.

Belgium was created as a country with three language communities after the revolution of 1830 which had demanded its independence from the Netherlands. Social work as a recognisable activity originated in the Belgian realm at the end of the nineteenth century as a response to industrialisation and urbanisation and the strong 'pillarisation' of society (meaning that the Catholic and Socialist unions, the women's movement and civil society organisations played an essential role by developing their own approaches to giving assistance according to their respective normative orientation; see Coenen 2013; Hermans and De Bie 2017). The first school for social work was founded in 1920 in Brussels, and from the start, the social work schools educated three types of social workers: (1) case workers; (2) social workers engaged in adult learning and social action (often employed in various civil society organisations); and (3) social workers committed to addressing relations in the workplace. Social work was then introduced and framed as a profession in 1948, as a consequence of a bill proposed by Maria Baers, one of the leaders of the Catholic women's movement. From the 1970s onwards, Belgium became a federal state consisting of regions and communities while still being a constitutional monarchy since 1830. The first two state reforms which were enacted in 1970 and 1980 resulted in the establishment of a complex state structure currently consisting of a nationwide federal level (responsible for social security, national defence, internal and external affairs, justice and the largest part of health care), three Communities

[1] Cf. In French: *Master en ingénierie et action sociales*.

(a Dutch-, French-, and German-speaking Community based on language differences and with responsibilities for person-related issues such as culture, well-being, social services and education) and three Regions (a Flemish, Brussels-Capital and Walloon region each being responsible for territorial issues such as economic and labour market issues, agriculture, environmental issues, energy, housing and foreign trade). The country thus has a federal government and a federal parliament consisting of two chambers (the Chamber of Representatives and the Senate) and comprises three Regions and three Communities. Each of them has executive and legislative powers, with the purpose that various groups of people with different cultural backgrounds and languages could live together in harmony.[2] Until today, the federal level is responsible for social security (minus child benefits since the last reform in 2011), health care and justice. These different phases of state reforms also had an important impact on social work. Only limited amounts of services in which social workers operate pertain to the federal or national level. The main public services are the Public Centres for Social Welfare which implement the social assistance law, the social services in general and psychiatric hospitals, and the role of social work in prisons. In addition, specific inter-federal institutions such as the Combat Poverty, Insecurity and Social Exclusion Service[3] and Unia, the independent public institution that combats discrimination and promotes equal opportunities,[4] facilitate the dialogue between the different regions and communities.

Surprisingly, however, although the work of scholars in the Dutch- and French-speaking communities of Belgium, including Brussels (bilingual), is strongly rooted and positioned in an open-minded orientation towards different European interpretations and influences of social work, we find ourselves in a certain void in terms of the exchange of fruitful insights in social work research, policy, practice and education between Flanders, Brussels and Wallonia.[5] In this chapter, we therefore first try to frame the causes and complexities of this void. We draw on research insights that emerge from a joint seminar between social work scholars[6] located at universities in Flanders, Brussels and Wallonia and ongoing seminars in the recently renewed IGOA/GIReP network of poverty researchers at the federal level. IGOA/GIReP represents the Inter-university Group on Research and Poverty, which is a network of poverty researchers recently revived due to stringent social policy rationing in Belgium. The core mission of the network is to promote the reflexive exchange and positioning of researchers in relation to predominant policies and practices. It recognises that approaches to poverty and anti-poverty strategies are not neutral but contested constructs, differing according to the ways in which different actors in societies define them. The network takes into account that the ways in which poverty

[2] See https://www.belgium.be/en/about_belgium/government/

[3] See https://www.combatpoverty.be/centre

[4] See https://www.unia.be/en

[5] In order to be complete, we should note that Belgium also has a German-speaking community, which represents less than 1% of the population. Most social workers there have completed studies in social work in the French-speaking community and a minority in Germany.

[6] The seminar took place in Leuven on the 28th of August 2019.

and anti-poverty policymaking are defined and pursued are also influenced by prevailing welfare state regimes, in which notions of anti-poverty policymaking largely depend on their respective historical as well as contemporary social, political and ideological contexts and motives. This calls upon researchers in the different parts of the country to make sense of poverty and anti-poverty strategies in well-considered and contextualised ways and to take a critical and reflexive stance in the research projects and approaches with respect to research traditions and (inter-) disciplinary backgrounds of the respective researchers. The network therefore organises three internal seminars a year and one public seminar to discuss approaches and positionings in a democratic debate with policy and practice. In the network we discuss contemporary intra-national as well as international similarities, differences and influences emerging in our academic work across Belgium. In this contribution, we try to identify strategies to tackle this lack of mutual production and exchange of knowledge between the linguistically defined communities for the future under three headings: (1) developing a critical historical-genealogical awareness in social work research, policy, practice and education; (2) paying particular attention to the disciplinary identity of social work research and implications for social work education; and (3) (inter)national networking, joint research projects and exchange.

2 Framing the Belgian Void: Linguistic, Historical, Social, Cultural, Economic, Political and Ideological Divisions

We currently realise that there is a relative yet worrisome void in the development of social work research, policy, practice and education across Belgium.

The most obvious element of this void in academia is the current lack of a lingua franca. Whereas we all have been educated in reading, speaking and writing French as well as Dutch and German across Belgium during our educational pathways, many social work researchers and practitioners do not master either French, Dutch or German enough and consider these languages as foreign rather than native languages. The limited intra-national exchange in Belgian social work might also be considered a generational issue. What could be called our ‘founding fathers and mothers’ in academia have been reading academic books and works in Dutch, French and German, collaborated on the federal level in large-scale research projects funded by the federal government, and were teaching students on subject matters that we now continue to update and reorient according to new research, policy and practice developments and continue to focus on, in line with our own research interests. During our seminar, we discovered that very influential books for our discipline had been developed recently at both sides of the country by these pioneers, like the book in Dutch ‘40 years of public centres for social welfare and social assistance’ (eds. De Wilde et al. 2016) and the book in French ‘100 years of professionalisation of social work’ (edited by Artois in 2019). However, we were not even aware of the existence of the books on the other side of the country. Given the Anglo-Saxon turn in social work academia in Flanders during the last 20 years

as a consequence of the growing pressure to publish in peer-reviewed journals, the reading habits of Flemish researchers has changed. The French-speaking social work researchers are mostly in contact with developments in France, Quebec and French-speaking Switzerland. Although we have to deal with the growing importance and dominance of peer-reviewed journals and Anglo-Saxon literature, we consider the writing of books and research reports in Dutch and French (and reading them) an important activity in academic careers. In addition, the three regions have their own scientific funds. There is still a federal scientific policy, but this is increasingly under pressure since policymakers believe that this is regional instead of national/federal competence. During the last years, some policymakers also expressed their doubts on ideological grounds, arguing that research on social issues (such as poverty, migration, culture and arts) can no longer be considered relevant as it only draws attention to these issues.

Because we are trying to take these influences into account in our current work, as the next generation of researchers, we started to communicate across the language barriers most of the time in English. Our hesitance to do so comes from the awareness that we respect Dutch, French and German as native languages in Belgium, yet our preference for English seems to be rooted in the increasing pressure of our academic environments to locate our work in the context of the international social work research community and to publish articles in high-ranking peer-reviewed journals in English. Nevertheless, in Belgium, journals continue to exist that disseminate national research findings in Dutch and French for a diversity of audiences, such as frontline field workers and (local) social policymakers. Although publications in these journals for professional social work are only in a relative way taken into account by our universities as influential contributions that count in our track records for having an academic career, we continue to make efforts to publish in national journals and books in order to reach the audience to whom our research results should matter primarily.

However, the issue of language is not the only and the main source of complexity. As social work researchers, we are confronted with different historical, social, cultural, economic, ideological and political developments in the different parts of Belgium that deeply influence our academic work and the disciplinary identity of social work. Although the scope of this chapter is too limited to explain all this complexity, during the last decades, it is clear that Belgian social policymaking has been hampered by extreme differences in ideological, social, cultural, economic and political contexts and orientations. The results of the elections on the federal level in 2014 and 2019, for example, show that citizens in the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium vote far more right-wing, liberal and centre-stage Christian-democratic parties who promote Flemish nationalism and even racism, yet citizens in Brussels and the French-speaking part vote more left-wing for socialist, green and moderate-minded liberal and centre-stage Christian-democratic politicians. The complex and long-term negotiations after these elections reflect deeply rooted ideological differences, for example, in approaching principles of social protection, social security and social inequalities related to poverty and migration. As a topical case in point, our group discussed some of the developments in the social and political struggle

against poverty and social inequality since our work concentrates on these issues. During the last decade, we witnessed an active political dismantling and disappearance of shared policy and practice frameworks and structures and pressure on shared funding opportunities for research on the federal as well as community level in this field of social work research. In terms of policy structures, for example, the long-term existence of the Belgian as well as Flemish 'Yearbook on Poverty Affairs', which provided a state-of-the-art picture on a yearly basis for the last decades, has been abolished by policymakers and is now funded by civil society organisations.

