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Editorial

Hans van Ewijk: Editorial	2
---------------------------------	---

Papers

Magdalena Hanková, Soňa Vávrová: Partner Relationships and Family Life through the Prism of Young Adults with Physical Disabilities	4
Vendula Gojová: The Potential of Civil Society - an Opportunity for Social Work	16
Kerstin Balkow, Peter Erath: Social Work Research and Practice - Towards a Productive Relationship	25
Besnik Fetahu: Challenges with Poverty and Unemployment: Comparison of Austria with Western Balkan Countries	35

Book Reviews

Tom Grimwood: Key Debates in Social Work and Philosophy. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2016.	46
---	----

Research Note

Science and Research Activities at the Department of Social Work, Faculty of Social Studies, University of Ostrava.....	49
--	----

Our mission	52
-------------------	----

Editorial

All over Europe, de-institutionalisation is embraced as a renewed approach to the fields of mental health care, youth care, social care and the fight against poverty and unemployment. Of course, economising arguments are dominant, but beyond that, serious doubts about the effectivity of placing people in institutions and institutional programmes are rising as well. The third reason is more ideological and is seen as a longing for more community, more 'brotherhood,' more social responsibility. The 'cold' legal relationship between the citizen and the state needs a warmer community-like embodiment. We are moving from emphasizing therapeutic approaches to embracing more social strategies, strengthening networks, social capital, communities and civil society. We can even see a certain move from a medical to a social model.

This shift in socio-economic politics highly affects social work. On the one hand it can be seen as a chance for social work to take a lead position in implementing the socialising strategies, which are actively moving away from institutional models. On the other hand, social work itself is under discussion while simultaneously being part of the system, a discussion focussed upon whether or not it is making citizens too dependent and becoming too much of a profession of pity. It calls for a repositioning of social work in the emerging field of locally integrated social policies. Another consequence of de-institutionalisation is a certain change in the target groups of social work. More people with chronic social-psychological problems are asking for support in their daily lives, and communities are confronted with a growing number of individuals displaying seriously problematic behaviour.

In the article *Partner Relationships and Family Life through the Prism of Young Adults with*

Physical Disabilities, Magdalena Hanková and Soňa Vávrová deal with partner relations and the family life of people with serious physical disabilities. For a long time, the problems of people with disabilities have been mainly seen as a need for care and services. But as the authors state "Human existence would not be fully satisfying without the meeting of basic social needs, which are based on the triad of friendship, partner relationship and the need to have a family." From their in-depth interviews with young adults with physical disabilities, we learn about social desires and constraints coming from families and social environments which have difficulties in coping with the aspirations of these young adults. In keeping citizens out of institutions, the need for the support of social networks and family life is essential. De-institutionalisation cannot just simply be taking people out of institutions and placing them in neighbourhoods, but its true effectivity depends on the capacity of communities, families and social (care) professionals to respect and to integrate people with certain vulnerabilities into daily social life.

Vendula Gojová analyses in her article *The Potential of Civil Society – an Opportunity for Social Work* the chance for social work to become a strong agency in de-institutional processes. In terms of local integrating strategies, cooperation and interdisciplinary work is necessary. An entrepreneurial professional is needed to get things done, to strengthen civil society and to support social networks. In our fragmented, mobile, and highly complex societies, social capital is a decisive factor in being successful in life. People need social competencies and social networks to find a position in our communities and society. Social work sometimes seems to stand 'helplessly at a crossroads, hesitating, which way to go'. The author sees the way to go consists primarily in taking the challenge

to strengthen civil society, to be active in cooperation, in a mixture of civil society, market, state and the professional legitimacy of social workers in strengthening socializing policies. It asks for entrepreneurship and community development approaches.

In *Social Work Research and Practice – Towards a Productive Relationship* Peter Erath and Kerstin Balkow plead for more ‘slow thinking’ and ‘slow social work research’. The quick work is done by evidence-based methods, protocols and practices aimed at arriving at quick solutions. Partly, social work like this can function in this way but many citizens are simply in more demanding contexts where one-way solutions are not available. Alongside ‘fast thinking and fast working’ we need slow processes, rewarding the intensity and unpredictability of socially complex contexts. Referring to Howard Gardner’s *The Good Work Project*, the authors claim excellence in a technical way, plus engagement and ethically-based responsibility in their function as a worker. Social service professionals need specific knowledge and expertise both from the fast thinking as well as from the slow thinking side. If social complexity in society is increasing, and the claims and expectations towards social work are rising, we need to invest in the capacity of the workforce. Therefore, students in social work ‘should very quickly get familiar with the scientific perspective of social work and especially should learn how research is constructed and... its results are interpreted’. Finally, Besnik Fetahu compares in *Challenges with Poverty and Unemployment: Comparison of Austria with Western Balkan Countries* the classic Welfare State with post-Communist states, characterised by rather poor and unstable economies. In his analyses he argues that ‘managing poverty and unemployment in the current political, social and economic situation is very challenging’ and that it will take at

least several decades for the Western Balkan States to catch up with the established Welfare States, and calls for the pursuit of democratic governance reforms and a strengthening of their institutional capacities. ‘Localism’ and ‘regionalism’ are seen as an obstacle to the growth of welfare. Reflecting on this article, I think, processes such as de-institutionalisation are to be discussed in societies.

Under *Research Notes* Vendula Gojová informs us about science and research activities at the Department of Social Work of the University of Ostrava, aimed at housing and social work interventions. The Department is actively engaged in international scientific debate and is working to inspire a national debate on participatory approaches in social work. Participatory processes in decision-making in the social domain contribute to strengthening the involvement of citizens in social responsibility.

In his book review of Tom Grimwood’s *Key Debates in Social Work and Philosophy*, Malcolm Payne is intrigued by the discussion of social work from the point of view of post-modern complexity thinking, but is missing the link to practice, stating: ‘But social work is work: this [Goodwin’s] approach, attractive and interesting though it is, steps away from the need for social workers to act, to do something about what their clients face in the short term, as well as thinking about how the structures of society operate and might be improved’. That is exactly where social workers are, in all its complexity, finding ways by supporting the individual and trying to obtain a more supportive social environment.

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Partner Relationships and Family Life through the Prism of Young Adults with Physical Disabilities

Magdalena Hanková, Soňa Vávrová

Magdalena Hanková,¹ is a PhD student at the Faculty of Humanities, Tomas Bata University in Zlín. Her research focuses not only on the partnerships and family lives of people with disabilities, but also on the emotional and social needs of individually integrated students with physical disabilities in the secondary school environment. She has been cooperating with Liga vozíčkářů (*League of Wheelchair Users*), Czech Republic.

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Abstract

The issue of partner relationships and family life as one of the areas determining the quality of life of people with physical disabilities has been long neglected in the Czech environment. The situation is slowly improving, but there is still a lack of research on the personal lives of physically disabled people. Thus, the authors have focused on this under-researched area through qualitative research. The participants expressed their intimate experience during semi-structured interviews and the obtained data was analyzed in accordance with the principles of practice-based theory procedures. The results show that partner and sexual relationships are an integral part of young adults' lives. The informants, on the other hand, identified some limits in their interpersonal relations which could generate a need for specialized help provided by social workers.

Keywords

young adulthood, physical disability, partner relationship, sexuality, family life

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Introduction³

Human existence would not be fully satisfying without the basic social needs which are based on the triad of friendship, a partner relationship and the need to have a family. Their importance especially increases during the developmental period of young adulthood, which occurs between 20–40 years of age (Vágnerová, 2007). The phase is connected mainly with emotional experiences, modified roles and interpersonal relationships (Langmeier, Krejčířová, 2006). It means that young people should be able to meet with the members of the opposite gender and create new relationships with them, because as Vágnerová (2007:65) stressed: *“it is a significant resource of personal development.”* Moreover, some experts have emphasised that parenthood and the institution of marriage play an important role in satisfying basic psycho-social needs (e.g. Vágnerová, 1999; Hanáková, 2013).

As a result, since the times of humanization, the issue of partner relationships and family lives of people with physical disabilities has become more significant. According to the literature, it is caused by the fact that this area has something in common not only with basic human needs and rights, but also with the quality of an individual's life. Thus, Novosad (2011) alleged that a physical disability can be understood in two dimensions: confrontation or challenge. The idea has been supported and, at the same time, made precise not only by psychologists, but also sociologists (Vágnerová, 1999; Kutner, 2007). A physical disability can cause emotional deprivation and a lack of experience with the social environment, but it can also contribute to problems in interpersonal communication and limited opportunities to establish new relationships. Hence, this type of disability can be perceived as a social stigma which significantly affects a human's social position. In light of the above facts, several myths and false information connected with the personal lives of people with physical disabilities have been produced. According to academic resources, this situation has been especially influenced by the social climate, lack of knowledge and prejudices towards disabled individuals (Cooper, Gouillebaud, 1999). For example, most extended myths suppose their asexuality, a loss of the ability to have “real” sexual intercourse, get married or take care of children. However, McCabe, Taleporos (2003), das Nair, Butler (2012) and Kaufman, Sylverberg, Odette (2013) in their books and research papers disproved this (false) information because, as previously mentioned, a need to love and to be loved is an integral part of a human's life, regardless of age or ways of its expression. This fact was also verified by Bryan (2009), who found that it is possible that people with physical disabilities fail in a marriage, but it can happen to nondisabled individuals as well. Finally, other studies have revealed that the disability brought happiness into relationships (Ngai, Yuen, 2001; Yorgason, 2008).

That is the reason why the knowledge of partner relationships and family lives of people with physical disabilities has great importance for social workers and educators who very often cooperate with this target group. In practice, according to Czech legislation (Act no. 108/2006 Coll., on Social Services), they should help their clients with mediating contact with the social environment, exercising rights or they should contribute to their personal independence. It means that experts could be able to reflect on relevant knowledge about the functioning of partner and family relationships of people with disabilities during their professional work with disabled individuals.

Nevertheless, only sparse attention has been paid to this important topic in the Czech environment so far. In recent decades, the only author who has focused on the partner and family relationships of people with disabilities was Kracík (1987). The author established a basic theoretical framework of this area when concentrating on parent's attitudes to the sexual lives of their own children as well as on problematic aspects of intimate lives of people with disabilities and specialized counselling for this target group. Unfortunately, the situation has not improved recently, because only Venglářová, Eisner (2013) and Drábek (2013) supported Kracík's effort to shed new light on the area of the partner and family lives of people with disabilities. Moreover, all of these resources

³ This article is based on the first author's Master's thesis.



are theoretically concentrated on the heterogeneous group of people with disabilities. Finally, only a few studies, realized abroad, have brought relevant recommendations for practice. Thus, in our research we focused on partner relationships and family lives from the perspective of a specific target group. The aim of the study was to investigate physically disabled young adults' opinions on their partner relationships and family lives. Our goal was also to present more in depth information about these significant phenomena and contribute not only to the improving of social practice, but also to open the discussion on this topic, which is an integral and natural aspect of human life.

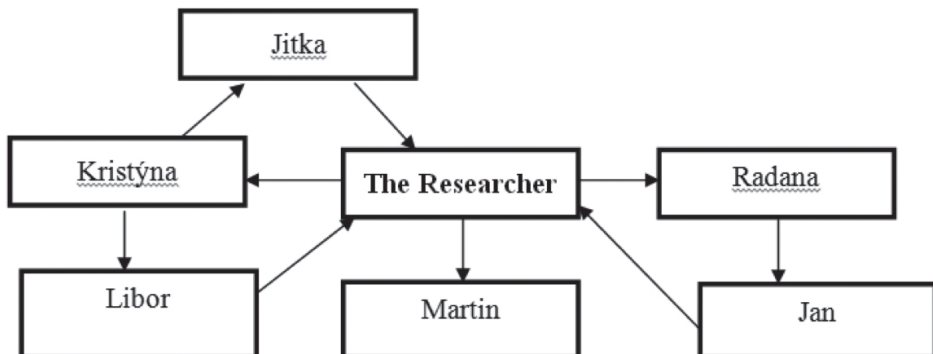
Methodology of research

The main question, which guided the research was *'What are the opinions of young adults with physical disabilities on their partner relationships and family lives?'* The research topic was closely connected with participants' inner world and feelings, which is why the qualitative approach was chosen. It is inductive rather than deductive and its aim is to bring deeper information about the phenomena (Švaríček, 2007). It is also necessary to highlight the fact that the design is based on information that can be gained from narrative rather than numerical data (Strauss, Corbinová, 1999).

Research sample

The research sample consisted of six young adults with congenital physical disabilities who already had some experience with partner relationships. In connection with the conditions defined above, congenital physical disabilities can be understood as *"persistent or permanent conspicuousnesses, limited abilities to move with a long-term or significant effect on an individual's cognitive, emotional and social performances"* (Renotiérová, 2006:212). It means that all participants were intentionally recruited on the basis of criteria defined by the research problem. In detail, the sample consisted of three women and three men aged 22-35 whose diagnosis was identified as cerebral palsy and spinal muscular atrophy. Moreover, all participants experienced at least one long-term partner relationship.

The research sample was created with the use of the snowball sampling technique. It is understood in accordance with Disman (2002) as a technique that is based on a contact who leads the researcher to other suitable participants. The selection of the participants took place in a community of people with physical disabilities, who were informed about significant aspects connected with the research (purpose of the research, research ethics and interview structure). The process of snowball sampling is illustrated below in Scheme 1.



Scheme 1: The process of snowball sampling



Research method and technique

Semi-structured interviews were chosen as a primary method of data collection. For this purpose, the following three interview questions were formulated:

What is your personal experience with partner relationships and how do you evaluate them?

What factors, in your opinion, primarily affect the functioning of your partner relationships?

What is your opinion on the institution of marriage?

The questions were pilot-tested with three young adults with physical disabilities aged 21–22 who had identical features with the research sample. The aim of this step was to verify the clarity of the questions. All participants stated that the second question should be redefined, as can be seen above, before the regular data collection.

