



## International Journal of Social Pedagogy

---

### Social Pedagogy and Critical Theory: A Conversation with Hans Thiersch

Daniel Schugurensky <sup>1,\*</sup>

**How to cite:** Schugurensky, D. 'Social Pedagogy and Critical Theory: A Conversation with Hans Thiersch.' *International Journal of Social Pedagogy*, 2014, 3(1): 2, pp. 4–14. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14324/111.444.ijsp.2014.v3.1.002>.

Published: 01 January 2014

---

#### Peer Review:

This article has been peer reviewed through the journal's standard double blind peer review.

#### Copyright:

© 2014, The Author(s). This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License (CC-BY-NC-SA) 3.0 <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/>, which permits re-use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided any modifications of this material in anyway is distributed under this same license, is not used for commercial purposes, and the original author and source are credited • DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14324/111.444.ijsp.2014.v3.1.002>

#### Open Access:

*International Journal of Social Pedagogy* is a peer-reviewed open access journal.

\*Correspondence: [dschugur@asu.edu](mailto:dschugur@asu.edu)

<sup>1</sup> Arizona State University, USA

## Social Pedagogy and Critical Theory: A Conversation with Hans Thiersch

Daniel Schugurensky\*, Arizona State University

THEORY

PRACTICE

RESEARCH

*Hans Thiersch was born on May 16, 1935 in Recklinghausen, Germany. His work became particularly influential since the 1970s, when he applied the concept of lifeworld orientation to social pedagogy. Indeed, Thiersch can be considered one of the representatives of a critical social pedagogy. Since his retirement in 2002, he has been a professor emeritus of Education and Social Pedagogy at the University of Tübingen. He has also co-edited the handbook of social work / social pedagogy. Professor Thiersch has published extensively on a variety of topics related to education, social work, youth welfare, residential care, morality and justice. However, because most of his publications are in German, his work is not well known outside of Germany. On a rainy evening of October 2013 in Frankfurt, I had the opportunity to have a conversation with Professor Thiersch.*

**Key words:** social pedagogy; critical theory; lifeworld orientation; Frankfurt school



Daniel Schugurensky (left) and Hans Thiersch (Frankfurt, October 2013)

To cite this article: Schugurensky, D. (2014). Social Pedagogy and Critical Theory: A Conversation with Hans Thiersch. International Journal of Social Pedagogy, 3(1), 4-14, DOI: [10.14324/111.444.ijsp.2014.v3.1.002](https://doi.org/10.14324/111.444.ijsp.2014.v3.1.002). Available online: <http://www.internationaljournalsofsocialpedagogy.com>

© All rights reserved. The author(s) retain copyright and grant the journal right of first publication with the work simultaneously licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution License that allows others to share the work with an acknowledgement of the work's authorship and initial publication in this journal.

**Daniel Schugurensky: I suggest that we start from the beginning. When did you encounter social pedagogy for the first time?**

Hans Thiersch: It was in the late 1960s and the early 1970s.

**DS: How did it happen?**

HT: Well, before we talk about this, we need to go a little back, to the late 1950s. At that time, I had a humanistic formation. I had studied philosophy and theology, and also German literature and philology. During my doctoral studies I wrote an essay about Jean Paul<sup>1</sup>, a romantic poet who had a cosmic vision. When I did my doctorate I was not particularly familiar with educational theories, but when I finished my doctoral program I received an offer from a professor of education called Erich Weniger (1894-1961) to work with him as a postdoctoral assistant at the University of Göttingen. This was my encounter with social pedagogy.

**DS: Was Erich Weniger interested in social pedagogy?**

HT: Interestingly enough, it has not been the focus of his interest, at least not in the 50s and 60s. Weniger was a traditional professor of general educational theory. However, and this is the interesting part, I encountered social pedagogy at Weniger's house.

**DS: This is indeed interesting. Are you saying that Weniger, your mentor at that time, was not familiar with social pedagogy, but you found social pedagogy in his house?**

HT: Exactly. What happened is that in Weniger's house I learned about social pedagogy through some assistants who were doing social work – not only theoretically, but also practically. One of the other research assistants was Klaus Mollenhauer<sup>2</sup>, who was a few years older than me. He wrote his PhD thesis on 'the origins of social work'. At that time I was not connected to community work, but other assistants were doing work in a community center organized by students. It was in that period that I started reading about social pedagogy.