In this chapter, we therefore try to identify strategies to take a critical and reflexive stance in relation to prevailing policy and practice with respect to different research traditions and backgrounds of the respective researchers. The three identified strategies are interrelated.

2.1 Developing a Critical Historical-Genealogical Awareness in Social Work Research, Policy, Practice and Education

In our discussions, we discovered the significance of raising a critical historical-genealogical awareness of our common history in Belgium in order to reconsider continuities and discontinuities in contemporary ideas in social work research, policy, practice and education (Lorenz 2007; Zamora 2018). As a vital example, we considered that although principles of citizenship and social rights have been institutionalised and led to social security and protection structures uniformly as a continuity across Belgium, the dependency of citizens on the social welfare system is currently in part framed as a 'dangerous development' by various policymakers. This is especially the case in Flanders on account of the centre-right political climate and shows the discontinuity between, and political path dependency of, Flanders, Brussels and Wallonia. Mainly in Flemish social policy rhetoric, poverty has been scrutinised under the social and political microscope as a personal problem of people living at the bottom of the social and economic scale, while dynamics of inequality and wealth are largely ignored. This results in concerns and measures being focused on the behaviour of the poor. This echoes a binary and pre-welfare state distinction between deserving and undeserving citizens (see Garrett 2018; Jacquet et al. forthcoming). Although the benefit structures mostly remain, an erosion of social protection and social security principles is at stake. For instance, in social assistance as well as in health insurance, more and more activation measures are implemented which stress the individual responsibility of the social beneficiaries and which raise further barriers to access which lead to more exclusion and non-take-up of benefits (Zune et al. 2017). In addition, there is a growing policy attention at the federal level given to detecting social fraud, which changes the public image from welfare beneficiaries to so-called frauds. Also recently, we notice social work being involved in the production of so-called charity economies in the shadow of the welfare state. These systematically but mainly voluntarily organised distribution initiatives of food and clothing to poor people are expressions of neo-

philanthropy in areas of frontline social work practice and challenge the profession to take position to these developments (see Villadsen 2007; Kessl et al. 2020 for European developments; Roets et al. forthcoming for developments in Flanders; Jacquet et al. forthcoming for developments in Wallonia; Malherbe et al. 2019 for developments in Brussels). In times where poverty reduction seems to lose ground regarding the explicit public mandate of professional social workers, public policy tends to give more incentives towards a greater involvement of non-state actors such as civil society, the market and volunteer and citizen action groups as agents of social justice (Dean 2015; Dermaut et al. 2019), thereby diminishing the social rights of welfare recipients and infringing their social citizenship status.

A historical-genealogical approach is therefore highly important to tease out historical roots as well as contemporary manifestations of recent shifts in the normative value orientation of social policy and social work which comparative approaches highlight most vividly. These comparisons ultimately carry the message that policies and approaches to social phenomena are historically and culturally contingent and therefore never just 'given' but shaped according to political principles and interests. A major milestone in recent history in Belgium was the institutionalisation of the *universal and unconditional right to human dignity* being guaranteed by local centres for social welfare across Belgium (see the OCMW/CPAS-law, art. 1, 1976) and implemented by professionally trained social workers (Hermans and De Bie 2017). The contemporary welfare reforms, which take place under the cover of a so-called transformation and crisis of the welfare state across Europe and Belgium, will be crucial to the extent that they foreshadow the coming conflicts around the role of the state and the visions that must be produced by social policymakers. The modernised assistance systems, since 1976 organised around the key principle of a right to social welfare to realise the human dignity of each person, constitute a key evolution in conceptions of Belgian social policy: instead of reducing poverty, human dignity became the new criterion to decide whether a public intervention by the Public Centre for Social Welfare is needed. At the same time, although a new law was created, there remained a strong link with poverty reduction, especially because of the impact of the economic crisis in the 1970s on the increase of poverty. This discourse, partly inherited from civil society mobilisations in the late 1960s, will be ambiguous with reference to its relationship with universal protections measures such as social security and macro-economic policies. It will redraw especially the boundaries of social policy by distinguishing the 'indirect' policy against poverty – organised around social security, labour market regulation and collective provision – from a more 'direct' one, organised around a guaranteed 'floor' of income. Within this framework, it is argued that the post-war ideal of universal social security will slowly decline in favour of more targeted, individualised, conditional and specific interventions for the 'poor'. As the Flemish sociologist Vranken (1998) argued, this shift could become 'the cornerstone of a new social policy, residual type'.

In short, historically there was a broad understanding of public social welfare which was complemented by different civil society actions that were also funded by the state. More recent policy developments no longer address poverty as a complex phenomenon that requires both a structural redistribution of resources and of power

and tend to reinforce and reproduce social inequalities and precarity. Even if different and new categories of people and types of poverty are addressed, structural and rights-oriented poverty reduction strategies are losing ground in Belgium and shift into more individualised and charity-based approaches. Gaining an in-depth historical-genealogical understanding of the changing normative value orientation which is at stake in the Belgian welfare state across the communities thus makes us realise even better that we need to continue to commit ourselves to social work's quest for social justice (see Boone et al. 2018; Vandekinderen et al. 2019). This also raises the vital question how we want social workers to be educated in the contemporary time juncture (see Hermans and De Bie 2017). Indeed, to implement the OCMW/CPAS-law in frontline and street-level social work practice, for example, requires processes of professionalisation of social workers, which is a central part of our mandate as teachers in social work academia.

2.2 Exchange on the Disciplinary Identity of Social Work and Implications for Social Work Education

In the context of social work education in particular, the key question lingers on whether and how social work as an academic discipline relates to the social work profession (Wheeler and Gibbons 1992; Green 2006). Scholars have found that social work risks having a subordinate academic status and an associated poor professional credibility and therefore needs to be fully incorporated in university curricula to support processes of professionalisation (Nash 2003; Green 2006). The discussion on the recognition of social work as an academic discipline formed the impulse for many university departments in countries throughout Europe to formulate an explicit point of view about the academic grounding and disciplinary identity of social work (see Sewpaul and Jones 2005; Lorenz 2008). This is also the case in Belgium where the historical emergence of social work education programmes is rife with complexity due to different normative and ideological orientations (Hermans and De Bie 2017). From the beginning, the trade unions, the workers' organisations and the women's movement all founded different schools for social work. As such, social work became part of the 'pillarisation' of the Belgian society. However, as a reaction against this, the larger cities founded their own schools for social work to reach out more to the lower social classes that did not always find their way to the schools in Catholic university cities. This former ideological orientation diminished as a consequence of different rounds of takeovers between organisations managing schools of social work, but is still influential in contemporary times, given the fact that there is still a strong connection between schools and practice organisations. These organisations are still present as partners in research projects, in practice placements of students and in boards of practice organisations that have an advisory function towards the schools.

In all of Belgium, social work finds inspiration on the academic level from 'bordering disciplines' in social, economic and political sciences, such as sociology,

social policy and social pedagogy/educational sciences. On the academic level, social work at universities in Flanders is currently established in faculties or departments of social pedagogy and educational sciences (Ghent), sociology and social policy (Leuven and Antwerp) and offers Bachelor and Master degrees. There are also study programmes at University Colleges of Applied Sciences but only at professional Bachelor level. In Brussels and at Wallonian universities, social work is not recognised as a discipline within academic Master degrees. Master students with degrees in sociology, labour sciences and economic and social policy[7] at Master level may choose different courses related to social work and with some social policy in their programme. A professional Master degree in social work and engineering was implemented in 2013 at different University Colleges of Applied Sciences. In Flanders, Brussels and Wallonia, however, research is separated by the different decrees that regulate the educational system as 'fundamental' for universities and 'applied' or 'practice-based' for university colleges, even if the research practice of scholars in both settings cannot be distinguished neatly between these two orientations. Interestingly, a new generation of scholars at University Colleges of Applied Sciences in Flanders, Brussels and Wallonia obtained their PhD at universities. This complexity is not to be found only in Belgium but is intensified here due to the institutional border between universities and University Colleges of Applied Sciences. These complicated institutional differences and relationships are the case in Flanders, Brussels and Wallonia, but the pressure for social work researchers to profile and publish in international journals requires time and space that prevents us from embracing cultural differences and engaging in a mutual exchange between the institutions. Moreover, these complexities continue to generate debate about the question whether social work should have and further establish its own academic knowledge base or find its academic grounding in 'bordering disciplines' ranging from psychology, to education, sociology, economy and political sciences (Lorenz 2008).