Implementation phase

The implementation phase was realized via Skype, because most informants preferred distance communication. This wish was also affected by the fact that they live in the Liberec, Olomouc or the South Moravian region and it would be very difficult for them to visit the researcher personally. However, both the researcher and the participants used web camera, which compensated for the absence of personal contact during the interview. All the semi-structured interviews were recorded. The shortest interview took 45 minutes and the longest one almost 3 hours. During the interview, not only open questions, which had to support the participant in narration, but also supplemental questions were asked.

Data analysis

The data gained in semi-structured interviews was first transcribed. According to the methodological literature, there are several types of transcription, but the commented transcription, which emphasizes the striking features of the speech, was considered to be suitable for the purpose of the research (Hendl, 2005). After that, the empirical material was analysed in accordance with the principles of practice-based theory procedures: open, axial and selective coding (Strauss, Corbinová, 1999).

During the analytical work based on open coding, the sequences of the text were broken into small units and these got some code, a name or term. Moreover, the codes were grouped into categories which were given a code name. As a result, 50 codes, including 4 vivo codes, were abstracted and then divided into 8 categories and their subcategories. Table 1 provides the list of codes merged into categories and their dimensions.

Table 1: List of acquired codes and categories/subcategories

Codes	Category / subcategory	Category features and their dimensionalisation
1. School love	Familiarization and rapprochement	Space aspect (direct/vicarious)
2. Meeting at cultural events		Time aspect (fast/slowly)
3. Spa familiarization		
4. The rapprochement		
5. Virtual familiarization		
6. Rapprochement of partners		



7. Emotional and relational instability	Partner with problems	Intensity of a problem (high/low)
8. Psychological problems		Influence on the relationships (negative/positive)
9. Intimate disharmony		
10. Socio-pathological habits		
11. Existential troubles		
12. The only homogeneous relationship	Homogeneous versus heterogeneous relationships	Duration (long-term/short-term)
13. Different relationships		Problem working (high/low)
14. Limits caused by the physical disability		
15. Shared barriers		
16. Spending time together		
17. A need to plan		
18. Easier heterogeneous relationship		
19. Relationships with no future		
20. Intimate beginnings	Sexual life	Initiation of the sexual activity (late/early)
21. First sex		Intensity of satisfaction (high/low)
22. It is not just about the body		Coping with limits (problem/problem-free)
23. Sexual limits		
24. Limits overcoming		
25. Sexual experiments	a) Sexual preferences	Forms of preferences (different/similar)
26. Empathy and patience		
27. Problematic parents' reaction	Responses of the family to relationships	Attitude to a partner (negative/positive)
28. Unproblematic fathers		Support intensity (high/low)
29. Prevailing negative reactions of mothers		Impact on the relationship (negative/positive)
30. Acceptance of the relationship		



31. The faith	Determinants of partner and sexual relationships	Duration (long-term/short-term)
32. Self-concept and self-acceptance		Effect (negative/positive)
33. Assistance		Coping with determinants (different/similar)
34. Partner's attitude to physical disability		Impact on the relationship (negative/positive)
35. Health conditions		
36. Partner as a priority		
37. A need of communication		
38. Prejudices of other people		
39. Necessary choice	Living together as a necessity	Length (long-term/short-term)
40. A place of living		Functioning (problem/problem-free)
41. Role distribution at home		Impact on the relationship (destructive/supportive)
42. The right to marry	Visions about the future	Entrance into marriage (real/unreal)
43. A dream came true	a) Visions about the marriage	Benefits of marriage (negative/positive)
44. Open alternative		Intensity of the fear (high/low)
45. Just a paper		
46. Advantages of the marriage		
47. Fear of having a child with a physical disability	b) Visions about parenthood	Managing of the child care (hard to imagine/complicated)
48. A desire to have a baby		
49. Necessary partner support		
50. Child care		

The second analytical step consisted of axial coding, which is based on the application of the general coding paradigm. The scheme outlined the relationships between the categories and its structure can be seen below (Scheme 2). It is clear that *partner and family life* was proven as a main topic, which connected all the categories and subcategories together, because it answered the questions: What does the data deal with? What are the action strategies and interactions about? (Strauss, Corbinová, 1999). However, the phenomenon could not occur without the causal conditions which were, in that case, understood as the most important moments of the forming relationship. This requirement is implemented in the category *familiarization and rapprochement*. The partner and family life had acquired a few significant features called context. Not only a choice to have a *partner with problems*, but also the decision to be in a relationship with a disabled or nondisabled partner (*Homogeneous versus heterogeneous relationships*) seemed to be very

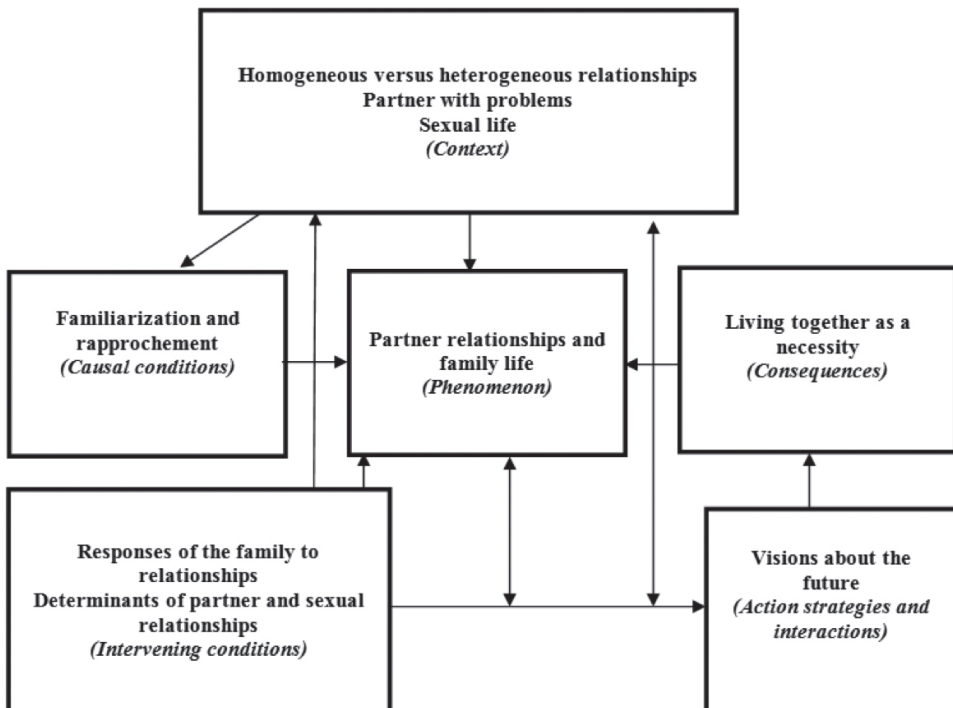


important. Moreover, *sexual life* is an integral part of each functioning relationship, because it can be understood as a proof of partner rapprochement. On the other hand, it affected the quality and functioning of the partner relationship. All the mentioned factors then determined participants' *visions about the future*, in other words, their action strategies and interactions.

The intervening conditions are considered to be wide and the general requirements influencing not only the action strategies and interactions, but also the context and phenomenon (Strauss, Corbinová, 1999). The research showed that one of the most important factors was the *responses of family to relationships*, which were very variable and collided between the positive and strictly negative dimension. Furthermore, the *determinants of partner and sexual relationships* seemed to be relevant because of their influence on the participants' thoughts about the future and their plans. It was also discovered that the action strategies and interactions played a role not only in partner, but family relationships as well. At the same time, however, it was the relationship which formed and modified participants' ideas about their future.

Finally, the consequences referred to the situations or phenomena which unexpectedly occurred in the young adults' lives. These features were identified in the category *living together as a necessity*, because this situation was especially caused by the acute problems of the informants' partners. In contrast, it is important to highlight that in some cases the decision to live together was influenced by the couples' need to spend more time together.

Scheme 2: Paradigmatic model of partner relationships and the family life of young adults with physical disabilities



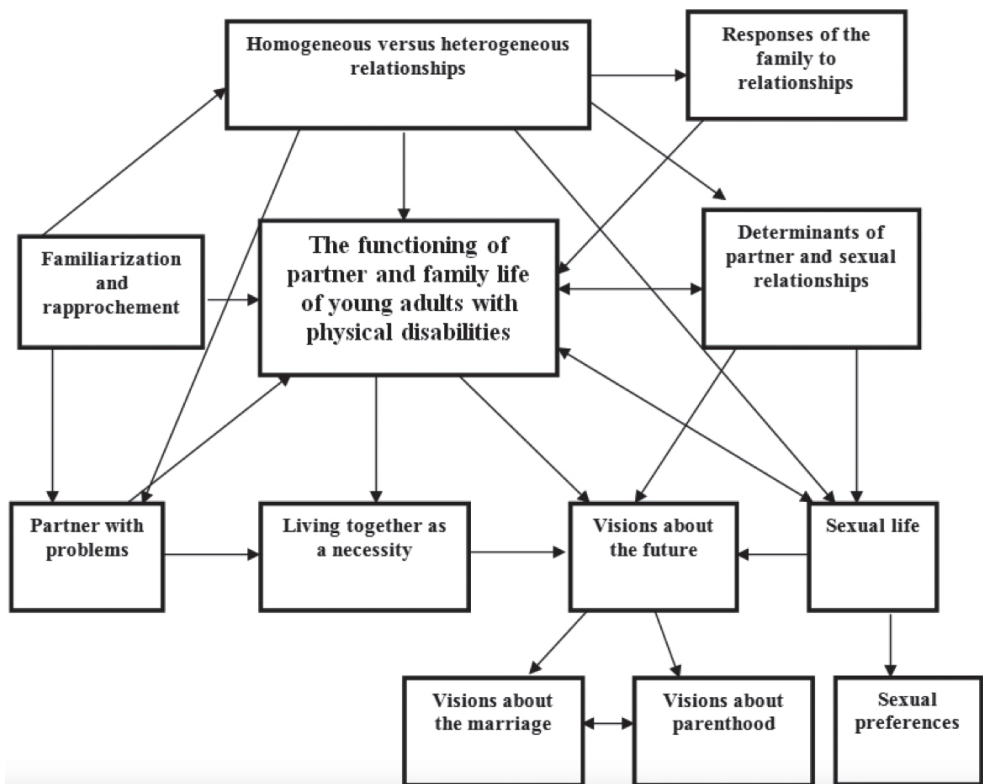


The basis for selective coding was created via axial coding. After an in-depth analysis of the data, the findings were integrated into practice-based theory.

The research results and their interpretation

The categories with their dimensions were related to each other as well as to the central category in accordance with the general coding paradigm. The output of this analytical phase is a model depicting the functioning of the partner and family life of young adults with physical disabilities. The presented model can also be understood as the answer to the main research question.

Scheme 3: The model depicting the functioning of the partner and family life of young adults with physical disabilities



The data analysis of the findings revealed that the partner and family relationships were an integral part of the participants' lives. The first important topic identified in the data was connected with the problem of establishing a full-fledged relationship, including sexual experience. In detail, young adults with physical disabilities mentioned limited opportunities to meet new people or, on the other hand, consolidate the partner relationship. That is why it was reported by informants that they met with their future partners in the environment where they felt free and equal during communication with other people, i.e. school, spa, internet-dating sites or cultural events. The following data fragments were identified to be significant for this theme: *"I fell in love with my educator in Jedličkárna"* (M16); *"It happened at the university. She was a student too and she was earning some money through English lessons. I attended her course (L9)"*; *"We met at some cultural events in our*



village. We were totally drunk.” (A15); “We met at some cultural event” (R5); “A lot of relationships occurred in the spa” (L5); “I knew her from Vesna and then from Lázeňák” (J4) “I was in touch with a few girls on internet-dating sites” (L40), “I met my current boyfriend on an internet-dating site” (K7) or “I met my boyfriend on Badoo” (A15).

The data also showed that whether in the virtual or natural environment, young adults with physical disabilities applied special criteria during the choosing of their life partner. In most cases, they had a relationship with a nondisabled person and that is why their experience with homogeneous relationships was very limited. On the other hand, as participants themselves reported, their partner very often struggled with several problems, i.e. emotional and relational instability, personal problems, socio-pathological habits or intimate disharmony. All these problems brought some conflicts and arguments into the partner relationship and resulted in weakened trust and understanding between the partners. Moreover, in some cases the couple broke up because of the problems or seriously discussed the separation. The theme was represented by these data fragments: “She shouted at me first, then she was kind. She was just playing with me” (M9); “She changed her mind about our relationship, it was nothing but a kind of fancy” (L24), “She takes a lot of things personally” (J24); “Lea had some psychological problems. When she was depressed, she was able to spend a few days only in her bed” (M29); “She didn’t like sex. And it was not satisfying for me” (M22); “I would like to try some experiments, but Jindřiška does not want to try anything new. Sex is kind of an obligation for her” (J9); “She was drunk, she left me in the evening and came back next morning. I spent the whole night in the wheelchair.” (M29); “He is very shy. He is not able to talk about problems” (R12); “He did not want to go out with me.” (A5).

In contrast with the findings mentioned above, it is important to stress that especially partners’ existential problems led to a necessity to live together with the participant. This life change, naturally, verified the strength of the relationship and in some cases had destructive effects. Furthermore, the relationship instability opened the thoughts about the future. As a result, different visions about the future were detected. Whereas some participants thought positively about the following years of their lives, others were scared about the functioning of partner relationship. Despite this fact, all of them expressed the desire to marry and have their own families: “He was kicked out of his lodging, he had no place to go (K7); “It was a necessity, otherwise she would be homeless” (L17); “I think that living together verified our relationship, it showed whether we would be together or not” (R6); “It worked without any problems” (M32); “It did not work for a long time, we were arguing a lot at the end of our relationship” (L19). Further informants reported: “I am glad I have managed to marry, because time is running out” (M39, 40); “I am engaged and I know I am going to marry soon. It is very important for me to have a big wedding.” (R14); “I would like to have children” (J15), “I hope it will be possible in the future” (K16); “I would like to have at least two children” (A23).