**DS: Was that part of a program in social pedagogy?**

HT: No, at that time, in the late 1960s, there were no programs of social pedagogy in German universities. There were not even courses on social pedagogy in the faculties of education. There were typical education courses, with occasional references to social pedagogy. But at the same time, outside of those faculties of education, there was a literature and a practice in social pedagogy. Obviously, there was a gap. Klaus Mollenhauer was one of the first to teach social pedagogy in universities. The students were not pursuing any particular specialization in social pedagogy. His course was a general education course, but he devoted parts of it to examine social pedagogy.

---

<sup>1</sup> Jean Paul (1763-1825), born Johann Paul Friedrich Richter, was a German Romantic writer who was famous for his humorous novels and stories.

<sup>2</sup> Klaus Mollenhauer (1928-1998) was one of the most important German educational theorists of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and is regarded as a very influential figure in the field of social pedagogy. He was professor of education at the University of Frankfurt from 1969 to 1972 and at the University of Göttingen from 1972 until his retirement in 1996.

**DS: And what did you do at that time?**

HT: I became inspired by Mollenhauer and decided to work in social pedagogy. I was first a professor of education in Kiel, and then, in 1970, I was appointed a professor of social pedagogy at the University of Tübingen. It was there that I developed the first curriculum of social pedagogy for a course in a German university in order of diploma.

**DS: Congratulations on that accomplishment. If I am not mistaken, around that time you became familiar with the Frankfurt School. Can you tell us about that?**

HT: Well, I think that there is another question before that one. First we need to talk about the student revolution that took place in the 1960s and 1970s. This happened in many places, but in the western part of Germany that era marked the end of the post-war Restoration period of Konrad Adenauer<sup>3</sup>. In this period there was a growing awareness that social pedagogy and social work were in the mainstream very conservative fields, not really liberating themselves from authoritarian thinking. It was in this particular context that the new generation of social pedagogues was seeking a new orientation.

**DS: What were the main features of this new orientation?**

HT: There were two main ongoing streams at that time that tried to go beyond the traditional philosophical orientation of social pedagogy and that brought a critical understanding to the role of education in society. On the one hand, we were reading the work of critical pedagogues who were influential at that time, and their ideas framed many of our debates about education and society. For instance, we had intense debates on the work of Otto Rühle<sup>4</sup>, particularly around youth movements and the labor movement. We also had discussions about the ideas of a critical psychoanalyst called Siegfried Bernfeld<sup>5</sup>, who wrote about the connections between psychoanalysis and education, and about the role of education in perpetuating social inequalities and in promoting social change. Another influential figure that we discussed was Heinz Heydorn<sup>6</sup>, who at that time was working in Frankfurt and had a critical approach to education. That was the panorama of critical perspectives on education at that time in Germany. On the other hand, we became familiar with the progressive orientation of social sciences like sociology, political science, critical criminology and the like, and here we can find a connection to the debates that emanated from the Frankfurt School.

---

<sup>3</sup> Konrad Adenauer (1876-1967) was the first post-war Chancellor of West Germany from 1949 to 1963. He is credited with leading Germany from the ruins of the Second World War to a prosperous and stable nation.

<sup>4</sup> Otto Rühle (1874-1943) was a German Marxist who played an active opposition to both the First and Second World Wars.

<sup>5</sup> Siegfried Bernfeld (1892-1953) was an Austrian intellectual educator who studied philosophy, psychoanalysis, sociology and biology. He was a key member of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society and was one of the few writers that explored the connections between Freud and Marx, and between psychoanalysis and socialism, and called for a non-authoritarian educational system.

<sup>6</sup> Heinz-Joachim Heydorn (1916-1974) was a German politician and critical educator who worked at the University of Kiel, the Jugendheim Pedagogical Institute and the College of Education at Frankfurt am Main.

**DS: So, it seems that the turn of social pedagogy towards the social sciences took place at the same time as the turn towards critical social sciences.**

HT: Yes. Before that time there was not much connection between social pedagogy and social sciences. By the 1970s social pedagogy started to connect to the social sciences, and particularly to critical approaches to social sciences. The Frankfurt School was one of those approaches. It was about a critical rethinking of hermeneutics, which originally was developed in philosophy.

**DS: And all this happened in a period of social upheaval...**

HT: Yes, those were interesting times. It was the end of the Restoration period, which was a conservative period, and the beginning of a new era, not only in Germany but also in many other countries. And here we have a third, important stream in addition to the ones I mentioned before, which was our links with student movements around the world, from Paris to Berkeley to Mexico.