Due to these institutional differences within Belgium, we consider the question how we perceive the disciplinary identity of social work and the implications for social work education as a very relevant one. In that sense, we follow Lorenz (2016) who observes that social work has an explicit *social* agenda as an activity that cannot strive to distance itself from prevailing historical, social, cultural (including linguistic), economic, political and ideological processes and changing welfare state regimes, evolutions and contexts and from the quest for social justice (Lorenz 2016; Boone et al. 2018). Although the disciplinary identity of social work always remains ambiguous, social work practice is nonetheless crucially influenced by theoretical resources and inspirations (see Healy 2000). During our seminar, we discussed the international and institutional influences in both the Dutch- and the French-speaking part of Belgium, including Brussels and the main influences in and

[7] The faculties of labour sciences and 'economic and social policies' were historically created in relation to the socialist workers movement in Brussels and the Christian workers movement in Louvain-la-Neuve/Leuven as a tool to foster science on employment-related issues as well as to strengthen continuous education for workers and trade union representatives at Master level.

differences between our research and educational programmes. It was clear, for example, that we all adopt a multilevel approach in which critical analyses of history (such as the role of social movements and trade unions), social problems, economy, law, rights-oriented welfare state arrangements, local social policy and organisational and frontline dynamics of discretion are at the heart of the professionalisation process of social workers. Our exchange made us discover that we have very different and elementary histories and dynamics in our respective regions, and therefore it remains difficult to fully understand each other across the regions. Yet we also rediscovered more unity in diversity than we expected. The fact that we are all, relatively seen, early career professors and researchers enabled us to reflect upon the 'territories' of, and lack of exchange between, established professors and research groups across the country and to openly discuss both the complexities we experience and the capacities we have in relation to our academic environments across Belgium. This reflexive openness and exchange already currently leads to new and joint research commitments across Belgium and to new energy and solidarity in taking a more differentiated stance in relation to policy and practice, both in the national and international realm.

2.3 (Inter)National Networking, Joint Research Projects and Exchange

During the discussions in our joint seminar, we agreed with one another that we need to develop strategies to tackle the above-mentioned lack of exchange and collaboration. In other words, an open-minded search for a common social work research, policy, practice and education agenda requires due attention in Belgium. This calls upon researchers in the different parts of the country to develop strategies for exchange, collaboration and networking in well-considered and contextualised ways.

For us, using English as a lingua franca is therefore inevitable as a bare minimum in the current time juncture and might be seen as both a necessary evil as well as an enriching opportunity to revive the exchange of vital ideas and the development of social work across Belgium and across Europe. The identity of social work requires commitment and partnership with social policymakers and practitioners, and therefore it remains crucial to continue exchanges in the language that all the stakeholders feel comfortable with. Using English is, in that sense, a necessary evil and intrinsically leads to new complexities, particularly when there is no 'native speaker' among the participants and all bring different associations from their own linguistic background to a commonly used term. However, using different languages, including English, is also extremely relevant in the development of the identity of social work as an academic discipline and as a profession and in the execution of joint research projects. An example of this is the doctoral research project of Nicolas Jacquet, who is affiliated as a doctoral student to both the University of Liège and Ghent University for a joint PhD on the erosion of social protection principles in

Belgium, a project based on the analysis of historical, theoretical and qualitative sources of the lives of citizens in precarious situations and belonging to different language communities. Another example concerns a recent 'evaluative research project' that was installed by the federal government and commissioned by the 'Inter-federal Public Service for the eradication of poverty, social insecurity and social exclusion'. This had existed for more than two decades yet its existence recently came under threat of cancellation by the federal State Secretary of Poverty Affairs. As researchers at Ghent and Liège University, we were joining hands from our different cultural backgrounds in order to deepen the analysis of strengths and weaknesses of the Inter-federal Service from different perspectives, yet we were united in our refusal to contribute to the disappearance of this service. This increased the complexity in dealing with this research project, but created also extra capacities in dealing with the pressure exercised by policymakers.

We are also convinced that international and European networking requires efforts in learning to communicate in other European languages – especially of neighbouring countries like Germany and France – in at least the passive sense. We consider openness for the active as well as passive use of different languages key to our academic work so as to be able to read original articles, books and research reports that are not translated to English yet can be considered as innovative and major contributions to our field (especially the historical ones!). Getting access to such material from specific social, historical and political contexts would enable us to become aware of our self-referential biases as well as the value of the variety of cultural traditions and other differences which we could embrace. In our current academic environments, which are dominated by positivist epistemologies of scientific subjects which neglect to pay attention to cultural specificities, these endeavours are often received with scepticism and resistance, and this even from our own colleagues and students who are afraid of meeting the challenges of unfamiliar languages rather than trying to engage with them. This retreat to what appears familiar and avoiding of risks is also reflected in a reluctance to make wider use of Erasmus exchanges across Europe which are still considered by many students and academics a burden rather than an opportunity for mutual learning. Particularly in social work, European exchanges – just as much as exchanges in a national context between different language regions – provide opportunities for reflecting on the significance of language and other historical, social, cultural, political and ideological differences that can be instrumentalised to further exclusion and therefore need to be confronted constructively. Reaching out across such borders is essential for social work research, policy and practice developments and education programmes.

Our reflections on the value of intra-national collaboration made us aware also that opportunities are still not being used sufficiently with regard to exchanges with countries that became accessible and joined the EU after 1989. In this regard, learning how to negotiate language differences within one country could be a basis for a better understanding of the limitations and opportunities arising from encounters with completely unknown languages, particularly since this becomes increasingly a practice reality of social workers under the impact of migration. Several of us are therefore committed to networking across Belgium, for example, in the Inter-

university Group Research and Poverty (IGOA/GIReP), and simultaneously across Europe in networks such as the International Social Work and Society Academy (see www.tissa.net), the European Social Work Research Association (see www.eswra.org), the French-speaking networks of social work scholars and professionals AIFRIS (see https://aifris.eu) and the French-speaking network of university scholars in social work REFUTS (see http://www.refuts.eu) and the European Sociological Association (see https://www.europeansociology.org/). Just listing these examples also highlights the fact that many of those European or international organisations often implicitly foster membership among certain linguistic regions as evidenced by the uneven representation of German- and particularly of French-speaking countries in organisations where it is automatically assumed that the language of communication is English.

3 Conclusions

From these reflections we concluded that our intra-national exchange efforts strengthen our commitment to the joint development of social policy and social work practices in Belgium. Our commitment to becoming 'intra-national polyglots' instead of turning more and more into monoglots will have benefits in terms of teaching, researching, publishing and ultimately disseminating research findings in Dutch, French, German and English. This will also make our work accessible in more academic formats, geared towards the requirements of the audiences we want to reach. Ultimately, this might also enhance our search for an identity of social work in the European and inter-national realm, an identity that is based both on universally valid scientific insights and on sensitivity to cultural diversity from a perspective of rights and equality. This reflects a more encompassing willingness to embrace a diversity of research traditions and cultures while strengthening our efforts in the academic grounding of social work to consolidate the identity of the social work family of professions.