The troubles which were caused by the physical disability played an important role in the partner and family lives of young adults with physical disabilities. The architectural and psychological barriers in some cases brought the couple closer, on the other hand, they contributed to couples’ separation as well. The same situation was detected in connection with responses of the family to a partner relationship which had something in common with the effort of parents to protect their child. Furthermore, it was difficult for mothers of disabled participants to accept that they want to live on their own. As the informants themselves reported: “Our sexual life is limited because of the disability. We had to adapt to these physical limits” (J9); “He accepted my limits, he cared about me” (A3), “The relationship could not work without some tolerance. My partner had to accept that he could not do all the activities that he did with his nondisabled ex-girlfriends” (K2); “We need to plan. If you want to spend some time with your partner, you have to plan how to organise the time when you are together” (R5); “We cannot go to pubs with barriers. We cannot go skiing. I must share these barriers with my wife” (M4). Some participants also stated: “My parents were surprised that I have a girlfriend. It was very difficult for my mum to accept that she will not care for me anymore” (J8); “It was difficult for my dad to accept that his little girl has a sexual life” (R10); “My parents want to protect me from all men in the



world" (K3); "My girlfriend's mother ignored me. She behaved like I was not there" (M23); "His mother was not excited about my relationship with her son" (R2).

The functioning of partner and family lives of young adults with physical disabilities was affected by several important determinants which were interconnected and had something in common with the necessity to adapt to them or find a way how to overcome these factors. Not only partners' attitudes to the disability, but also communication about the problems or self-acceptance of young adults with physical disabilities seemed to be very important: "If you do not have self-esteem, you do not have a chance in a relationship" (M8); "She does not try to care for me at any rate. It is a partner relationship" (M32); "He is able to overcome barriers, he is able to help me. He is emphatic" (R11); "He was the first person who did not care about the opinions of other people. He just wanted to be with me" (K3); "It is very important to talk, talk, talk about everything and this was quite problematic for him" (R9); "I guess they are scared to communicate about my disability, but they should know about my health conditions. It makes me angry when they do not ask" (A5).

Finally, the empirical material revealed that the determinants described above, including the constitution of the couple in the relationship, influenced not only the quality of sexual life, but also visions about the future. The participants considered their sexual life to be satisfying; however, they identified some limits in this area closely connected with physical disabilities. The limits were, according to informants, compensated for with the usage of sexual aids or the initiative of the nondisabled partner. Moreover, young adults with physical disabilities expressed the desire to discover something new in their sexual life and have an empathic and patient partner. They precisely said: "It is always good. I have not found any problems" (A11); "I found out that me, a disabled person, is able to satisfy a nondisabled girl" (M30); "He told me that there is no significant difference in sex with a disabled or nondisabled girl" (R8). Despite these facts, the informants quoted: "Sexual enjoyment is not so strong, I am not able to fully satisfy my wife because of my disability" (M36); "I have atrophy, so my sexual satisfaction is not exhibited" (L21); "We tried cunnilingus with Bobunka and it was fantastic" (M22); "I have a vibrator to satisfy my wife. I guess she is not bored with me" (M36).

Conclusion

The study has explored partner relationships and the family life of young adults with physical disabilities. This part of the research paper summarizes the most important findings which are closely related not only to basic human rights, but also the quality of life and therefore special attention should be paid to them.

Our survey has revealed that the functioning of partner relationships and family lives of young adults with congenital physical disabilities is influenced by several important factors, but the most important seems to be partners' problems, responses of the family and social environment to the intimate relationship and the participants' own visions about parenthood and marriage. The research shows that the informants are very often in a relationship with nondisabled people who face existential, emotional or socio-pathological problems which affect the quality of relationships and, in some cases, lead to the separation of the couple. In these cases, professional help which could contribute to a positive solution of the problems would be suitable.

From the declared opinions of young adults with physical disabilities it is also obvious that not only homogeneous, but also heterogeneous couples have experience with variable reactions of the family and social environment to the relationship. For example, our research has shown that for parents of disabled people it is very difficult to accept the new life reality based on the fact that they do not have to care for their child anymore. Similar problems are typical for parents of nondisabled partners, but their negative attitudes are influenced by prejudices and a priori rejection of a disabled person. These factors can support partners' togetherness and the strength of the relationship, but the aspects can, at the same time, contribute to their distancing or separation. It means that our findings fully confirm Kracic's (1987) opinion that unsupportive reactions of the social environment can negatively affect the relationship as a whole. That is the reason why it is



necessary to focus on the enlightenment of the intact population, including experts, which should be based on factual insight leading to more supportive attitudes to disabled people's personal lives. Despite the fact that Kamberg (1990) and McCabe, Taleporos (2003) identified several problems in the sexual lives of people with physical disabilities, i.e. erection, vaginal lubrication, the absence of orgasm or sexual confidence, our survey reveals that most participants find their sexual life satisfying and problem-free. The only limit is connected with the number of sexual positions and it does not influence young adults' gratification, because they are able to overcome this problem with their partners. As a result, especially female participants are thinking about marriage and motherhood, which they consider to be very important for their personal development. On the other hand, the women express fears connected with child care because of the loss of the ability to care for the baby. In light of our findings, it would be suitable to extend consulting services that would provide specific information about the family life of individuals with disabilities.

To conclude, the qualitative findings connected with the personal and family lives of people with physical disabilities have brought a new light into this under-researched, but very important area of human life. As the participants proclaimed, a need to love and to be loved is an integral part of their lives. That is the reason why we are convinced that our results would be valuable material for social workers whose activities can contribute to respecting the fundamental rights of their physically disabled clients. In other words, our recommendations for practice would be mainly connected with a prevention of social deprivation of the clients through the intentional mediation of contacts with the social environment that could lead to a fulfilment of emotional and social needs of physically disabled individuals. Secondly, a basic knowledge about the partner relationships and potentially problematic areas could help the social workers to strengthen their client's autonomy and ability to solve every-day problems. Finally, the social workers should focus on professional help for disabled couples, whose living and social situation might involve some difficult aspects generating the need of specialized support (e.g. the ways how to spend time together without an assistant or questions related to a family life and child care).

On the other hand, only the perspectives of the informants themselves have been reflected and therefore they cannot be generalized to other populations. Moreover, the small sample size and limited time spent in the field could reduce the depth of the obtained information. Further research is needed to increase the understanding of the functioning of partner relationships and the family lives of people with physical disabilities. Including the perspectives of their partners in a larger qualitative study would provide more complex insight into the every-day reality of young people with physical disabilities.

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The Potential of Civil Society - an Opportunity for Social Work

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Abstract

In the context of the current welfare state situation, social service providers deal with the question of innovation, its traditional methods and procedures, requiring multidisciplinary cooperation. Often, social service providers respond to this situation with institutions establishment through business thought that should be linked to social work's ethics, based on community services and business integration, thus social enterprise establishment. This text is a part of a dissertation thesis, in which the central idea is to differentiate the social work conception in the field of social entrepreneurship (or in the field of social enterprises) from the market logic efforts to dominate this profession. The text aims to discuss potential solutions to the current state of resources, that social work can be found in the area of civil society.

Keywords

social work, social entrepreneurship, civic society, community work

Introduction

From the changes which have occurred in society over roughly the last four decades, and the associated problems of development (Dahrendorf, 1991; Esping-Andersen, 2002; Giddens, 2004; Keller, 2009, 2011), we can select the following phenomena regarding the topic of this text: (1) people are constrained in their possibilities to ensure their own existence, (2) the globalized market less increasingly meets the needs of communities. We can identify various reactions and recommendations as to this state of society and the related crisis of the welfare state. One of the solution strategies may oscillate between proposals by Rosanvallon (in Keller, 2009) and Giddens (2004). It means solutions developed in a parallel way in the civil society space, in space which should be close to social work. In the first part of this text we will try to discuss what in this area seems to be important for social work as an agent of social change. Of main importance is the second part which suggests possible inter-disciplinary collaboration of social work and social entrepreneurship, which could support the potential of civil society. All this aims at answering the question of whether social work could use ideas of social entrepreneurship, resting exactly

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on this potential, to achieve its goals. And if so, in what form its intervention might take. The relationship of the first and second part of the text is supported by the assumption that social work was commissioned by society. It should therefore be accountable to the state of society and its development.

1. What can social work seek and find in the area of civil society?

From projects or forecasts of further development of the welfare state (Dahrendorf, 1991; Esping-Andersen, 2002; Giddens, 2004; Keller, 2009, 2011), we can trace certain hopes for the ability of civil society to participate actively in the processes of solving social problems.

Actions of civil society are usually in opposition to instrumental actions by the state, generally being oriented towards non-materialistic values, to achieve autonomy and self-determination of the participants, in contrast to actions with a view to gaining influence and power (Habermas, 2000; Müller, 2002). Civil society is characterized as a historically formed layer of social life, characterized by spontaneous self-expression of individuals and their voluntary associations created to implement their interests (Večeřa, 1996) which, however, may not always be of positive content. This area of each society acquires importance exactly in the context of the activities of state and market entities (Rakušanová, Stašková, 2007). A strict separation of society and the state was included in ideas by Adam Smith (in Večeřa, 1996; Habermas, 2000), forming a basis for theories of political and economic liberalism. Liberalism advocated emancipation of economically enhanced citizenship excluded from political influence against the absolutist and bureaucratic state power. With this orientation, liberalism became one of the fundamental intellectual resources of the theory of constitutional state and further of the civil society concept.

In efforts to define the notion of civil society, it is therefore possible to trace focus primarily on the polarity between it and the state. The concept of civil society is usually associated with active citizenship and participatory democracy. (Giddens, 2004) According to Giddens (ibid.), the topic of community is vitally essential for current politics.

Can social work contribute to development of the potential of civil society? Social work is bound to contribute to sustainable development of society and to promote participation of its members in this effort. With overall social changes, changes in the relationships among the state, market and life space of people occurred simultaneously, which had an impact on social work, too. (Bourdieu, 1998; Habermas in Laan, 1999; Marshall, 2009) Although social work is a part of the state control (especially in the field of social policy), thus by implication it depends on the sources of its funding, it increasingly anchors its activities exactly in the area defined by civil society. Elsen (2000) regards it as a completely natural reaction to stable expectations of society (including the state) of promoting sustainable development, whereas the state progressively limits its responsibility in these activities, moreover allowing the globalized market to restrict social work in its local form. As a result, social work is daily confronted with products of the existing cooperation between the state and the market – with rising unemployment, a new form of spatial/social segregation, a growing level and extension of poverty. In connection herewith, there is a stronger interest in the concept of social capital which is considered as a tool to bridge these inequalities. (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000) Actions of social work related to tackling social problems of its clients seem to be no longer sufficient to fulfil its goals and expectations in this context. At a time when it is difficult to presuppose the development and the degree of influence of the globalized market, as well as the rate of progression of the government trend of weakening its control and redistribution function, it is more than crystal clear that social work has to change and/or expand its field of activity (Rodger, 2000). Elsen (2000) sees only one possibility for social work to protect socially defeated people and groups from the fate of unpredictability. It is through support of their independent economic production with regard to production of social benefits, i.e. support of their current and potential social capital. The first and most important step according to the author is interconnection of activities of social work with civil society tied to a specific locality and an effort to support self-



organization of relevant local or interest groups through their empowerment. (Payne, 2005; Schuringa, 2007; Henderson, Thomas, 2007) If we try to summarize the above-stated facts, as for achieving its goals in contemporary society, social work would apparently benefit from deepening its activities on the macro-level. Specifically, by joining its forces with organized and unorganized civil society towards greater emancipation of both of them in relation to the state and the market. The conviction of feasibility of this direction is supported by cognizance that the form of reformatory and empowering social work is by no means new and unsuccessful (see the beginnings of community work as a method of social work (Pople, 1995; Hartl, 1997; Gojová, 2006)).

2. Interdisciplinary cooperation of social work in the space of civil society

Elsen (2010) assumes that the outdated model of economy and social aspects needs to be replaced by a local, sustainable solution to problems while being aware of global risks. Social work should focus its attention on this direction, with its most important contribution consisting of empowering people to participate in the economic, political, cultural and social life of the community. In response to increasing poverty, social exclusion and unemployment, Elsen presents a concept of the local market. It advances active support to a locally anchored economy while simultaneously promoting social and economic self-organization of local resources. (Lorenz, 2005; Chytil, 2007)

2.1 Entrepreneurship in social work

Society expects social work to provide protection to its members against social exclusion, or to give assistance with their reintegration into society. In a situation when employment is considered to be the basic integration element, traditional social work gets into certain troubles because social work itself is not able to create jobs. (Castel, 2003; Blokland-Potter, Savage, 2008) In the past, however, other institutions were major players in the field of employment (shielded by the institution of the welfare-state) which due to modernization processes of society lost their strong position or were divested of resources necessary to meet the given objectives. Social work should respond to the situation, but it seems that for several years it has been standing helplessly at a crossroads, hesitating which way to go next. Succumbing to the dictate of economic thinking and joining the market of services, or insisting on its ethical principles and maintaining the traditional rules of providing its services? The crossroads also offers another way: interconnecting the advantages of both mentioned ways. It means using the elements of (social) economic thinking to achieve its goals, while maintaining ethical principles of social work. Basically, it is advisable to consider this way because in the field of social economy, business initiatives often appear which declare a social aspect but in fact, they rather use it to conceal their real objectives.

One of the main goals of social economy is to become a legitimate part of the liberalized market as well as the civil society, specifically through mobilizing citizens to self-help and mutually beneficial activities. (Hunčová, 2006) Social economy includes social entrepreneurship defined as an economic activity increasing the chance of disadvantaged persons to find a place on the labour market. (Dohnalová in Skovajsa, 2010) In the specialized literature of social work, we encounter social entrepreneurship e.g. as one of the objectives of community development. (Payne, 2005; Henderson, Thomas, 2007; Schuringa, 2007; Goldsmith, Burke, 2011) It seems that social entrepreneurship is becoming an important concept in the field of social work, but not much attention is paid to how to anchor this concept in social work and whether it should be used at all. We might even get the impression that social work (traditionally operating mainly in the field of the public and third sector) is reluctant to enter into a partnership with entities of the market sector.

Entrepreneurship is generally seen as a “process of launching new ideas into practice”, entrepreneurship in social work is regarded as “building of institutions through entrepreneurial thinking which is accompanied by the ethics of social work and is based on integration of social services, business and skills in respect of work with the public”. (Bent-Goodley, 2002:291) Bent-



Goodley (ibid.) implemented research aimed at defining and understanding the entrepreneurship in social work as part of professional equipment of social workers, and based on its results, she proposes a method and a form of introducing “entrepreneurial training” into curricula of social work studies. Likewise, the American Council on Social Work Education (www.cswe.org) asks educators in social work to respond to the current state of society and to develop trends which would help social work to devise interventions addressing social problems. As an innovative response to this need, precisely entrepreneurship in social work is at hand. According to Young (1991:62), entrepreneurship in social work may include “... a new kind of service, a new way of delivering existing services, services provided to new clients, new financial and organizational arrangement of the service provision, or even revitalization of a programme in the current organizational framework”. Inclusion of the field of entrepreneurship in education in social work can bring more social aspects into economic thinking and vice versa. From the research by Bent-Goodley (2002) specific skills resulted which a social worker should have: being involved in politics, contributing to community development, understanding communities and a wider society in the historical context. (Devore, Schlessinger, 1996; Popple, 2005)

Yet according to Bent-Goodley (2002), social workers have wasted their business opportunities. Unlike other helping professions which teach students to find their economic goals and to set up their own organization, social workers are hired to provide case management, clinical and counselling services and administrative support. While they provide this important service to their clients, other professionals create a structure of the organization, set the note for the professional ethics and profit from creating a service. (Harris, 2003; Holasová, 2009) If social workers are qualified to provide services to address social problems of clients, they may be equally qualified to create opportunities enabling clients to solve these problems on their own. Training of social workers with a view to seeing themselves as producers of entrepreneurship programmes can help them to stop the influence of other professionals in dictating the form of practice of social work services. Kirst-Ashman and Hull (1993) write about entrepreneurship in social work in this sense, too.

2.2 Methods of social work applicable in the context of social entrepreneurship

If we look at the above text in the light of social work, it will in principle direct us clearly towards the field of one of its methods - into the realm of community work.

Community work is a summary of methods and techniques used for empowering communities so as to make them capable of self-organizing and bridging the gap between excluded groups and the majority society. (Gojová, 2006)

There are different views on the importance of community work in the public space in general but also in the social work profession. One of them points out that the knowledge and possibilities of community work are becoming increasingly important for the current practice of social work because with the weakened influence of the welfare state, responsibility is transferred to the local level and thus to community initiatives as well, especially in socially excluded localities/communities. (ibid.) The reason of growing networks among community groups of European countries is the special role of community work in supporting reconstruction of local economies and social systems, as well as helping to maintain social cohesion. (Popple, 1995)

To be precise, social economy integrates local resources, including the nonmonetary (volunteering, self-help), i.e. the social capital of the community, into economy. A common denominator of social economy entities is their regional focus primarily on the development of local activities and possibilities (provision of local social services or creation of jobs in the local community). Likewise, community development emphasizes the development of self-help. (Popple, 1995; Henderson, Thomas, 2007)

***Community development as a method of social work applicable in the context of social entrepreneurship***

One of the identified models of community work, the central feature of which is mobilization of the community for a change, is community development. (Popple, 1995) The community development approach originally appeared in the context of support to marginalized localities and people from developing countries. (Hartl, 1997) It can be seen as both a method and a process. The method of community development can be defined as a way of stimulating and influencing changes in a positive direction. (Henderson, Thomas, 2007) The process of community development can be perceived as a change which is happening in communities and aims to create conditions for solving problems. (Schuringa, 2007) Community development activities are mainly connected with work in the local community or a community of interests.

The most common models of community development practice consist in support to local organizations, reducing costs/improving quality, increasing revenues, community entrepreneurship, improving skills and abilities, influencing policies. (Popple, 1995; Henderson, Thomas, 2007; Elsen, 2007)

Community care as a method of social work applicable in the context of social entrepreneurship

Community work, focusing on the model of community care, seeks to cultivate social networks and voluntary services in order to achieve well-being of the population, especially the elderly, persons with disabilities and in many cases families with children under 5 years of age. (Popple, 1995) The community care model concentrates on development of the concept of self-help towards social needs, it uses paid workers (sometimes referred to as “organizers”) who support people in care and voluntary initiatives.

Traditionally, women are the caregivers in families and communities. Work of this nature is taken for granted, as part of the sphere of the private and therefore is perceived as irrelevant to the public sphere, which also applies to the notion of citizenship. (Kremer, 2007) At the same time, caregiving is not considered as valuable work in the sense of employment. (Esping-Andersen, 1999) Kremer (2007) extends Marshall’s concept of citizenship (1950) which originally did not include the importance of caregiving for society, which is an essential activity in every society at any given time. In a situation when there is only one person fully burdened by providing care, his/her potential activity on the labour market is fundamentally threatened. In this way, the caregiving person becomes economically dependent, which is contrary to the basic condition of full citizenship, i.e. with human activity on the labour market.

Kremer (2007) also reflects the risks which would be brought about by introducing care as a full-value, i.e. paid, activity on the labour market (as required e.g. by Esping-Andersen). Families could pay a special workforce for care or somebody from the family who has been performing these activities (i.e. usually a woman) would be paid for the caregiving activities. But at a price that still there will be somebody in the family who is responsible at least for household care management (even though he/she does not get paid for it), and e.g. in the case of families with children, knowing that the children need more care than is granted to them through a paid service.

3. Comparison of indicators of the social dimension of social entrepreneurship and principles of community work

The similarity of the current debate on social entrepreneurship, as one of the ways to overcome the crisis of the welfare state by empowering active citizens in the context of a functioning market, with a growing importance of community work in social work practice, as a way of empowering communities to self-organization, suggests that these two concepts can be applied together and one can find support for achieving its goals in the other. (comparison shown in Table 1)



Table 1: Comparison of indicators of the social dimension of social entrepreneurship and principles of community work

	Social entrepreneurship	Community work
Target group	Socially excluded groups/communities/localities, or threatened by social exclusion	Particularly socially excluded/disadvantaged communities/localities
Condition	Initiative started by a group/community	Community motivated for change
Space	Local/regional level	Local community
Decision-making process	Participatory management	Involvement of community in the whole process, incl. management and decision-making
Objective	Benefit for community	Empowering community for change

Source: Borzaga, Defourny, 2004; Schuringa, 2007; Henderson, Thomas, 2007, modified by the author

If we want to identify the relationship of social entrepreneurship and social work in general, in specialized literature we can observe a multitude of perceptions of the relationship of social entrepreneurship and social work, or social services, dependent on the discourse in which the individual authors operate:

A) **Social entrepreneurship with social work**

- social entrepreneurship as a tool for financing social work services and thus a tool for its sustainability – the field of social work is equated with the field of social services (Dohnalová, 2009; Krajčík, Janák, 2012; Šebestová, 2012),
- social entrepreneurship as a “trendy” business model² (i.e. corporate social responsibility, philanthropy etc.) (Kuldová, 2010; Dizdarevič in Skovajsa, 2010).

B) **Social entrepreneurship in social work**

- social entrepreneurship as a means for achieving integration objectives of social work (Campfens, 2006),
- social entrepreneurship as a reaction of social work to the crisis of the welfare state and the diminishing resources of state financial support to social work services (Rodger, 2000; Elsen, 2007),
- social entrepreneurship as specialized social work for development of local communities (Elsen, 2007; Henderson, Thomas, 2007; Schuringa, 2007).

Connection of social work and social entrepreneurship should consist in implementation of activities aimed at integration of society, or integration of socially disadvantaged people or people threatened by being socially disadvantaged into society.³

² It is not always necessarily about entrepreneurship with social work, but if we start from an objective declared by such business - achieving a social change, then we can include this concept of social entrepreneurship here.

³ A theoretical discussion of the integration concept suggests that it is advisable to view this relationship from Lockwood’s (alternatively Luhman’s) (in Zollschan, Hirsch, 1964) perspective of social integration (inclusion) and system integration (integration).



Conclusion

The aim of this text is an attempt to find an answer to the question of whether social work could use ideas of social entrepreneurship, resting on the potential of civil society, to achieve its goals. And if so, what form its intervention might take.

On one side of the debate there is a requirement for economization of social work, approaching its services as a subject of business. On the other hand, there is a belief that social work must be preserved in its traditional form, i.e. that maintaining its ethics is incompatible with introduction of elements of economic thinking. A middle way may be application of ideas of the social entrepreneurship concept to support achieving the objectives of social work.

We have tried to outline this situation in community work, or more specifically in its selected models. Initiatives by professionals and/or laymen to promote community care could constitute a field of economic activities of the community members resulting in establishment of a social enterprise. Such a social enterprise can be thought of as a “product” of community development. However, it is also possible to imagine the stated levels as the business of providing social care. After all, against accusations of marketization and privatization, there stands promotion of a shift in self-help activities towards business activities of a community for the purpose of ensuring services provided by its members. This argument is supported by the concept of citizenship which cannot be full-valued if it is associated with economic dependency of citizens.

Community care is concerned with meeting the needs and finding resources for their procurement. In spite of that, it is rather about work of employees in care services than about care of the community for itself. An innovative approach of social work can utilize strategies of community development which may lead to empowerment and involvement of users and to shared responsibility of small community groups.

In the conclusion of the text comparison of social dimension of social entrepreneurship and principles of community work. It shows, that two concepts can be applied together and one can find support for achieving its goals in the other. By the identification of the relationship of social entrepreneurship and social work in general, in specialized literature we can observe a multitude of perceptions of the relationship of social entrepreneurship and social work, or social services, dependent on the discourse in which the individual authors operate. This relationship we can be divided into two types: social entrepreneurship with social work and social entrepreneurship in social work.

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Social Work Research and Practice - Towards a Productive Relationship

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Abstract

Base systematic research in this paper³ argues that even if there are many social work practitioners, scientists and students of the opinion that research in this field is of little use, we shouldn't be so pessimistic. Far from it, the authors are of the opinion that both intuitive and rational thinking and decision making are equally important for a practice which – in order to avoid mistakes and prejudices – must rely on "fast thinking" as well as on "slow thinking". Against this background the paper firstly works out the deficiencies of both epistemological approaches and then argues for a constructive relationship between practical and scientific thinking in social work. German and international examples of good research practice demonstrate the usefulness of a broad knowledge base in social work for practice and decision making. Finally, the paper summarizes the main preconditions which are necessary to realize a new relationship between social work practice and research.

Keywords

social work research and practice, research methods, evidence based practice, practical and scientific thinking, knowledge acquisition, fast and slow thinking, quality of research

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Introduction

To talk about research in the field of social work in general is difficult not only because there are many representatives from policy and non governmental welfare organizations who are often of the opinion that scientific thinking in this area is useless (Kruse, 2013:155f), but as well because academics and university teachers are reluctant to convince social workers of the benefit of research for the concrete work:

1. From a constructivist perspective social work in a postmodern world is determined by “ambivalence and ambiguity” and practitioners therefore must develop a “fragmented identity” (Kleve, 2003:120). Because social work takes place in a very personal contact or relationship between social worker and user within a specific social cultural context they have to learn “*to read situations always in different ways, yet oppositional*” (Kleve, 1999:26). They think that social work practice is individually and specifically shaped so that nobody can draw general knowledge out of such individual experiences (Schweikart, 2003:438):

“That is why regarding their scientific status social workers always have remained – for good reasons and in the best sense of the word – without theory, i.e. theoretically unorthodox and scientifically irreverent ruggats. The work – in their own sovereign way – through an ever growing heap of ‘refuse’; that also includes scientific ‘refuse’” (Bardmann, 2005:13)

2. Representatives of a “reconstructive social work” are of the opinion, that scientific research methods always have to “serve” social work practice (Miethe, 2007:25). They are of the opinion that pure scientific argumentations are not able to do justice to the complexity of social problems and interventions. They often fear that a scientific approach (with its high discourse power) and its “cold” and “neutral” empirical thinking could be used to restrict social aid and to harm the reputation of the representatives of social work.

In this presentation we’ll firstly work out the deficiencies of both perspectives (part 1), then we’ll argue for a constructive relationship between practical and scientific thinking (part 2). Then we’ll exemplarily show some German and international examples for good research (part 3) and finally we’ll summarize the preconditions which are necessary to realize a new relationship between social work practice and research (part 4).

1. Different ways of knowledge acquisition

In a common understanding knowledge can be derived from four general sources (Louchkova, Adams, 2001:28):

1. Knowledge can be based on intuition or common sense. Here reality is “given”, in as much as it appears as being in agreement with or confirmed by our unmediated experience.
2. Knowledge can be derived through the transmission of traditional knowledge. Often it is associated with authoritative claims to truth, represented by religious leaders, scientists or other experts.
3. According to Habermas knowledge can be stated by “communicative reason” based on the paradigm of mutual understanding between subjects capable of speech and action.
4. According to Popper knowledge has to be based on a scientific method, a method that is reliant upon a procedure of self-correction and preliminary verification, where truth retains a status of knowledge open for falsification.

Truth then, within both natural and human sciences, serves as an ideal rather than an achievable state of knowledge. This gives rise to the essential problem of “method” in research and the extent



to and manner in which all methods of inquiry and accounts of reality are limited, compromised and dependent. (Louchkova, Adams, 2001:28) Especially Bourdieu has pointed out that therefore the problem with knowledge is always a problem of “discourse power”.

“Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. In addition, it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its ‘general politics’ of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as a truth; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true.” (Bourdieu, 1998:131, translation, E/F)

However, the realization that truth will be always “relative” should not lead us to the conclusion that each piece of knowledge would be of equal value. People who are really searching for truth will have to acknowledge that the knowledge methods mentioned above shouldn’t be regarded as isolated but associated with one another. Each of these methods has advantages and disadvantages, as the psychologist and Nobel price winner Daniel Kahnemann (2011) has shown us in his book: “Thinking, Fast and Slow”.

1. Against a too strong belief in knowledge which based on personal experience and intuition Kahnemann (2011) argues with the phenomenon of the “cognitive illusion” or the “focusing illusion”: Practitioners are often convinced that they are able to fully understand clients but in real they unconsciously overrate single aspects of a person and thus they become victim of the tendency towards a “regressive forecast”: some arbitrary sorts of behaviour will be causally connected and lead to a merely apparent plausibility. In his view we always have to keep in mind that nothing is as important as it seems to be if we are thinking about it.
2. Such an intuitive and individual method to gain knowledge doesn’t lead only to a kind of “cognitive delusion” but on the long run to “mental laziness” or “self-exhaustion” (Kahnemann, 2011:58). This means that a person is no longer able to cope with his/her own explanation theories which might lead to “cognitive simplifications”, as for example “stereotypes”, “racism”, “sexism”, etc. Especially in intercultural social work we can see that social worker themselves express racist statements without realizing it as such.⁴
3. But we shouldn’t as well overrate the empirical perspective (Kahnemann, 2011:4). Not only because this knowledge method is reducing complex phenomenon on measurable facts, but as well because its “discourse power” comes from people in power and is therefore in our modern societies determined by a capitalist ideology. Research projects in the social work fields are mostly financed by policy makers and the economist system whose main interest is to cut down expenditures in the social fields in order to spend this money to finance tax cuts, economical subventions, prestige buildings, etc. From Bourdieu (1998:156f) we can learn that even within a critical understanding social workers need a self-understanding as practitioners and scientists:

⁴ As an example we can take the story of a social worker who wanted to protect a young woman against marriage with a male person from Nigeria because he thought the African man would only want to obtain a residence permit. He informed police, parents etc. Then the person showed him his German passport. (Moussa, 2012)



“The difficulty of the political fight today is, that the rulers, the right wing as well as the left wing technocrats or epistemocrats have their interests in reasonableness and in the general: We are moving towards universes in which ruling needs more and more technical, rational arguments and in which, as the rulers are referring while exercising their power forcefully to reasonableness and science, also the controlled (people) have to use reasonableness, to defend themselves against the power.” (Bourdieu, 1998:156f, translation, E/F)

2. Fast thinking, slow thinking

According to Kahnemann human beings have to act often in an intuitive or comprehending way. But at the same time they have to be willing to proof their experiences and intuitions against a “mental control”. In his opinion this is about “fast” and “slow” thinking. Both knowledge methods have to be connected because they are interdependent. This shows us that the main benefit of scientific figures, facts and correlations is to help us sometimes to correct our too fast or rush thinking.

“Most of us are healthy most of the time, and most of our judgments and actions are appropriate most of the time. We navigate our lives, we normally allow ourselves to be guided by impressions and feelings, and the confidence we have in our intuitive beliefs and preferences is usually justified. But not always! We are often confident even when we are wrong, and an objective observer is more likely to detect our errors than we are.” (Kahnemann, 2011:7)

Only a multi-perspective view on the different ways to produce knowledge is guaranteeing a “mental self-observation” which protects us at least against the grossest errors. As a consequence, practitioners and researcher should always indicate, respectively determine, by which means specific dates have been created in order to be able to comprehend the possible restrictions of the results. And researchers should always inform us about their research design:

1. The purposes of their research projects, for example to inform, compare or improve services from the perspective of planners, managers, practitioners or users.
2. Its aims – these may be descriptive, diagnostic or evaluative.
3. Its orientation – either empirical or interpretative.
4. Its methodology – either predominately quantitative or qualitative.
5. Its design – it could be based on surveys, questionnaires narratives, etc. (Louchkova, Adams, 2001:34; Bortz, Döring, 2006:87ff).

So it's always up to the respective observer or reader to make a decision about the relevance or irrelevance of a given research result. This doesn't mean that all research is arbitrary, but we must always have in mind the conditions of the specific knowledge production and nobody should withdraw from this effort of multi-perspective thinking.

According to Howard Gardner, a Professor of Psychology at the Harvard University, especially professionals are in need of an “ethical mind” or an ethical orientation which is not only based on specific values which tell us e.g. how practitioners should behave towards others or how social workers should act in a crisis intervention. The challenge for everybody is to act on the basis of responsibility. (Gardner, 2011)

As a result of his thinking, Howard Gardner has developed what he called “The Good Work -Project”. According to him good work aims at doing justice to the value of responsibility and therefore has to embody the three E's:

- Excellence in a technical way;
- Engagement – that people are meaningfully involved with what they are doing and they find it motivating; and
- Ethical, behaving responsibly in their world as a worker. (Gardener, 2011)



According to him the problem with the three E's is that they don't necessarily coexist. Someone could be excellent but not ethical. Another one could be ethical but not engaged, or engaged but not excellent. Obviously the problem is that the three E's strictly belong together. In other words: there is no ethical social work without excellence based on personal decisions which are derived from institutional, personal experience and the existing knowledge from research results. Thus the consequence and message must be: a modern social work must cooperate with research in order to find out what is excellent and thus morally right.

3. The quality of research

3.1 Reasons for bad research practice

Empirical research and independent studies are important but we always have to keep in mind that standards must be observed and therefore those forms of research must be rejected as irrelevant and sometimes dishonest if they are:

- Mainly determined to support single interests. Within such kind of research projects researchers are not really able to develop autonomy and freedom to create a sound research design and to carry it through neutrally. As the main type of research in social work is "contract research" or "practice research" the responsible persons are/feel often very much dependent on the respective financiers. Furthermore a critical research practice (Schimpf, Stehr, 2012) is decreasingly existent because academics are more and more urged by their universities to accept contracts and thus be well enough respected within their institutions.
- Based on an insufficient research methodology. In this case all results are of no real scientific use. To take them and build up new follow-up studies would be a waste of time and money. Nevertheless the results are mostly used for ideological argumentations as long as no other or opposing research results are available. A lot of researchers know about this and hence are documenting their research processes very imprecisely to consciously or unconsciously avert replication or follow-up studies (see: Brüderl, 2008).

Example:

As one example we can take an evaluative study (Mobile Jugendarbeit, 2009) done by a university on behalf of the Caritas and Diakonie (the biggest non-profits in Germany). The aim was to show that the concept of "mobile youth work" is perfectly able to support young people in precarious life situations. The research design is a fund of methodological mistakes and a case study for students to learn how we shouldn't design a research project. What were the problems?

- There was no definition about the "basic population". Who do we want to reach and to ask? And if we want reach the total population of these former young people of a given number of recent years, are we able to reach them? (Maybe some of them have moved, are in prison, in psychiatry, etc.).
- The interviews were made by the social workers who knew the young people. A fact which has (probably) led to desired results.
- There were lots of very general and suggestive questions (e.g.: Do you think we could help you for a better life?).
- The research question was not theorized, the responsible persons had no concept of possible side factors which could have contributed to young people's development.

The result of the research project was of course: 95 percent of former young people are of the opinion that mobile youth work has helped them to have a "better" life.



3.2. Standards for good research projects

In order to not favour such inappropriateness the respective research projects must be clearly named and theoretically proven. The following well known and generally accepted methodological designs in social sciences seem to be particularly suitable for a “multi-dimensional methodological fundament” for social work (Romm, 2001; Dexheimer, 2011):

Replication studies

Social work researchers and social work practitioners are doing a lot of mostly small and unique research projects which are practically of a certain interest but in the eyes of scientists judged as meaningless. The problem hereby is that research results which are based on only one study can't claim to be objective, valid and representative. So we should use replication studies in order to prove the research results and similar or different conditions, and thus to be able to draw conclusions which are more precise and more sophisticated. For example, Fuchs et al. (1994, 1999, 2004) could demonstrate in a series of replication studies that violence in German schools hasn't increased through the last twenty years, but rather changed. Straub (2009) has shown within a European comparison and replication study that the concept of “family group conference” is suited to strengthen family members' responsibility for the sake of the child. And Brian Littlechild has clearly shown through a number of replication studies that the concept of “restorative justice” doesn't lead only to a reduction of violent behaviour but to positive changes in staff motivation and satisfaction as well (Littlechild, Sender, 2010).

Case studies

In Germany a research school, which is called “reconstructive social work” was established in the 1980's. Its aim is to carry out case analysis against the background of highly developed qualitative research methods and thus to deepen the understanding of two social work perspectives:

1. to better understand the client's specific perspective, his/her way of thinking, judging, decision making, etc. and thus to have more respect,
2. to discover and create a range of objective case structures, to build up case typologies and thus to be better able to make a clear decision for the best treatment or programme.

If e.g. we look at people with debt, we can easily discover that debtors have different personalities as well as different types of problem stories. So for the services or treatments it has to make a difference if it's the case of a young person who has debts because of a lack of economical skills or of a mother with three children which has fallen into poverty because of a sudden divorce, etc.

Methodological studies

The aim of a methodological study is to prove the appropriateness of a given method. Gojová (2011) for example investigated the question of how far inhabitants of a local community can be involved in a project and develop a strong “control conviction”, which means the ability to believe in one's own strength. Thus the research could demonstrate that empowerment processes have “*the potential to break the patterns of dominance*” (Gojová, Nedělníková, 2010:171). In a similar way some Swedish researchers showed that it is possible “*to help (disabled) clients gain the power of decision and action over their own life (...) by increasing capacity and self-confidence*” (Payne, cited by Jarhag, 2010:272) if social workers use their influence to transfer power from the environment to the clients.

Meta-analysis

Within a meta-analysis, researchers don't directly start with a research project but try to draw the best conclusions out of a huge variety of valid research results. Klug and Schaitl (2012) could show for the field of probation work (which in Germany is part of social work) that we can surely assume, that

- a combination of help and control is more appropriate than pure surveillance;



- a client-centred approach is not effective;
- the most important intervention to avoid a relapse is motivational and behavioural trainings as well as social learning programmes.

Effect studies

“In every case, regardless of the clients and problems, social workers must be concerned about the effectiveness of their efforts. Accordingly, assessing the effectiveness of social work is one of the principal purposes of social work research” (Reamer, 1998:6). But the main problem within these effect studies is that it is mostly not possible to isolate expected influence factors because there are always other “intermittent factors” which could influence the desired effects, as for example environmental factors or personal growth.

Bryderup (2005) from Denmark is challenging the argument that children shouldn't be brought up in homes even if he knows the fact that research shows that children staying in their families show better results concerning the variables education, work, behaviour and addiction. According to him the four variables aren't clearly enough defined and therefore misleading.

Within the “JES-Study” (Effects of different educational programmes, BMFSJ, 2002) the effects of different educational programmes were measured at four points of time. Children were defined according to 8 different criteria. One of the main result was: The level of process quality in the different homes is the main predictor of positive effects on the children.

Practical research

There is a huge demand for “practical research” in Germany but a lot of social work researchers are not very happy with this term. To very closely follow the procedures of practitioners is a tricky thing because scientists should stick to the research standards irrespective of possible positive or negative results whereas practitioners want to have encouragement and confirmation.

According to Heiner (1988) three types of practical research can be identified:

1. Only the researchers undertake the research and cooperate with the managers of a given practice. Often it's about looking for hard data and facts with which effects and efficiency of programmes can be confirmed.
2. Researcher and practitioners are equally participating in the research process. The aim is to observe developments and incidents and try to optimize given processes and structures.
3. Researchers are giving advice to researching practitioners or sometimes even clients who are examining programmes and service procedures. The research guarantees that the project sticks to the scientific standards and that the results are valid.

Within practice research we can differentiate the following types:

Evaluation studies

In contrary to effect studies the aim of evaluation studies is to describe, analyse and value specific processes, projects and organisational units. All in all the projects serve to create “knowledge” about social work services, procedures and programmes from the perspective of a given organisation or service. The aim is mostly to justify or improve a given practice. The problem of all these studies is the level of the embedded scientific standards. This level is often low, but even if the level would be high the general relevance of such results is seldom high and the acquired knowledge seldom really valid.

Action research

The idea behind action research is to reach a certain aim through a cooperation between researchers, practitioners and services users in a way that the expectations of all three groups are fulfilled. Therefore, it is important that each group plays its role, brings in its strength and is able to tactfully deal with the respective others.



Jan Fook et al. (2011) are reporting from an action research project in Oslo which was aimed at promoting “*structures and arenas for binding cooperation on an equal footing between municipal social service providers, social service users, social researchers and social work/welfare educators*” (Fook, 2011:33). There overall results were:

- Clients usually are expecting that research is supporting the service users’ perspective.
- The continuous question/problem concerning the use of different research methods is: Which method is appropriate and who should make a decision about this?
- A partnership is only possible if all participants know each perspective and the respective obligations (clients want to have better services, practitioners want to have more clarity in decision making, researchers want to publish, etc.).

4. Research in social work – a challenge for practitioners, scientists and students

If social worker should be able to act both intuitively and scientifically it is not sufficient to leave research totally up to professional researchers. The attempt to find arguments for social work research leads us back to a problem which has much to do with the self-understanding of social work as a profession. If we define a “professional” as someone who has specific knowledge and expertise in doing something and is paid for using this knowledge and expertise properly there is then no doubt that social work has to be located within the system which, within a modern society, is designated to deal with knowledge: the system of science (Sommerfeld, 2015).