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Social Work, Political Conflict and European Society: Reflections from Northern Ireland

Jim Campbell

1 Introduction

Social work practice is varied and complex, engaging with a wide range of clients and scenarios. The following chapter focuses on an issue that is of growing interest to social work policymakers, practitioners and educators namely that of political conflict. The content of the chapter is partly drawn from personal, professional and political experiences; it could be argued that these are the domains which we should consider when understanding the nature of social work's role; it is just that their application to the issue of political conflict is relatively unusual in the literature. I was an adolescent when the conflict in Northern Ireland began in 1969 and have vicariously 'witnessed' many of the terrible events of the time. Some family members and acquaintances died, were injured or traumatised by the 'troubles' (as the conflict is commonly referred to). I was educated in Belfast, became a social worker 10 years before the Belfast Agreement (NIO 1998) was signed, and then a social work educator in Belfast from 1992 to 2012. This insider status is both advantageous and problematic; the following account of social work and political conflict in Northern Ireland is necessarily partial and value-laden, because of these experiences born of identity formation and personal experiences. Many social workers in Northern Ireland will have similar experiences, not just in how political conflict arising from material forms of ethnic and religious divisions affects their lives but in the way that related thoughts and behaviours inform the way we create and sustain such divisions (Campbell and Healey 1999). The chapter will use these insights to explore the role of social workers in dealing with the political conflict in Northern Ireland. It begins with a brief historical account which positions the conflict in

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European and other international contexts. At the core of the chapter is then a discussion of the contemporary social work role in Northern Ireland which can be understood in terms of a range of factors, including sectarian divisions, the nature of social work organisations and failures of the political process to deliver on the peace-building aspirations of the Belfast Agreement which was signed in 1998. Later in the chapter, the results of a recent mixed method study of social workers who experienced the most violent period of the conflict will be used to further explain these relationships. The chapter concludes with an appeal for more radical approaches to social work practice, policy and education which can challenge existing sectarianism and other forms of discrimination which are not confined to Northern Ireland. It will be argued that it is important to locate this project in the wider European milieu where such forms of conflict are increasingly evident at a time of shifts to the right and the emergence of new populist, right wing and nationalist movements.

2 Explaining the Northern Irish Conflict

Northern Ireland is the smallest jurisdiction in the UK (1.8 million people) and, unusually, does not share a land border with the other three countries, England, Scotland and Wales. It has, however, a border with the Republic of Ireland, one which was created following a war of independence in the south of Ireland between 1916 and 1921, which led to a negotiated settlement with the UK and then the partition of the island. Six counties of the northern part of the island remained in the UK; the other 26 counties eventually formed the Republic of Ireland. There are many versions of history that seek to explain the causes of the conflict, with its origins in colonial processes that began around 800 years ago, culminating in the partition of Ireland in 1922.

It was in 1922 that Winston Churchill referred to a sense of frustration that, even at a moment when post-war construction and new forms of nation-building in Europe were occurring, the age-old conflict of the Irish question remained unresolved and was rising to uncomfortable British and international attention. He also implied in his remarks, mistakenly, as will be discussed later in this chapter, that somehow the colonial power Britain had been an ‘honest broker’ in the process that led to a border on the island of Ireland.

This is an assumption that is very much contested, depending on one’s perspective on the conflict (Miller 2014). Although this conflict is often viewed to be unique, it is possible to draw comparisons with events elsewhere in Europe. Just as Ireland was partitioned in 1922, other events in Europe led to new political and national boundaries following the Paris Conference of 1919 and the Treaties of Versailles and Trianon: German boundaries with France, Belgium, Denmark, Poland and Lithuania were redrawn, and the Austro-Hungarian Empire was completely split up so that new nation-states appeared, notably Poland, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. Importantly for the future, members of linguistic and ethnic communities found themselves divided up by numerous, redrawn boundaries. As in Northern Ireland,

such profound decisions were to have long-lasting effects on the history of Europe and many parts of the world in the twentieth and once more in the twenty-first century. The resentment that built up in many countries because of these decisions contributed to the rise of Fascism and Nazism that resulted in the Second World War, leading in turn to the division of Europe through the mechanism of the Iron Curtain. Recent global conflicts can be linked to, for example, the way that Britain and France maintained their grip of power on the Middle East after the First World War and how the West generally failed to face up to the consequences of its policies of colonialism.

2.1 Sectarianism, Economy and Politics

Up until the war in Yugoslavia from 1991 to 2001, the Northern Irish conflict, lasting more than 40 years, was the longest, protracted armed struggle within and against a European state in the post- Second World War period. There are complex explanations for the causes of the conflict, often expressed in binary terms of division: Protestant against Catholic; Unionist against Nationalists; and Irish against British. A mistaken assumption is that the conflict is solely about two religious tribes; a more sophisticated analysis is that the British State, and to a lesser extent the Irish government and other international players (e.g. the USA and EU) have been centrally involved, sometimes beneficially but also with not so positive effects. At the height of the conflict, a 'Dirty War' took place between republican paramilitaries and state forces who also, to some extent, colluded with loyalist paramilitaries. The concept of sectarianism, critically interpreted as something more than simply religious discrimination (McVeigh and Rolston 2007), involving analyses of class and neocolonial processes, helps explain thoughts, behaviours and attitudes that characterise the Troubles. Thus, most children in Northern Ireland are educated in different schools, health and social services are used differentially by Catholics and Protestants, and cities and towns are often segregated in terms of clearly marked geopolitical spaces. Many of the deaths and injuries occurred in working-class communities along what are described as 'peace walls'. These are physical and sometime more subtle boundaries that resemble the walls that have been or are currently being erected, for example, along borders between Mexico and the USA, Israel and Palestine and Hungary and Croatia. Even when such barriers of division are removed, as in Berlin, many psychological and social scars inevitably remain, fuelling future conflicts.

A long-standing weakness in the Northern Ireland economy has contributed to social and sectarian divisions. Northern Ireland is the smallest economy of all regions within the UK with only 2.1% of the 2015 UK total GDP and has a GDP per head at €22,600 compared to the UK average of €31,200 (Eurostat 2017). It has been estimated that as much as 10% of GDP has been adversely affected by the conflict (Dorsett 2013) and that optimism about the peace process which has led to some positive changes to society and the economy (Norris and Collins 2019) has

been undermined by successive governments' commitment to neoliberal economic conditions (Coulter 2014). It is important, therefore, to apply analyses of class to counter over-simplistic explanations based purely on religious difference. Thus, working-class communities, both Catholic and Protestant, have tended to suffer most, socially and economically when compared to their middle-class counterparts.

The landmark Belfast (or 'Good Friday') Agreement (Northern Ireland Office 1998), viewed to be an important vehicle for the delivery of a peace process, established a cross-party Executive Government in a local Assembly. During the 20 years since the signing of the Belfast Agreement, the nature of the conflict in Northern Ireland may have changed, yet many of the fundamental causes remain. The Agreement sets up an interlocking set of political institutions, not just in Northern Ireland but across the islands of Britain and Ireland, and included a series of measures to build peace in civil society. Important in this regard were, for example, the releasing of political prisoners and proposals for meeting the legal and social needs of victims of the conflict and their families. Despite years of attempts to establish effective cross-community government, however, a sense of partialism continues to be characteristic of political decision-making (O'Duffy 2013). Writing in 2019, the parliament at Stormont has not met for 3 years since 2016 because of continuous disputes about respective rights and identity issues and, it can be argued, an absence of political leadership within and across communities. Of greater concern are the looming effects of Brexit, some of which are unpredictable at the time of writing. Although the population of Northern Ireland voted 58% in favour of remaining in the European Union during the referendum of 2016, the entire UK voted narrowly to leave (52%). In the 3 years that followed, the subject of the Irish land border became central to negotiations between the UK and EU governments. A number of issues have become particularly problematic as a result of the ending of EU agreements which had 'softened' the Irish land border. Norris and Collins (2019) have estimated the social and economic consequences of Brexit affecting trade across the Irish border and between Northern Ireland and Britain. They concluded that it may well impact upon citizens' rights and entitlements across the border and between Britain and Ireland, particularly in terms of access to social security benefits and pensions. Although the Good Friday Agreement underpinned the peace process, it also sought to enhance the border-region living standards and citizens' freedoms and rights which may be compromised by Brexit. There are also concerns that the construction of a 'hard boarder' would lead to a return to terrorism and open sectarian conflict. In effect it would not be possible to police the 499 kms and around 200 crossings (more than with the entire EU) of the border, in the event of increased paramilitary threats and violence. It has also been argued that rights underpinned by membership of the European Union (equality rights, labour and employment rights and the right to an effective judicial remedy) may be jeopardised by Brexit (McCrudden 2017).

2.2 Ongoing Violence and the Needs of Victims and Survivors

Despite the fact that the determined and most damaging violence of the early part of the Troubles has all but ceased since the Belfast Agreement and had already gradually diminished since its nadir of death, destruction and trauma in the early 1970s (McKittrick et al. 2001), 'low-level' forms of conflict and violence remain, reinforced by systems of sectarianism, mistrust in or opposition to formal political processes and insecurity over identities. Whilst mainstream paramilitary organisations have to varying degrees sought more peaceful approaches (Ferguson and McAuley 2019; Clubb 2014), political violence continues to be espoused by some, along with individuals and groups with paramilitary connections active in carrying out intimidation and illegal drugs trade. In a number of areas, paramilitary groups are engaged in 'policing' crime, for instance, in the form of 'kneecapping' (Horgan and Morrison 2011) of young people and others who are deemed to be offenders. Despite the peace process, and the role of national and international governments in managing the ending of the conflict, Northern Irish society is still deeply divided (Shirlow and Murtagh 2006). The number of peace walls (Cunningham and Gregory 2014) has grown since the Agreement; these are reminders of the unfinished business of conflict resolution or rather the constant reaffirmation of boundaries as pseudosolutions to conflict. The issue of segregated schools is often cited as a key to understanding the production and reproduction of sectarian relationships and attitudes in later life (Mitchell 2017). This practice prevails despite attempts to bring children together, formally or informally in the educational system (Duffy and Gallagher 2017). It is hardly surprising therefore to find that these divisions spill over into third-level education which can therefore contribute little to overcoming conflict (Campbell et al. 2013). It appears that the formal ending of conflict has not reassured citizens about the consequences of contested identities, particularly when political parties fail to confront the causes of conflict, construct new patterns of social relations and commit the political process to cross-sectional issues and interests.

Another fundamental issue that is stymying the peace process is a failure to meet the needs of victims and survivors of the conflict. Over 3700 people died as a result of the 40 years of the Troubles, and many thousands have been physically and psychologically traumatised. One of the many problems in dealing with this issue is the contested nature of victimhood. Most of those who perpetrated killings were paramilitaries (both republican and loyalist) with about 11% associated with violence from state forces (Fay et al. 1999). The great majority of those who died have been described as 'innocent civilians' caught up in bombings, shootings and sectarian murders. Despite the fact that there have been some government attempts to define victimhood and to present policies to deal with the needs of victims and survivors of the conflict, there is a lack of consensus about how this key problem can be resolved (Brewer and Hayes 2015). A concern remains amongst individuals, families and communities that issues of justice, truth and compensation have been neglected at the expense of political expediency (Lawther 2018).

2.3 Opportunities and Challenges for Social Change

Despite the slowness of the peace process, there are discernible changes that have occurred in the last 20 years. Although the Northern Irish conflict is conventionally viewed to be local and rigid in nature, the use of critical, analytical lenses can reveal more complex cultural, ethnic and national identities, situated in wider global contexts. Increasingly young people in Ireland are more likely to consider themselves different to the conventional binary identities of British and Irish, offering alternative ethnic and cultural spaces (Cassidy and Trew 2004). New patterns of migration over the last few decades have also transformed aspects of society, leading to the gradual emergence of a more multicultural society. Yet such changes reveal other problematic fissures in a society which is already fragmented. The increase in racist attitudes in Northern Ireland has been identified in recent years (McKee 2016). One way of explaining this phenomenon is to draw parallels between the concepts of sectarianism and racism (Bernard and Campbell 2014). Explanatory theories drawn from colonial and neocolonial ideas, and arguments about the significance of interpersonal attitudes and behaviours which have the effect of 'othering', can help explain aspects of racism and discrimination. McVeigh (2015) provides a critical analysis of these debates by arguing that the Northern Irish state tends to represent race hate crime in terms of reversing what he describes as the Protestant/Catholic differential, whilst not accepting responsibility for its own historical role in the conflict. It is possible, here, to draw parallels with other European contexts, where the deregulation of economies, a retreat from the post-war commitment to public welfare and the othering of existing and new ethnic minority communities have created political systems that are fragmented and conflictual (Lorenz 2005). Yet in contemporary Northern Irish society, there are stirrings of, and for, change, with growing and vibrant gay, lesbian and transgender communities arguing for political action and recognition, despite homophobic attitudes in the community (Hayes and Nagle 2018). Long-standing, progressive alliances between trade unions and social movements have resulted in challenges to traditional structures of division. After a considerable period of political resistance, the London government has finally introduced laws that will bring Northern Ireland into line with the rest of the UK in the areas of women's reproductive rights and same-sex marriage (Evans and Tonge 2018).

3 Social Work and Political Conflict in Northern Ireland

Having set the scene, in terms of the diverse and contested causes of the conflict in Northern Ireland, this second part of the chapter now seeks to explore how social workers responded to these traumatic, dangerous contexts. In the course of my academic career, over a 25-year period, I have been interested, with colleagues, in exploring ways in which social workers responded to the Troubles in Northern

Ireland (Smyth and Campbell 1996; Campbell and Healey 1999; Pinkerton and Campbell 2002; Campbell and McCrystal 2005; Campbell et al. 2013). As stated at the start of this chapter, this academic interest is inevitably interconnected with my sense of identifying location in a conflict that I grew up with. Later in my career, I became involved with various European colleagues in using comparative approaches to exploring social work in Northern Ireland and other culturally diverse and contested regions of Europe, which led to my involvement in a wider network of social professionals in Europe (ECSPRESS). It is through these lenses that the second part of this chapter is now presented. This will highlight how the profession responded to the conflict in Northern Ireland according to the trajectories of violence and political contexts of the Troubles. It concludes by appealing for more engaged forms of practice that envisage new types of alliances with victims and survivors and social movements that deal with discrimination, not just in Northern Ireland but in other European settings where these challenges exist in the aftermath of historical divisions and contemporary threats to social peace.

3.1 History, Continuity and Change

In Pinkerton and Campbell (2002), it was argued that the social work role in the context of Northern Ireland could be understood in terms of three phases. In a first phase, best described in an early commentary (Birrell and Murie 1980), health and social care services appeared to be fragmented, because of their rudimentary organisation, and ill-equipped to deal with the profound dislocation of populations and widespread violence that was occurring in the late 1960s and early 1970s. As the period of Direct Rule (when the British government took over political and administrative responsibility for the Northern Irish state from 1973 to 1998) developed, more robust systems of health care and social work evolved under an integrated service (Campbell et al. 2013). Social workers tended to adopt a politically neutral stance, partly because they were mainly employed by state bureaucracies who espoused this ideology and for reasons of safety; to explicitly reveal their political opinions was a dangerous proposition. It was safer to 'say nothing' (Campbell and Healey 1999). We speculated that social workers, as other health and social care professionals, saw themselves as doing their best to make the abnormal normal and ensuring that clients were provided with the best service available regardless of political religious identity.

A second stage was characterised by a sense of stalemate of the conflict, where it appeared that there was little chance that either the state or oppositional paramilitary groups could achieve 'victory'. The social work response was largely to continue to provide services in difficult circumstances, but early attempts to determine a more proactive approach by the profession were emerging. For example, social work trade unions challenged sectarian threats and violence in the workplace through industrial action, and the probation service (social workers who work in the criminal justice system) took a position not to work with those prisoners who

viewed themselves to be incarcerated for political reasons. Meanwhile social work educators took tentative steps towards adopting anti-sectarian education and training in the classroom (Smyth and Campbell 1996). This is not to say that social work practice was any easier; practitioners continued to provide competent services despite witnessing bomb explosions, shootings, traffic disruption and personal threats (Campbell and McCrystal 2005). Two major atrocities drew attention to the role of social workers and healthcare professionals. Bolton (1999) discusses the aftermath of the Enniskillen bombing where in 1987 an IRA bomb exploded during a Remembrance Day commemoration ceremony in the town centre killing 11 people and injuring 63. He explains how he, as a social worker, alongside other colleagues and professionals responded to such an event. He was an off-duty social worker when he was called to the hospital where the dead and injured had been brought and witnessed the traumatic effects on families and helpers. He, with another social worker, stayed with families for a number of hours afterwards to do their best to address trauma and loss. Nearly a decade later, a second bomb explosion caused the greatest number of deaths in a single incident during the Troubles in the rural town of Omagh. This occurred during the year of the Belfast Agreement at the beginning of the peace-building process. Importantly, social workers, amongst other professionals, were available to provide a range of individual, family and community supports and interventions in the months and year following the bombing (Gillespie et al. 2002), suggesting that there now was greater intention on the part of the state and community to find more robust ways of dealing with such incidents than had been the case in the past.