In order to achieve a scientific level in social work several conditions are required:

- Students of social work should very early become familiar with the scientific perspective of social work and especially should learn how research is constructed and how research results are to be interpreted.
- Research would have to be established from the beginning from a Bachelor’s up to Master’ and to PhD level.
- Practitioners should have the possibility within further learning studies to develop and try out methodological research skills.
- Research projects should always tend towards two aims: to improve practice and effects of social work interventions but at the same time to gain new and partly contradictory scientifically proven knowledge.
- Researcher should always try to hold on to best research standards. If that’s not possible, they should clearly address that their results and proposals are not well-proven.
- As there are not really many research projects done in our countries, research results should always be regarded on a European and international level.

The problem in Germany is often that managers in social work don’t know the language of knowledge and science and therefore they have incredible difficulties and anxieties to communicate with scientists and researchers. To change this on the long run we need to start a scientific offensive in social work through a better education of students and a training of practitioners on how to interpret results from science, how to acquire new knowledge and how to take part in research projects. On the long run this may not only lead to a better practice but at the same time to a better status of social workers. Medical doctors or lawyers in Germany have their high status in society because of their scientific background. Only if social workers strive to the same status they will be able to give account of their practices and to legitimize their decisions.



If social work is a

“communication which informs that there is a deficit, which tells that this deficit should be overcome and makes it comprehensible that between the deficit and its removal there is no evident reliable but only an uppermost ‘contingent’ connection“ (Baecker, 1994:99).

The results of help are never evident. Therefore social workers must learn to communicate their reflections in a proper way, which means to switch between intuitive, experienced and scientific knowledge.

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Challenges with Poverty and Unemployment: Comparison of Austria with Western Balkan Countries

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Abstract

Managing poverty and unemployment in the current political, social and economic situation is very challenging for Austria and especially for Western Balkan countries. Austria is among the modern welfare states in Europe while Western Balkan countries are in their EU integration process, with their poor welfare system are facing slow economic growth, political instability, high level of corruption and many social problems. Western Balkan countries are very well known for their wars in former Yugoslavia, Albanian rebellion in 1997 and the NATO intervention in Kosovo in 1999, but are less known for their social welfare system. In their process of transition, development and integration in the EU, many social problems appeared on the horizon with an increasing rate of unemployment and widespread poverty. Can Western Balkan countries achieve the level of the Austrian welfare system or can they follow the route of developing a sustainable welfare system as Austria has it? This article provides and analyses statistical data about unemployment and poverty for all Western Balkan countries compared with Austria. The overall purpose is to elaborate the welfare state in Western Balkan countries, as one region that surprisingly was not well studied.

Keywords

welfare state, poverty, unemployment, labor market, social services

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1. Introduction

Western Balkan countries² have started reforms in their welfare system after the collapse of the socialist system in former Yugoslavia. Meanwhile they inherited a welfare system based on social insurance, and by providing social assistance through family benefits, education system and health care that is mainly free for all citizens. Social expenditures in Western Balkan countries are low in comparison with Austria. With their current GDP per capita³, they will need more than thirty years to reach the actual wealth of Austria, and only if the average of the GDP growth per year is 2.5% for the entire region. It is very important to mention that Austria is a country with one of the highest rate of GDP dedicated for social expenditure, with 30.2%. In Western Balkan countries we also have differences between countries in their allowance for social expenditure with Serbia on top with high social benefits and Albania at the bottom with the lowest share of expenditure on social benefits. This article is the result of research work that is done at the Institute of Sociology at the University of Graz – Austria (2015), with the support of the Federal Austrian Ministry of Science, Research and Economy. Research has been done to analyze the welfare system in Austria in comparison with welfare systems in Western Balkan countries. The dynamic and level of socio-economic development in Austria was strong while in Western Balkan countries it was followed by crisis. Development of welfare state institutions in Austria was strong and consistent while in Western Balkan countries was partial and inconsistent. Many scholars characterize the welfare system in Austria as a conservative model. The welfare system in Western Balkan countries has not been studied and is not characterized in any model. Today we can identify two schools of thought about the social expenditure which one state should take. The first one is led by Korpi (2003) with his 'new welfare state', an approach regarding changes in the post-industrial era, such as the role of a growing service sector, decreasing economic growth rates, aging of population, the maturity of the government in welfare commitments, as increasing social expenditure for poverty reduction and unemployment benefits, constrict budgets and government agency. According to Pierson (2001) now we have new interest groups as major actors within welfare states, such as labor organizations (workers union), pensioners, healthcare consumers, and experts from the field. This approach typically engages a linear scoring approach that looks at the total of welfare state spendings as a percentage of GDP (Esping-Andersen, 1990:19) and tends to find little evidence of retrenchment occurring within welfare states (Pierson, 2001:150).

The second school of thought is the so called 'power-resources' approach (Palme, 1998:425). Adherents of the power resources approach criticize that the new politics approach misses fundamental dynamics affecting individual entitlements and distribution of benefits and their translation into disposable income for recipients, such as the extent to which benefits are taxed (Allan and Strugss, 2004:498)⁴. The content, quality and coverage of benefits is important to the power resources approach to welfare generosity (Esping-Andersen, 1990:20). Supporters of the power-resources approach have found significant evidence of the welfare state regress within welfare states, particularly in the form of a return to levels of mass unemployment (Korpi, 2003:594). This approach has led to a conceptualization of welfare state typologies that look at the generosity of welfare states. Most famously the three world typology of Esping-Andersen (1990) distinguishing liberal, social democratic and corporatist or conservative models. Austria as a conservative welfare regime has been historically associated with significant levels of social expenditure and with the strong role of state. The welfare states of Western Balkan countries were not included neither by Esping-Andersen (1990), nor by Maurizio Ferrera (2005b) with

² In this article by the term Western Balkan countries, we are referring to Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia.

³ This was calculated using statistical data from World Bank 2013, section for Economy and Growth, Poverty, Social Protection and Labor.

⁴ See (JESSOP, 2002:38).



his five models of welfare state. Western Balkan countries are weak and poor states with their strong regionalism and localism (Bartlett, 1993:17), high rates of unemployment and poverty, and with poor welfare services. According to OECD better life index (2015) Austria performs well in many measures of the well-being. Austria ranks above average in jobs and incomes, subjective well-being, personal security, civic engagement, health status, environmental quality, education and skills, but below average in work life balance (Hemerijck, 2014:19). Compared with Western Balkan Countries, Austria has a very decentralized welfare system. It is divided into nine provinces with a decentralized authority where public welfare services are organized and administrated by municipalities. Those are regulated by nine different laws of public welfare with different amounts of welfare benefits on each region, for example, you can live better in Salzburg and Upper Austria than in Carinthia. In Western Balkan countries the welfare programs are more centralized.

The article is organized as follows. In section 2, the role of the welfare state for the compared countries is examined, and following the theoretical approach developed, starting with the Esping-Andersen (1990) typologies of welfare capitalism and with Maurizio Ferrera (2005a) models of welfare state. Section 3 and 4 present the results of the comparative study of welfare programs towards poverty and unemployment in Austria and Western Balkan countries.

2. The role of the welfare state

Today we still don't have any accepted theory about the origin of the welfare state. The researchers agree that the welfare state is a product of Europe, starting in the nineteenth century, but with its 'golden age' in the second half of twentieth century (De Graaf et al., 2011:24). However, the welfare state has developed on the basis of the recognition that in a capitalist society, some sections of the population tend to become vulnerable to poverty, illness and precarious living unless the market mechanism that produces and reproduces these vulnerabilities in some way is regulated or controlled for the benefits of these vulnerable sections. According to Polanyi (2000), we should acknowledge the transformative role of the markets in the eighteenth and nineteenth century in creating modern capitalist societies, but then he also argues for an active role of the state as a regulatory force to mitigate the many destructive aspects of the market that are harmful to human society and also to the natural environment (Polanyi, 2000:72). In the literature on the welfare state, we can find many different terms such as social security, social work, social welfare, welfare state, social assistance and social protection have been used as well (Greve, 2014:30). Although each of these terms carries its own philosophical and ideological underpinnings, one commonality that unites them is the emphasis on the necessity for state intervention to deal with the precarious situation of the socially and economically vulnerable sections of the population and for life situations when people almost earn their own income arising out of the functioning of market economies (Tang and Kwong-Leung, 1998:73). As we mention before, Esping-Andersen (1990) argues that the welfare state has been approached both narrowly and broadly. The narrower view sees it in terms of the traditional terrain of social amelioration: income transfers and social services, with perhaps some token mention of the housing question. The broader view often frames its questions in terms of political economy; its interest is focused on the states with larger role in managing and organizing the economy. In the broader view, therefore, issues of employment, wages and overall macro-economic steering are considered integral components of the welfare state complex (Esping-Andersen, 1990:2). Welfare state studies have been motivated by theoretical concerns with other phenomena, such as: power, industrialization, or capitalist contradictions; the welfare state itself has generally received scant conceptual attention (Esping-Andersen, 1990:19). Further, in his highly influential book "Three worlds of welfare capitalism" described three types or 'regimes' as he calls them, of 'welfare capitalism'. His argument is that in different countries, social policies are organized around certain internally integrated features so that social policies of different types share certain consistent assumptions and effects. These features were the nature of state intervention, the stratification of social groups, and most crucially the extent to which



markets were replaced by bureaucratic distribution in the process of ‘de-commodification’ in favor of the distribution of goods and services according to needs (Baldock, 1999:22). Esping-Andersen (1990) suggests that there are three types of welfare state: neo-liberal (US, UK, Canada), social democratic (Sweden, Denmark, Finland) and the corporatist or conservative model (France, Germany, Austria, Belgium), see Table 1.

Table 1: Esping-Andersen’s three worlds of welfare capitalism (1990)

Model of welfare state	Countries	Characteristics
Neo-liberal	US, UK, Canada	- low de-commodification - high stratification - free markets regulation
Social democratic	Sweden, Denmark, Finland	- high de-commodification - low stratification - direct provision of finance by state
Corporatist or conservative	France, Germany, Austria, Belgium	- high de-commodification - high stratification - state intervention, regulation of markets or finance

The neo-liberal type had a relatively low level of de-commodification, a relatively high level of stratification in terms of income inequality and state intervention typified by the regulation of markets rather than the provision or finance of social welfare. By contrast, the social democratic type had a high level of de-commodification, low level of stratification and direct state provision or finance, as well as regulation. The corporatist or conservative type had a mixture of these features: heavily stratified by both income and social status, yet with considerable de-commodification, if only through the heavy regulation of nonprofit providers rather than direct state provision (Baldock, 1999:23). Several authors have questioned the distinction between only three welfare state types. According to Maurizio Ferrera (2005b) we have five types of welfare state. The first one is Continental Europe with Bismarckian insurance schemes, transfer heavy, but few services and a male bread winner model. The second one is South European with national health services, transfer pension heavy, very much lean on social services, low exclusion and high familiarization, and very high poverty. The third is Anglo-Saxon Europe with Beveridgean ‘encompassing’ schemes, weak universalism, and occupational/fiscal welfare for the middle classes, means tested benefits for the poor, including poor working, and poverty cum exclusion. The fourth is the Nordic European model with strong universalism, extensive social services (including active labor market policies), dual earner model (female employment, gender equality) and with low poverty and high inclusion. And the fifth model is the Central/Eastern Europe with the transition from socialist collectivism (productive welfare model) to mixed or hybrid models (social insurance, poor services), and with high poverty and exclusion (Ferrera, 2005b: 24), (see Table 2).



Table 2: Maurizio Ferrera models of welfare state (2005b)

Model of welfare state	Countries	Characteristics
1. Continental Europe	France, Germany, Austria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bismarckian insurance schemes - transfer heavy, lean on services - male breadwinner model
2. Southern Europe	Spain, Italy, Greece	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bismarckian insurance schemes + national health services - transfer (pension) heavy, very lean on social services - male breadwinner model + high familiarization (low 'exclusion') - very high poverty; weak/nonexistent safety nets
3. Anglo-Saxon Europe	Britain, Ireland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Beveridgean 'encompassing' schemes, weak universalism - occupational/fiscal welfare for the middle classes - means tested benefits for the poor (including working poor)
4. Nordic Europe	Sweden, Denmark, Finland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - strong universalism - service rich - dual earner model, female employment, gender equality - strong but limited safety nets, low poverty, high inclusion
5. Central/Eastern Europe	Poland, Slovakia, Estonia,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - transition from socialist collectivism (productive welfare model) mixed or hybrid models (social inclusion + residual safety nets) - poor services, female earner - high poverty and exclusion

So as we can see the role of welfare state remains important because of the frequency with which it is used, by politicians, in the media, and by ordinary people, and because historically the welfare state was once understood as the twentieth century's most complete answer to new social needs. It was an institution which should set minimum standards in income, health, housing and education, a standard below which citizens would not be allowed to fall: the idea of the welfare state as a social safety net. The Austrian welfare system was typologies by Esping-Andersen (1990) as one of the conservative model. Western Balkan countries were not included into the three worlds of welfare capitalism of Espin-Andersen, because at that time all countries in West Balkan were communist states. In Austria the development of the welfare state was strong and consistent. In Western Balkan countries the development of the welfare state after 1990 was partial and inconsistent (see Table 3).



Table 3: Besnik Fetahu, Systematic comparison of the welfare systems of Austria and the West Balkan countries (2015)

	Austria	Western Balkan countries
History of wars	None	Several wars between 1991-2001
History of political economical system	Democratic market society Since 1946	Communism 1946-1990 Transition to the market society
Dynamics and level of socio-economic development	Strong Since 1960	Crisis Since 1991-2001
Development of welfare state Institutions	Strong Consistent	Partial Inconsistent
Development of unemployment	Lower than EU average	Higher than EU average
Development of poverty	Lower	Higher

Some authors, such as Rimlinger (1971), Wilensky (1975) and Mathias (2001) argue that industrialization and social needs generate unemployment and poverty in particular and make the provision of state welfare more or less inevitable (Jessop, 2002:28).