A third phase, taking us to the present, can be identified towards the end of this history of open conflict. As the level of violence and conflict has diminished, more spaces have emerged for social workers and their organisations to consider differentiated and perhaps more proactive opportunities to deal with sectarianism and the legacy of 40 years of conflict, for example, using counselling or community approaches in dealing with victims and survivors. In one European Union-funded project, social work academics, students and victims and survivors designed a curriculum aimed at enabling social workers to be more responsive to Troubles-related issues (Coulter 2014; Duffy et al. 2013; Campbell et al. 2013). The authors describe how innovated pedagogical methods were used to create imaginative spaces for victims and survivors of the Troubles to engage with social work students and educators. There were opportunities to explore complex identities, experiences of the Troubles and improvements in social work student skills, knowledge and values when dealing with the needs of victims and survivors. The teaching encouraged participants to reflect upon legacy issues and how they could contribute to building, with others, a more just society.

A second initiative (Duffy et al. 2019), sponsored by two professional social work organisations, the British Association of Social Workers (Northern Ireland) and the Northern Ireland Social Care Council, carried out a mixed method study on the experiences of social workers during the most intense, violent period of the conflict (1969–1998). Data collected from 101 questionnaires and 28 in-depth interviews revealed, for the first time, the types of strategies, coping skills and potential

for vicarious trauma in these accounts. It revealed that social workers routinely had to seek access to communities in the midst of violence, sometimes through negotiation and agreement with paramilitaries and members of the state security forces. A number of coping mechanisms used by social workers emerged which helps explain how respondents sought to make the 'abnormal normal'. This included adapting apolitical, neutral stances yet taking risks in the everyday tasks of meeting the needs of individuals and families. There was limited evidence of employers providing support for practitioners in the midst of this violence and social conflict, with peers most likely to be the common source of supervision and advice. Over 20 years after the signing of the Belfast Agreement, respondents were generally positive about the role of social workers in dealing with legacy issues and meeting the needs of victims and survivors, as Northern Irish society emerges from this traumatic period of conflict.

4 Implications for European Social Work

How then can this debate about the relationship between social work and political conflict in Northern Ireland help us explore similar issues for the profession in the wider European context? It is important first to be cautious about how such comparisons can be made to avoid simplistic, reductionist conclusions (Mabbett and Bolderson 1999). Thus, there may be a lack of confidence in whether, for example, the role of the social worker in Belfast is similar to that of one in Sarajevo, Klagenfurt or Simferopol; local contexts may be difficult to translate and compare to other settings (Hantrais 1995). An unfortunate aspect of the knowledge base in these areas is that most of the literature is reported in the English idiom (a common language of international collaboration) which may adversely affect the meaning and understanding that is attributed to culturally nuanced circumstances. Despite these problems comparative analysis is possible in the field of social work policy, practice and education, as evidenced in the seminal work of Lorenz (1994) in his review of the development of European social work. One approach is to assert a common understanding of social work values and principles as core to the social work knowledge base which potentially helps social workers deliver the more politicised, activist and social justice-oriented practice that is at the heart of the current global definition of social work (IFSW 2014), in such situations of political conflict. The case of Northern Ireland is interesting because it was, albeit in the last century, a product of the type of political boundary redrawing which has taken place in Europe following the fall of the wall in 1989. Despite the early optimism for positive democratic and social change of the Belfast Agreement, as was the case following the collapse of Communism in Central and Eastern Europe, we can see how many societies are adversely affected by neoliberal policies, their cancellation of welfare guarantees and the disintegration of consensus politics. What is described in the UK as the post-war settlement, which brought together the two main political blocs to deliver health, social care, housing and education on a more equitable basis, has now been

replaced by a fractured political system and policies that tend to victim-blame or fail to deal with multiple forms of discrimination and racism. Parallel narratives are to be found in European countries governed or influenced by right-wing populist (ethnic, civic or regional) movements, for example, in Hungary, Italy and Poland where cultural and ethnic boundaries are being invoked as offering a sense of security allegedly threatened by cultural diversity.

In these contexts, it is crucial that social workers resist these policy and political drivers, particularly in situations of political conflict. One of the lessons from the Northern Ireland case study was that social workers needed to, in safe ways, find ways of building alliances with marginalised communities and to challenge systems of injustice through the lobbying of key policy stakeholders, an argument made by Campbell et al. (2019) in their analysis of the roles of social workers in Northern Ireland, Bosnia Herzegovina and Cyprus. Such activities are often, however, stymied by the political system. Fazzi (2015) describes how practitioners struggled to find their voice and role when working in organisations that were influenced by exclusionary populism and xenophobia in Italy. To make sense of these relationships, it is crucial to situate these roles in a wider analysis of how it is in fact economic globalisation and neoliberal ideologies of individual responsibility and 'activation' that adversely affect the lives of individuals and communities that social workers engage with (Hyslop 2018). This is particularly relevant, for example, in understanding the issues faced by migrants who seek new lives in Europe after fleeing from conflicts in Syria, Iraq, North Africa and other regions of conflict around the world (Zaviršek and Rajgelj 2019) and also of indigenous populations living in economically precarious conditions.

It is also important to critically analyse the complex, multiple identities that social workers may or may not share with their colleagues and clients when such overt forms of violence and conflict exist. Just as social workers need to understand the structural causes of migration, of historical conflicts and of economic deprivation, they should also be required to contemplate how the sense of their own cultural or national identity may affect relationships with clients; social workers are not necessarily free from the forms of racist thoughts and behaviours that may be shared in the wider society (Williams and Graham 2014) nor would they necessarily feel secure in their own complex identities. An important way of addressing such deficits is to invest in social work education which enables students and educators to explore such prejudices and attitudes. Returning again to the Northern Ireland case study, since the signing of the Belfast Agreement in 1998, social work education embraced more positive ways of teaching students directly about the impact of the Troubles on individuals, groups and communities by partnering with victims and survivors in educational projects (Coulter 2014). By engaging in more authentic conversations about such identities and roles, social workers can be better equipped to meet the effects and challenges of political conflict and deliver more appropriate services to victims and survivors, both in Northern Ireland and the rest of Europe.

5 Conclusion

This chapter began by highlighting the historical, political, social and economic contexts that shaped the political conflict in Northern Ireland. In reviewing the literature on this subject, the corrosive effects of sectarianism become apparent, the way that society is structured and divided. It then used a chronological approach to explain how social work developed during three periods of the Troubles, reflected in a number of professional strategies and attitudes that enabled practitioners to carry out their roles in complex and dangerous circumstances. It is not surprising to learn that social work is still struggling to deal with legacy issues in dealing with the needs of victims and survivors of the conflict and in supporting practitioners who may vicariously be harmed in this field. These issues are drawn out in the recent study of social workers' experiences of the Troubles during the most intense period of the conflict. It appears that peers are an important source of advice and emotional support following violent, traumatic incidents. Teamwork and collegial approaches to practice in such a challenging and adverse context were also pivotal in helping social workers cope, not just in dealing with conflict and trauma but also with a changed social policy context that threatens some of the core values and principles of social work. More optimistically, it is argued that where social work practitioners, educators, students and service users build alliances, then strategies can still be built to effect positive social change and the furtherance of social justice. The final part of the chapter seeks to tentatively explore how the lessons from the Northern Ireland conflict can be used to understand such issues in the wider European context, for example, in dealing with issues of racism and other forms of social injustice, to equip social workers with the required levels of knowledge, skills and values in this field and to engage with wider issues of politics and society.

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Conclusions: Cultural Diversity and Core Principles and Values in Social Work

Walter Lorenz, **Zuzana Havrdová**, **and Oldřich Matoušek**

1 Introduction

This volume presents an unusual perspective on European social work. It offers insight into how social work education and practice developed in carefully selected countries of Eastern and Western Europe by taking the events of 1989 as a key reference point for characterising the diverse cultures in which core principles and values of social work were implemented. The accounts of exchanges across the former Iron Curtain show to what extent they contributed to the spreading of common ideals and knowledge in social work, but they also evidence the strength of 'path dependency' when trying to implement the recognised and accepted common social work values and principles in specific national and social political contexts.

The focus of the authors in this volume is unique as it shows the ways social workers struggled with different political and cultural contexts arising from the troubled history of Europe as a whole. In this sense it illustrates how important it is for social workers to have a clear historical perspective in order to be able to take critical position to and act adequately in such contexts and also to understand each other's differences and achievements across Europe in view of these historical legacies.