3. Development of unemployment

The region of Western Balkan is known for its previous wars and conflicts, but we don't have a clear picture for welfare system. In their EU integration process they are dealing with duties and obligations that must be fulfilled before they can become a member of the European Union. Generally, welfare systems in European Union entail largely free education and health care, a broadly accessible social security, unemployment benefits, sound maternity and child care benefits (Levine, 2007:59). In this case Austria can be a good example of how to deal with social problems, and in particular with unemployment and poverty. The fall of the communist system has led to a process of deindustrialization of the Western Balkan countries. Employment rates have decreased, unemployment has increased, and the Western Balkan countries are faced with political, social and economic instability for decades. Unemployment and poverty were the reasons for a large emigration, in particular youth emigration from Western Balkan countries towards European Union countries. Since the EU abolished visa requirements for their citizens in 2009 and 2010, the number of asylum seekers from Serbia and Macedonia, as well as from Albania, Bosnia and Montenegro, has more than quadrupled (Stiglmyer, 2013:2). Privatization also led to the collapse of the old industrial companies which increased the unemployment rate. The global economic and financial crisis also led to the increase of the unemployment rate in most of the regions (see Table 4).

Table 4: Unemployment rate (World Bank, 2013)

Countries	Unemployment rate	EU average	15-24 Youth unemployment rate
<i>Austria</i>	4.3%	10.5%	10%
<i>Albania</i>	12.8%		28.7%
<i>Kosovo</i>	30.9%		55.9%
<i>Macedonia</i>	28.6%		54.9%
<i>Montenegro</i>	14.3%		41.3%
<i>Serbia</i>	24.1%		49.4%



In the Western Balkan countries, the unemployment rate among people with higher education is low comparing to those with secondary and primary education. As we can see in the Table 4, most countries in the Western Balkan show high youth unemployment compared to Austria. Related to the unemployment benefits Austria can be a good example for the Western Balkan (see Table 5).

Table 5: Average monthly unemployment benefit and assistance in Austria 2012 (Austrian Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Social Report, 2014a)

	Women	Men	Total
<i>Unemployment benefit</i>	763 €	922 €	855 €
<i>Unemployment assistance</i>	621 €	736 €	690 €

In Austria the most supportive cash benefits for the unemployed, are the unemployment benefits and unemployment assistance. These benefits and assistance are available for the people in need who have no or insufficient entitlements to unemployment insurance benefits. According to ESSPOS⁵, in Austria about 4.6 billion Euro were spent on unemployment benefits, active labor market policies and services, and on the public employment service in 2012. Unemployment benefits are paid for a limited period of time and are followed by unemployment assistance, which may be collected for an unlimited period of time if certain criteria are met (indigence, means test on own and spouse's/partner's income). Unemployment benefits are related to the basic benefit amount and where applicable to family supplements and additional supplements. The basic benefit amount is 55% of the average net income of the previous calendar year (if the application is filed in the second half of any given year) or of the penultimate calendar year (if the application is filed in the first half of any given year). While unemployment assistance amounts to 95% of the previous basic amount plus 95% of the previous supplement to unemployment benefits. Unemployment assistance is granted only to those in need (Austrian Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, 2014).⁶ In Western Balkan, all countries provide unemployment benefits except Kosovo. For example, Serbia provides unemployment benefits for at least 12 consecutive months or 12 months in the last 18 months. An interruption in coverage must not last longer than 30 days. The monthly benefit is 50% of the insured average incomes in the last 6 months.⁷ Other countries like Macedonia and Kosovo, have problems with the exact data of unemployment. They still don't know how many are employed and not reported or registered, they still don't have any evidence about how many are registered as unemployed but actually have a job. In the case of unemployment benefits, Macedonia provide some but they are limited in time. Unemployment benefits are covered to those who are available to work by registering in an employment bureau and who are actively seeking employment. The duration of unemployment benefits is 18 months. Also Albania is offering unemployment benefits. The insured must have at least one year of contributions, not be receiving any other benefits (except for partial disability), should be registered at an unemployment office and be willing to undergo training. A flat-rate benefit is paid for up to 12 months if the insured has temporary periods of employment (see Table 6).

⁵ European Commission. 2015. Eurostat Statistics Explained. Population and Social Conditions.

⁶ Austrian Federal Ministry of Social Affairs. 2014a. Social Report 2011–2012, Analysis Section.

⁷ Social Security Programs throughout the World – Europe 2010.



Table 6: Unemployment benefits (OECD, 2015)

Country	Duration of unemployment benefits
Austria	12 months
Albania	12 months
Kosovo	None
Macedonia	18 months
Montenegro	3-12 months
Serbia	12-18months

In Kosovo's case the situation is different. It is the only country in Western Balkan that has a limited number of social protection benefits and no unemployment benefits. This is because of the International administration by UN, after the war in Kosovo 1999, and they have established a completely new welfare system in Kosovo which is weak due to limited budget. The social assistance scheme is the main poverty alleviation tool, paid to the families and funded from the overall budget. There are two categories of recipients: Category I where no one is capable of work, and/or where the only adult capable for work is looking after an incapable person over 65; and Category II with unemployed adults with a child under the age of 5 or providing full-time care to an orphan. Recipient numbers continue to decline as a result of rigid conditionalities.⁸

4. The social situation of unemployment and poverty

Compared with other European Countries, in Austria the social welfare benefits and services are well developed and greatly help cushion the still-felt impact of the economic and financial crisis as well as its social and economic consequences for those groups of the population particularly affected by them. Rising expenditure on labor market and anti-poverty policies in combination with consistently high family, health and pensions benefits are major contributors in reducing the risk of poverty and marginalization in Austria. The percentage of the Austrian population at risk of poverty, which is below the EU average, would be more than three times as high if it was not for these social benefits. There also exists a considerable gap between the richest and poorest in Austria – top 20% of the richest people in Austria earn about four times more than those of the bottom 20%. As we can see from the table 4, Austria's unemployment rate is 4.3%, clearly below the European Union average of 10.5%⁹. From this data collected in 2012 we can see that the unemployment is not one of the highest social problems in Austria. But unfortunately in 2014, the unemployment rate has slightly increased, and this is as a result of the global and financial crises. The unemployment in Austria compared with unemployment in the Western Balkan are very far from each other, for example Kosovo has higher unemployment rate in region with 30%, while Albania have the lower unemployment rate in region with only 12.8%¹⁰ (see Table 7).

Western Balkan countries are engaged in their transition from a socialist system with a centralized market to a free market economy. They believe that the transition will be a completed task after they are fully integrated in the European Union. But in the EU integration process they are faced with tasks and responsibilities that must be accomplished; one of them is the reduction of poverty. Austria, as one of the EU member states, has full institutional capacities for collecting data on

⁸ European Commission. 2008. Social Protection and Social Inclusion in Kosovo under UN Security Council Resolution 1244. Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities. Executive Report.

⁹ Austrian Federal Ministry Of Labour, Social Affairs And Consumer Protection 2014b

¹⁰ World Bank data for 2014.



poverty, and analyzing and prioritizing them in the political agenda. In Western Balkan countries poverty reduction is still one of the remaining social problems that the state should deal with. They lack of institutional capacities for collection and analysis of the data for poverty reduction and they are far away from Austria. Here we can take good example from Kosovo, as I mention before with its social assistance scheme as the main poverty alleviation tool, paid to families and funded from the state budget. Meanwhile the global economic and financial crisis had the consequences for both: Western Balkan countries and Austria reducing their economic growth. In this economic stagnation the unemployment and poverty rate has slightly increased. The 2011 Life in Transition Survey (LITS¹¹) provided a valuable insight into the household-level effects of the crisis. In Montenegro over half of the respondents reported that a household member had experienced wage reductions or debts as a result of the crisis. In Macedonia a third of households reported job losses or family business closures. In Serbia respondents highlighted a loss of remittances as another transmission channel from economic slowdown to reduced living standards. With low foreign investment and losses of remittance income, Western Balkan countries are faced with the rise of poverty. In Austria poverty is monitored yearly through a Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) adopted from the European Union. In this case Western Balkan countries are improving their statistical system as the first step toward adopting SILC. By adopting this statistical system, Western Balkan countries will be in a good position for monitoring income and consumption poverty.

Table 7: General overview for 2013 of demographic and economic data for Austria and Western Balkan countries (World Bank 2013; INSTAT Albania Statistical data 2013; Kosovo Agency of Statistic, statistical data 2013; Statistical Office of the Rep. of Serbia, statistical data 2013; Statistik Austria, statistical data 2013).

Country	Total Population (million)	Youth population (15-24 years)	Elder population (65 years and over)	Unemployment rate	GDP (\$)	GDP growth	Poverty rate	Birth rate	Death rate
Austria	8.4	11.6 %	19.2 %	4.3 %	50.546	0.2 %	13.4 %	8.73/1000	10.31/1000
Albania	2.7	19.2 %	11.1 %	12.8 %	4.659	1.4 %	14.3 %	12.73/1000	6.47/1000
Kosovo	1.8	18.1 %	6.9 %	30.9 %	3.877	3.0 %	29.7 %	17.70/1000	6.90/1000
Macedonia	2.1	14.1 %	12.4 %	28.6 %	4.838	3.1 %	27.1 %	11.72/1000	9.00/1000
Montenegro	0.6	10.8 %	14 %	14.3 %	7.106	3.3 %	11.3 %	10.75/1000	9.17/1000
Serbia	7.1	11.6 %	17.2 %	24.1 %	6.353	2.6 %	24.6 %	9.15/1000	13.77/1000

5. Conclusion

This article has detailed real social problems and difficulties of the welfare system in Western Balkan countries. Wars and conflicts in the region, their transition from the communist system to the democratic system with free market and also their slow European Union integration has led to a huge deindustrialization in the region as a result of bad privatization, with poor welfare services

¹¹ European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Life in Transition Survey 2011.



as a result of budget limits, and higher rates of unemployment and poverty which is becoming a chronic problem for the region over decades.

Also the global financial crises with the latest Eurozone crises have had negative effects in both compared countries. Austria as among the modern welfare states, with its huge social expenditure per GDP capita, and good tradition of managing unemployment and poverty, can be a benchmark for Western Balkan countries in their route to establish a competitive, wealthy, and sustainable welfare system. While Austria has been included into typologies by most of the social scientists as one of the countries with a corporatist model of the welfare state, the Western Balkan countries were not included into such typologies. This is probably because Esping-Andersen (1990) typologies only western welfare capitalism, while western Balkan was at in that time a communist region, with strong social welfare programs. After the collapse of communism, western Balkan countries have continued to provide some welfare programs from their ex-Yugoslavia welfare system, except Kosovo who had to build everything from the beginning. Western Balkan countries must reform their social policies with a goal of creating a sustainable welfare system. They will achieve this by developing laws for social insurance, policies for unemployment benefits and assistance, by decreasing corruption at the central and local level. In their European Integration process they have to harmonize social policies among themselves regarding the free movement of workers and the right of pensions.

Now, while they are in the process of European Integration they have a good opportunity to pursue democratic governance reforms, strengthen their institutional capacities, and start fighting seriously the high level of corruption and crime, and start regional cooperation. They are small states, with a limited budget, and poor capacities. Social expenditure varies in extent between Austria and Western Balkan countries. Austria and Serbia have relatively high social benefits, while Albania and Kosovo are countries with low social benefits.

The whole region shows a low level of economic activity and this has led to high rates of unemployment and poverty. The privatization process was a disaster, because it led to the deindustrialization of the region. This situation has created a picture of no perspective, especially for young people in the region. As a result of all this, emigration has also played a role. Especially high level of youth unemployment, emigration became a widely used tool of avoiding poverty in region. Western Balkan countries must continue to build their institutional capacities for measuring and analyzing poverty and unemployment. The European Union and in particular the Austrian welfare system can be a good benchmark.

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Tom Grimwood: Key Debates in Social Work and Philosophy. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2016.

This is an innovative book about social work and philosophy, and welcome for that reason. Most texts on social work and philosophy concentrate on ethics and moral judgement, or on the implications for social work of human rights and social justice policies and practices of discrimination and oppression. They are often concerned to explain philosophical ideas and debates to social workers, but rarely interrogate philosophical ideas with social work practice issues, and vice versa. Tom Grimwood has published in philosophical journals, but is also familiar with social work practice: he moves comfortably between practice, sociological thinking and philosophical analysis.

He selects eight debates: interpretation, community, identity, the ethics of human rights, documentation, the self, culture and knowledge and expertise. All of these are tackled with a sceptical and thoughtful analysis from a range of philosophical and social science thinking. The analysis of each feeds into later discussion, so approach builds radical questioning skills in its readers, social work practitioners and educators.

But not necessarily without questioning the radical. These complex analyses do not support any particular position, the radical against the neoliberal or the reflective against the practical. Therefore, although the text aims to promote critical thinking, in effect teaching philosophical analysis, its refusal to accept the critical social work agenda of radical social transformation makes it part of the postmodern turn. Examining these 'key debates' promote thoughtful practical interrogation of the

implications of the situations that practitioners face. In the following paragraphs, I try to give an impression of the thoughts that might be stimulated in a reader by some of the material he discusses.

The first chapter, on interpretation, for example, raises questions about whether practitioners can ever recover from layers and complexities of meaning an understanding on which they might act. Is it possible to communicate with the participants in a practice situation to gain understanding where trust between practitioner and service user does not exist, or where doubt and uncertainty are present? Is the knowledge that we gain from research and from observation in practice ever knowledge of something without also being knowledge for a purpose? And if all knowledge is knowledge for a purpose, those purposes then affect our interpretation of the knowledge. Is the practitioner's claim to know about and interpret social situations always an expression of power relations? Is the claim to be a critical practitioner in itself a position that accepts an ideology of resistance and transformation of power relations. If so, that ideology has the potential to suppress alternative interpretations of the situation and our aims that are constantly emerging. The implications of critical analysis, though, refuse to acknowledge the potential validity of alternative and emerging knowledges and aims.