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2 Unfinished Social Integration of European Nation States and the EU

It emerges that the project of social integration of nation states has by far not yet been completed in various parts of Europe and that it probably hangs very precariously in the balance. The terms on which national social belonging is to be (re-)organised after 1989 resembles ominously the uncertainties surrounding the process of European integration which is experiencing a deep crisis exemplified by the UK's determination to break its links with the EU. This observation means for us on the basis of our analysis that social workers, who have an essential role in the establishment of social solidarity, are at times drawn into dealing with political conflicts directly as in the case of Northern Ireland and indirectly as in Italy's province of South Tirol where the community is still frequently split along linguistic lines. While social workers in these situations might ostensibly be dealing 'only' with personal issues, it becomes clear from these accounts that these have a connection to wider political issues concerning the questions: what attributes constitute national unity and on what terms to have the full right to belong.

The mere fact that social work takes place and social problems manifest themselves within distinct national boundaries does not define the terms on which their job is to be carried out, and social workers have wisely refused to become mere administrators of national social policies. Concerning the national integration projects themselves, it has become clear that even after 100 years since the most decisive national boundary-drawing in Europe had taken place after the ending of the devastating conflagration of nations in the First World War in which the foundations for the political map of Europe today were laid, these boundaries still provide only a rather precarious sense of unity. And the reason for this failing can be found in the analysis of those country examples in which conflict or tensions between majority and minority groups are still evident in various forms. Without a determined effort of investing in social measures that ensure a substantive sense of belonging rather than a conditional one, the mere political insistence on unity fails to resolve divisions. The chapter on Northern Ireland shows that the religious differences of the two communities have become 'activated' by the social inequalities that existed between them and that social workers found it very hard to bridge these divisions as long as social discrimination persisted. In the case of Belgium, the division is portrayed as being rooted in language differences whereas here as well the language boundaries correspond with differences in economic and social development. And in the example of South Tirol tensions similar to those in Northern Ireland but focused also on language and culture could only be lessened by determined investments in the social infrastructure with health services, education and to some extent jobs being made available to both language communities on equal terms. Therefore, only through the deliberate attention to support measures which express and facilitate a sense of social citizenship as of right can national boundaries assume a more functional role for specific purposes and reduce the claim to exclusivity which causes external and internal tensions in and between countries. And only an extensive social programme at EU level can render all the boundary compromises legitimate that still haunt national and the European unification projects. While governments can try to legitimate measures to exclude migrants

and also 'deviants' like homeless people from social security benefits with allegations that they represent a threat to the nation's ethnic and moral purity, national interests are always thereby symbolically placed over social and humanitarian values and this therefore creates the fear among many inhabitants that one day they also might find themselves on 'the wrong side of the border' if their behaviour or their lack of efforts are deemed unacceptable. And it is apparent that right-wing political and social groups use precisely this fear to foster xenophobia, hatred and racism as their 'defence'.

3 The Social Impact of the Cold War

By choosing the historic watershed of 1989, we were trying to show that the determined politics of division which had characterised the period of the Cold War had contributed to a kind of competition over models of welfare on both sides of the divide but with models that were each premised on a sense of ideological exclusivity: Communist welfare had to demonstrate the advantages of collectivism through an enforced form of equality which did not refrain from violating individual freedoms, whereas the capitalist forms of the welfare state had to demonstrate the effectiveness of market mechanisms by reducing to some extent their anti-social effects, upholding the value of liberty and sacrificing thereby the promise of social equality. It can be seen with retrospect that both approaches had serious limitations precisely on account of their being imbedded in confrontational boundary ideologies. With the 'thaw' of 1989 came the opportunity to implement core principles of social solidarity without these ideological impositions and the social movements that had triggered the fall of communism were certainly inspired by that desire. But the very fall of communism was portrayed in typical Western perspectives as a 'victory of capitalism' and hence as a political stance to which there 'simply was no alternative'. The Eastern perspective of innovative social workers was mainly that the Western model of social work and social services is a goal which must be reached as fast as possible. However, others merely continued without reflection the habits they were socialised into and saw themselves primarily as agents of the state. In addition, the new public management ideology gradually begun to influence also the direction of post-communist welfare policies and at the same time legitimate the further reduction of welfare guarantees that had been given to Western citizens in the period of the Cold War. Social workers in the East, representing a new kind of professional with a Western orientation, were torn between the new social policy measures, the new social work ideals, principles and methods and seemingly brand-new opportunities to build services from scratch.

4 Struggling with the Past

But 1989 did not bring the 'start of a new history' – on the contrary, the previous histories of each of the countries under review here began to assert themselves with renewed vehemence and renewed traces of conflict and divisions in each one of them.

The struggle of asserting oneself against Soviet hegemony and the ever-present influence of Soviet communist parties and the subsequent challenge of building autonomy of a sovereign national state in the new post-communist and post-Soviet era while at the same time struggling to assert this in the European economic market and political dominance caused a serious challenge for national identities. The question of national borders raised profound cultural issues, particularly that of the role of a common language as a legitimating criterion. The Baltic countries had to deal with a past in which national autonomy had appeared as but a brief interlude between massive external political dependencies and a, at times ambiguous, political insistence on autonomy. Poland's national boundaries gave rise to numerous controversies stretching back much longer than the past 100 years, and while they are currently not being openly disputed, nationalist politics feed on a perceived continued threat to national identity. The construct of 'Czechoslovakia' as the inheritor of a part of the former Habsburg Monarchy soon fell apart after 1989, and this led to considerable differences in the approaches to the definition not just of national identities but also of modes and conditions of belonging to the new separate political entities of Slovakia and the Czech Republic. Hungary is struggling with a similar discrepancy between actual political boundaries and the much wider extent of ethnic Hungarians living in neighbouring countries so that political questions concerning the post-Habsburg boundary settlement in the Treaty of Trianon predominate over the much more urgent question of social inequality which gets hidden beneath those political claims. Post-1989 Romania is still faced with a deep social crisis as the combined result of the extreme pro-natalist policies of the communist regime, which had led to a large number of orphans being relegated to institutions, and of the failures of post-communist economic policies, which caused extensive emigration and left the country struggling to be self-sufficient.

But the question concerning the legitimacy of post-1919 borders also haunts, for instance, that northern part of Italy, South Tirol, which used to be Habsburg territory and is struggling to reconcile the resulting plurality of 'national languages', German, Italian and Ladin, with a common sense of identity. And Belgium is linguistically divided as a whole country in such a profound way that contacts across the language border rarely feature even in academic circles, and this division resulted in very different social conditions on both linguistic sides. Finally there is the case of Northern Ireland, product also of a troublesome attempt at national boundary drawing in the wake of the First World War, where the seemingly religious-based conflict has in reality a clear social basis in the unequal treatment of both population groups and where the ending of the UK's relationship with the EU will rekindle the conflict over the unresolved question of belonging and identity of this nation.

For social work all this has brought considerable challenges. As the chapters dealing with issues arising in the Czech Republic show, there is a discrepancy between the definite demand for social work in the new political, economic and social circumstances after 1989 and a certain reluctance of parts of society to accept fully the required human rights and solidarity perspective in view of prevailing authoritative attitudes across different segments of society. Due to this cultural tendency, social workers had to struggle to uphold, for example, participative approaches to intervention, and the recognition of social work is much harder in some fields than was expected after the promising beginnings of 1989. The innovators were

mainly NGOs. For them contacts with Western colleagues were crucial, as they were for academics. The support and the motivation arising from partnerships with Western universities played an important role in strengthening prospects of professionalisation. This experience also sensitises Czech social workers to the sometimes ambivalent role of legal frameworks and institutionalisation (like the Social Work Act) which may bring the risk that bottom-up initiatives get misappropriated for political purposes. Given those circumstances, it is all the more remarkable that many innovative initiatives were taken by social workers to deal with the challenges professionally and through consolidating social work education. This was achieved not alone on account of Western influences and support but also by picking up on initiatives by some professional groups and networks which had taken place already under communist conditions, often against considerable resistance, such as the support of prisoners, social and marital counselling or the highly limited practice of therapeutic communities or group work.

In many ways, developments in Slovakia 'after the divorce' from the Czech Republic in 1993 took a parallel course but with significant differences that again point at the importance of overall political frameworks for the specific appearance of social work in such historical contexts. In contrast to the Czech Republic, the Constitution of Slovakia expresses a much more 'statist' relationship with civil society and is not an invitation for civic participation; civil society organisations have instead been often regarded as part of the strong state administration. As a consequence, social workers in turn received more legal opportunities to influence the legislation and build their own institutions. This resulted, for instance, in a remarkable number of university programmes of social work leading to the highest academic titles. However, this also slowed down the transition from a paradigm of social work as therapeutic aid and bureaucratic protection to a paradigm of social work as promotor of the reform of the overall social environment.

Lithuania in that sense presents a very telling example of a country that had been under the direct rule of the Soviet Union and where independence brought the challenges to cope not only with a sizable ethnic group of Russian speakers but also with strong traces of authoritarianism in the population's general attitudes and relationship with the state. Establishing social work according to its internationally agreed standards and principles is therefore a particular challenge in view of this 'path dependency' and means a constant struggle against low status, particularly since neoliberal social policies question further the validity of social work's wider social role.

In this regard, social workers in Romania seem to have been backed in their struggle for recognition by the entry social work education has found in numerous universities. This has certainly promoted the development of 'indigenous' social work discourses, initially also aided by numerous foreign support and collaboration projects, but now the discipline can be regarded as very well connected internationally on its own terms.

Hungary stands in some contrast to the other accounts of restarts for social work and social work education in post-communist circumstances. In this country, the plans for social work courses along lines that were broadly compatible with traditions developed in Western countries were practically ready before the dramatic events of 1989, and colleagues there were able to move very quickly thereafter to

bring those plans to fruition. As this design of social work studies had been the result of collaboration between sociologists and some academics who had managed to qualify in social work outside the Soviet Bloc, the ensuing curricula had a solid academic basis in social sciences, which meant also that dealing critically with political issues featured very highly on the training agenda. Furthermore, collaboration with Western universities in the further development of social work curricula was less decisive than in neighbouring countries although there were lively exchanges. How those international exchanges will be carried on in the light of the highly nationalist politics imposed by the Orban government is a cause of great concern as social workers are already being forced to adopt control functions which are incompatible with international ethical standards of social work.

5 The Value of Cross-Border Collaboration

But the value of such collaboration lay by no means just in providing a kind of 'development aid' to countries engaged in the re-establishment of social work education. As the chapter on the international master programme shows, such collaboration has great actuality and benefits all participants in an international consortium that comprises universities in Western and Eastern Europe. The inclusion of Poland as a former communist country in that exchange and collaboration programme sharpened the appreciation of the participants for the importance of distinct traditions of social solidarity, for the nature of contemporary social work delivery and for the recognition of such differences as constitutive of social work's identity and of social work competences.

A similar observation comes across from the analysis of the experience of Nordic countries in widening their already very intensive and regular mutual collaboration in training and research to Baltic countries after 1989. The inter-Nordic exchanges had been a unique feature of developments in social work under a distinct social policy 'regime' of social-democratic principles and ideals that had contributed to the high academic and professional recognition social work had achieved in all those countries. But the analysis shows that extending those contacts to Baltic countries was not just an exercise in providing a neighbourly leg-up but helped to focus on a critical examination of those very social policy principles that had in one sense almost been taken for granted in social-democratic countries but were in another sense already undergoing profound changes even there, in line with ideas of privatisation and commodification spreading in other capitalist countries.

This raises the issue of whether international comparisons are only of value to those scholars and students who develop a speciality in international collaboration or whether the same issues that emerge so obviously in international contacts can also be found 'internally' in countries whose national identity is far from settled. The most obvious indicators of cultural and hence also social and political divisions are language differences, and as the contributions from both Italy and Belgium show, these can either be treated as constituting separate spheres of social contacts

which were mostly left untouched and unchallenged in their separateness or can be activated in order to release the transformative energy contained in multiple national and social identities mediated through intercultural competences.

The Free University of Bozen-Bolzano is attempting to practise and teach exactly that competence. While the existing multilingualism in that Italian province is often regarded as a burden imposed on both the German- and the Italian-speaking community as a result, once more, of the re-drawing of national boundaries after the First World War, the university treats its trilingual approach to all study programmes as an affirmation of its international connectedness and as a basis for making a 'European horizon' the practised reality for all students and staff. Social work students not only have to learn to communicate with a clientele increasingly culturally diverse in terms of their linguistic identities, but also to manage constructively the cultural relativity and at times conflicts contained in these linguistic barriers. Finding a balance between being rooted in a distinct cultural and linguistic milieu on the one hand and having an international orientation on the basis of multilingualism that relativises taken-for-granted identities on the other is a competence which would benefit all social workers. Above all, this orientation exemplifies the importance of social work having to transcend national frameworks and lays the foundation for what can be called European social work.

This constitutes a skills repertoire which has not been fully realised in the case of Belgium's multilingual history. The country, including its academia, seem to function on the basis of linguistic separation to the point that very few shared research projects exist between the two main linguistic communities. And yet the exchanges would offer such opportunities to recognise more distinctly the link of social work practice with sociopolitical circumstances which are the decisive factors that keep the country divided and which would need the application of exactly those competences which culture-sensitive social work models are beginning to develop in order to overcome the deep social and economic divisions in the country.

And finally, the little-known story of how social workers in Northern Ireland managed to operate under actual conditions of civil war, not in faraway places but in a European country, tells of competences that, when tested under such challenging circumstances, have indeed relevance across the whole spectrum of divisions that manifest themselves in Europe today. When encountering such deeply entrenched political positions, these social workers had no choice but to take the political and ideological implications into account even when dealing with problems like mental health which, superficially seen, appear to have only a psychological dimension. People on both sides of the divide process their personal problems in distinct ways, and knowing and respecting those boundaries was essential for the safety of social workers operating within those polarised force fields. The process of healing those divisions in the era of a fragile peace agenda is proceeding with the substantial help of social workers and depends for its success very much on the kind of skills social workers have developed. These go beyond person-to-person exchanges and convey a version of solidarity that binds people together through overall human interests without this being perceived as a threat to people's distinct identities.

6 Conclusion

What emerges from this selection of European scenarios is that the unique features of social work as a professional activity, and hence of its contribution to society, consist not in its scientifically established universality, important though this aspect will always be, but in the manner in which academically trained social professionals can engage effectively and critically with varying political, cultural and social contexts in a dynamic process of adaptation *and* transformation. This goes in both directions, in that of a critical questioning of social work's conceptional basis as a science with justifiable claims of universal validity and value neutrality and in that of a critical engagement with social policy developments, which requires taking up ethical value positions and addressing the normative nature of political programmes. Social work is typically positioned at the political fault lines of society which manifest themselves in distinct national patterns of solidarity with all the risks of thereby also creating new exclusions, whether they threaten to split off people with disabilities, with mental health problems, with behaviour difficulties, with the threat of poverty or people belonging to 'other' ethnic or political communities. It is always not the intrinsic 'otherness' of the person that 'causes' the actual or potential exclusion but the way boundaries of normality and of belonging are drawn in a country around them. From its history over the last 100 or so years, Europe has numerous examples of people finding themselves 'on the wrong side of the border', be that a manifest political border like the Berlin Wall and the entire Iron Curtain or an even more lethal 'imaginary' border like the Nazi racial laws and their consequences in the Holocaust. While many of those walls came down and border controls within the Schengen area of the European Union have become largely unnoticeable, new ideological and indeed physical boundaries are constantly erected particularly since the Corona crisis. There seems to be not enough understanding of all the wider implications of those processes, which frequently get presented only positively as being in the interest of the well-being and security of people living 'on the right side' of those divisions while the overall negative political and social effects of such divisions and exclusions are not considered. The entire European unification process is stalling because of differentiated attention not being given to the social implications both of boundary-opening and of boundary-closing. As the examples in this volume show, social workers, on account of their constant borderline experiences and the reflexivity these experiences require, have a rich repertoire of knowledge and skills to contribute in relation to a socially (and hence also politically) competent handling of border questions.

This voice must be heard more clearly in Europe, and further work on those skills through international and European exchanges and collaboration is more required than ever. The insight with which the pioneers of social work placed the profession intentionally in an international context should always remind us that we can only deal with the specific requirements of persons in need of our assistance when we see their specific condition in a wider national and international context and bring together universal scientific knowledge and an understanding for the subjective values that constitute the persons concerned.

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W. Lorenz et al. (eds.), *European Social Work After 1989*, European Social Work Education and Practice, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-45811-9