Similarly, Grimwood raises questions about social work professional organisations' conventional commitments to ideas such as community and human rights. But the aim



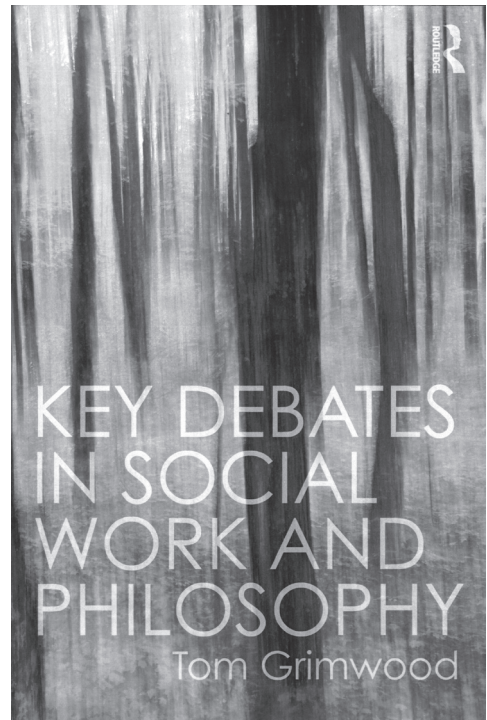
here is not to redefine these in new ways, or to find a new psychosocial analysis. Rather it is to make practitioners aware of the complexities of such loyalties and of any analysis that follows from them. Instead, he expects practitioners to maintain thoughtful scepticism of over-simplified proposals for action.

The policy claim of social work professional ideologies, for example, is that practitioners have an ethical responsibility to maintain a commitment to implementing human rights. Grimwood suggests that what they are doing is mediating the complexities of people's experiences of their humanity within the interpretations government policy, agency practices and the social expectations of the shared everyday experiences that constitute different sense of community and form people's identities. Contending that practitioners are mediating alternative conceptualisations of humanity rejects the certainty of over-simplified professional objectives that unquestioningly support human rights. It asks, instead, what compromises and conflicts exist and how may they be squared.

Their mediation of interpretations of shared experiences is recorded in documents, and this process appears to give some sense of formality and security to the meanings that practitioners and their agencies attribute to the situations that social workers engage with. But is that interpretation secure? Documents about service users try to order and explain a complex reality, but may lead to an unreasonably simplified social and political reaction.

Reading this book is like traversing a familiar city from a new point of the compass, through unexpected routes. These intricate discussions contain imaginative and creative ideas, and incorporate a huge range of both familiar and unfamiliar contemporary philosophy alongside similarly familiar and unfamiliar social work writings. I learned a great deal and identified new writers that I want to explore. Social work teachers and students will welcome a stimulating and iconoclastic account of interesting issues in thinking about practice.

But does this book model a practical approach to thinking within practice that can be applied as part of everyday practice in agencies? The



introductory chapter tries to defend the book against criticism of its resolute avoidance of practical prescriptions. The practice recommended is incorporating serious thought as part of what social workers do. Thinking in this way aims to be antagonistic to current expectations of practitioners; their own expectations and the demands of agencies, social policy, politics and a target-driven culture. All prescriptions of action are questionable and should be questioned. Simple nostrums are inadequate to the complexity of the world. It is appropriate to understand the complexity of interpretations that practitioners have available to them. Competing understandings of cultural, social and personal identities are of course present within competing cultural and personal understandings of their social work. But social work is *work*: this approach, attractive and interesting though it is, steps away from the need for social workers to act, to do something about what faces their clients in the short term, as well as thinking about how the structures of society operate and might be improved.

This leads me to wonder in what sense these



debates actually are *key*. Key to whom; key in what context; key issues for service users; key issues in the demands on social workers? Look back at the list of subjects and ask whether identity, self and culture are key issues for the well-being of service users. At a high level of abstraction, yes; but in the pressures of daily practice, less clear perhaps.

Among the expressed aims of this text are to help social work students resist over-simplified thinking. Currently, the codeword, used in this book, is 'dichotomous' thinking, avoiding thinking either we must do one thing or another, whereas there are often a range of options that interact with each other. Another expressed aim is to clarify interests and objectives that are in tension: you can see your way through a complex situation if you use the thinking skills promoted in this book. Pursuing the current fetish of textbook publishers, and picking up some of the methods of 1970s programmed learning, there are little boxes throughout which encourage readers to agree or disagree with points made. These help to focus the reader on what otherwise might be a sinuous discussion. And some of the discussion connects with particular scenarios that social workers face. But a box that mentions Nietzsche, Marx, and *ressentiment* in one complex question (p 71) seems a long way from helping people with thinking that they can use in practice.

Nothing is more practical than to be able to use your mind, but to make use of the skills promoted in this book in practice requires further development of these thinking methods in more concrete application to real decisions. In education, using this approach in practice would require training opportunities and supervision in thinking through situations. In agency management, it would require policy and managerial support for the kind of thinking practices promoted here that might be antagonistic to current management approaches. And eventually we need research. Having trained people in the method and established agency support for it, we need to interrogate whether it helps practitioners steer themselves through complex situations, and whether service users value being helped in this way.

So what for social work educators and students is a fascinating and stimulating book can only be a beginning. It would require considerable development and institutional change to make the opportunities it offers concrete possibilities for practice.

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Science and Research Activities at the Department of Social Work, Faculty of Social Studies, University of Ostrava

With its science and research activities, the Department of Social Work fulfils some of the key R&D areas of the Faculty of Social Studies, University of Ostrava. Over the past four years the Faculty members have been primarily engaged in the topic of housing for low-income groups and research on social work interventions and social policy measures.

The first major achievement in this area implemented by the entire Faculty of Social Studies was research on ways of coping with poverty, or the risk of poverty in families with minor children in various stages of social disqualification. In addition to analysis of individual situations we were also interested in what role social work plays in these ways of coping. Research results have shown that the surveyed families perceive housing as a major problem. On the one hand, social work was evaluated as the tool to solve their housing problem (arrangement of accommodation with social or commercial service providers). On the other hand, the housing area was evaluated by the surveyed families as one of the areas where social work can only accomplish a little. It provoked the question how to describe the successful intervention of social work in housing. It certainly seems that to ensure alternative accommodation is not enough.

In the previous years and years to come, several annual surveys focused on the housing issue for low-income groups such as the housing exclusion, reintegration of single mothers living in shelters into permanent forms of housing, identification and analysis of needs in terms of housing of residents in socially excluded localities have been researched.

Particularly in relation to the issue of housing, the researchers from the Department of Social Work have been trying over the last two years to develop participatory approaches in social work, both in terms of research and professional approaches. Activities of the Department members thus form a complex that is based on implementation of the experience gained from research activities into educational activities of the Department, as well as on communication with the social policy structures and social work as a profession. A two-way flow of information and sharing of experience and feedback is a must.

The Department of Social Work is actively engaged in the international scientific debate and inspires a national debate on participatory approaches in social work. An example is the organization of the two-day conference in September 2015, which aimed to encourage the involvement of various actors in the public systems of assistance and support towards the greater involvement of people in difficult situations in decision-making.

The conference aimed at giving opportunity to meet for people who have experienced social work in different contexts and from different perspectives, meaning that the participants were social workers both from the state and private sector, people who are defined as clients of social work, students of social work and academics in the field of social work. The conference organizers, academics from the Department of Social Work plan to organize another year of the conference in 2016.

The Department of Social Work also tries to develop participatory approaches in social work by trying to influence national and local (social) policies through the involvement of those who are concerned with the issue. The Department is a member of the National Platform for Social Housing. Its activities include co-organization of the past four years of the Czech Sleep Out event. Its members support the residents of some socially excluded localities in the region in the development of community groups, whose goal should be to increase the degree of participation of the local population in the development of the locations where they live.

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Calls for papers and abstracts

ERIS Journal – Summer 2016 (English edition)

We are already accepting papers from various areas of social work for the planned English issue. The deadline for obtaining papers from potential authors is March 10th, 2016. The publication date is August 2016.

The editor of this issue is Brian Littlechild, University of Hertfordshire, United Kingdom.

ERIS Journal – Winter 2017 (English edition)

We are already accepting papers from various areas of social work for the planned English issue. The deadline for obtaining papers from potential authors is September 10th, 2016. The publication date is planned for February 2017.

The editor of this issue is Anna Metteri, University of Tampere, Finland.

ERIS Journal – Summer 2017 (English edition)

We are already accepting papers from various areas of social work for planned English issue. The deadline for obtaining papers from potential authors is March 10th, 2017. The publication date is August 2017.

The editor of this issue is Anita Gulczynska, University of Lodz, Poland.

Papers should be sent to the administrator of the academic papers who will also provide you with additional information upon request:

- Barbora Grundelova, barbora.grundelova@osu.cz
- Vladislava Vondrova, akademik@socialniprace.cz

Abstracts for the 2/2017 Refugees and Social Work (Czech and Slovak edition)

Markéta Rusnakova, the 2/2017 issue editor, invites potential authors to submit their extended abstracts of articles planned for the issue focused on the topic Refugees and Social Work.

You are encouraged to take the opportunity to receive feedback from the issue editor. The feedback will help you formulate and plan the text so that it has a better chance of succeeding in the publication process of our journal. The process is organised in the following way. 1. Assessment of professional standards of the articles by the issue editor. 2. Double-stage anonymous review proceedings.

Abstracts for the 3/2017 Social Work, Health and Lifestyle (Czech and Slovak edition)

Libor Novosad, the 3/2017 issue editor, invites potential authors to submit their extended abstracts of articles planned for the issue focused on the topic Social Work, Health and Lifestyle.

You are encouraged to take the opportunity to receive feedback from the issue editor. The feedback will help you formulate and plan the text so that it has a better chance of succeeding in the publication process of our journal. The process is organised in the following way. 1. Assessment of professional standards of the articles by the issue editor. 2. Double-stage anonymous review proceedings.

Organisational information

Extended abstracts, (maximum size of 1 standard page, 1800 characters in the Czech or Slovak language, including spaces) should be submitted by 31 March 2016 to the administrator of academic articles at akademik@socialniprace.cz. The issue editors will provide you with feedback on your abstract by 30 April 2016.

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Public commitment to the Journal

The journal for theory, practice and education in social work

The mission of the journal “Czech and Slovak Social Work“ is:

- to support the ability of Czech and Slovak societies to cope with life problems of people through social work,
- to promote the quality of social work and professionalism of social work practice,
- to contribute to the development of social work as a scientific discipline and to the improvement of the quality of education in social work,
- to promote the interests of social service providers and users.

In the interest of achieving these objectives, the Journal will, across the community of social workers and with co-operating and helping workers from other disciplines, promote:

- attitudes which regard professionalism and humanity as equal criteria of social work quality;
- attitudes which place emphasis on linking theoretical justification of social work practice with its practical orientation on clients' problems and realistic possibilities;
- coherence among all who are committed to addressing clients' problems through social work;
- open, diversity-understanding, informed and relevant discussion within the community of social workers;
- social workers' willingness and interest in looking at themselves through the eyes of others.

Notice to Contributors

The journal *Sociální práce/Sociálna práca/Czech and Slovak Social Work* is published four times in the Czech language and twice in the English language each year. The journal publishes the widest range of articles relevant to social work. The articles can discuss on any aspect of practice, research, theory or education. Our journal has the following structure:

- Editorial
- Academic articles
- Book reviews
- News / Research notes

1. Instructions to authors of academic articles

Editors accept contributions that correspond to the profile of the journal (see "Our mission"). The contribution has to be designated only for publishing in the journal *Czech and Slovak Social Work*. It can also be a contribution which has already been published in another journal, but for another use the text has to be revised and supplemented. The number of contributions from one author is limited to two per year.

The offer of manuscript receipt and review procedure

The academic text intended for publishing in the journal should be a research or overview essay (theoretical, historical, etc.). For the article to be accepted to the review procedure, the author of the text must work systematically with the relevant sources, explain the research methodology and present a conclusion with regard to the research goal. Because the journal has a specific professional nature, texts are preferred which also contain application aspects where the author explains the relevance of their conclusions in the context of social work.

The review process is reciprocally anonymous and is carried out by two independent reviewers. Student works are subject to single review process. Academic and student works are judged in terms of content and form. If necessary, a work may be returned to the authors for supplementation or rewriting. Based on the assessments of the review process a decision will be made to either accept and publish the article in our journal or to reject it. The Chairman of the Editorial Board will decide in questionable cases. Please send two versions of the article to the editor via e-mail. The first one may contain information which could reveal the identity of the author. The second version should be the complete and final text.

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Authors are informed about the result of the review process within six months from the date of receipt of the text/manuscript.

Manuscript requirements

The text must be written in accordance with applicable language standards. The text letters should be written in Times New Roman, size 12, font style Normal. Pages are not numbered. Footnotes should be placed strictly at the end of the article.

- I. Front page** contains a descriptive and brief title of the article in English; the names of all authors, biographical characteristics (up to 100 words) and also contact details for correspondence in the footnote.
- II. Abstract** in English in a maximum of 200 words.
- III. Keywords** in English. Please use two-word phrases as a maximum.
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There is also space for all reviewers who want to introduce an interesting book in the field of social work and its related fields in the journal. We require making arrangement about the book review with the editors in advance. When sending the text please attach a scan of the front page of the reviewed book. (in 300 DPI resolution).

The format of the book review is set from 8,000 to 12,000 characters (including spaces); other conditions are the same as the conditions for journalistic articles. The book review must include bibliographic information on the rated book (e.g. Daniela Vodáčková a kol.: *Krizová intervence*, Portál, Praha, 2002). Please add your name and your contact details at the end of the review.

3. Ethics and other information

Manuscripts are assessed in the review proceedings which comprise 1) the assessment of professional appropriateness by one member of the Editorial Board, and 2) bilaterally anonymous review by two experts from the list of reviewers posted on our website.

The text is assessed exclusively on the basis of its intellectual value, irrespective of the author's race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, ethnic origin, citizenship or political views.

The editors of the journal make every effort to maintain impartiality of the review proceedings not to disclose the identity of the reviewers and other participants in the proceedings. The author whose work was demonstrably proved to contain plagiarisms or forged data shall lose an opportunity of publishing in the Journal.

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