**DS: Thank you for providing this important context. Can you elaborate a little further on the connections between social pedagogy and the Frankfurt School at that time?**

HT: Sure. When Weniger died in the early 1960s, some of his disciples remained alone without the teacher, and that was the moment for a new beginning, to connect what we have learned in that tradition with the more critical tradition. Mollenhauer was one of the leaders of this group. At that time we started to be influenced by the Frankfurt School, not so much with the earlier generation of people like Adorno or Horkheimer<sup>7</sup>, but with the new generation of the Frankfurt School like Habermas. For us, Habermas was the bridge between social sciences and social pedagogy. In the late 1960s there was also the book of Ilse Dahmer and Wolfgang Klafki that discussed the approaches of Weniger and Habermas. Klaus Mollenhauer and I had chapters in that book. Then came Mollenhauer's book on education and emancipation in the late 1960s, and that was another important connection between social pedagogy and the Frankfurt School.

**DS: How was the evolution of social pedagogy in Germany since those years?**

HT: In order to answer this question, I need to clarify that in the German context, we make no difference between social pedagogy and social work. In relation to the practice, we have treated social pedagogy like social work. However, I also need to clarify that in Germany, unlike other countries, social work is not an academic discipline taught in the university. It is taught in the polytechnics. Social pedagogy, on the other side, is generally taught at universities. As you can imagine, this hierarchy has created many discussions that still continue and probably will continue in the future.

**DS: Is social pedagogy also taught in polytechnics?**

HT: Most polytechnics have only social work, and some combine social work and social pedagogy under one single curriculum, under umbrella terms like 'social issues'. To a large extent, this makes sense, because social problems are one, and then we could organize interventions to address those

---

<sup>7</sup> Max Horkheimer (1895-1973) was a German sociologist and philosopher. Theodor Adorno (1903-1969) was a German sociologist, philosopher and musicologist. Both played a very active role in the early phase of the Frankfurt School and collaborated on several important works on critical theory.

problems in terms of family work, community work, counseling, etc. For this reason, in my view the difference between social work and social pedagogy in Germany is meaningless, both in practical work and in academic work. Having said that, it is also true that social work and social pedagogy have different theoretical roots and we were trained in different traditions. I come from social pedagogy, and my classic readings were Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Dewey, and the like. My friend Hans-Uwe Otto, with whom I collaborate, comes from social work. He has a social services orientation and has read more sociological theories dealing with issues related to professionalization, social services, and things like that.



Andreas Walther, Barbara Stauber, Daniel Schugurensky and Hans Thiersch

**DS: You are credited for introducing the lifeworld approach to social pedagogy and social work. Can you say a few words about it?**

HS: In the 1970s there were two main critical camps, the reformists and the radicals, and although the social context has changed, both traditions are still present in Germany today, and the split between them persists. The radical tradition criticizes social work as a servant of capitalism that can only reproduce unequal social relations and prevent revolution. The reformist tradition has been guided by the assumption that our society has a duty to do social work. The argument is that we are a human rights profession in a welfare state society. This tradition argued that the state should provide the resources and that the obligation of social workers was to reform the welfare state and to build a relationship between social pedagogy and social work based on new principles.

**DS: Where were you situated in that debate?**

HT: I was more in the reformist tradition but had some connections to people in the radical camp. We regarded social work as a human rights tradition, and therefore we emphasized social help and social support. In this context, the lifeworld orientation was very important because it argued that we need to start with the problems and the needs of the people and their own interpretation of their

situation in their own situation. We were influenced by people like Siegfried Bernfeld, Ivan Illich and Paulo Freire, and by theories about everyday life like the ones proposed by Erving Goffman, Alfred Schütz, Berger and Luckmann, Habermas and Kosík<sup>8</sup>. In 1978 I published an article on everyday life and social work that was the beginning of this paradigm in social work. It was called 'Everyday life orientation'. My argument was that the 'everyday world' of users of social work services are in between the 'system' and 'everyday life', and that social work institutions are always at risk of colonizing the 'everyday world' like any other system.

**DS: Did you propose an alternative to that?**

HS: My proposal was that our main role was to understand social problems and not to colonize them and that we should immerse ourselves in the places where social problems occur, in the complex realities and not just in theories, in the context of the rules of organizations and institutions that serve them. In short, we should immerse in the complex realities of people's lives, concerns and networks. A lifeworld orientation implies more than intervening in social spaces. The focus is coping with everyday life situations, in routines, and in pragmatic strategies. Indeed, the lifeworld orientation has four dimensions: time, space, social relations and cultural interpretations. The role of the social pedagogue is to help people to critically analyze their problems, reflecting on the social causes of individual problems and to find options for a successful everyday life. The focus is connecting help for the individual with political action in the context of social justice and well-being, while recognizing social and political resources.

**DS: Did your ideas about lifeworld and social work make an impact beyond academia?**

HT: To some extent, I would say yes. In 1990 we prepared a report to the government in which I introduced the concept of everyday life orientation and lifeworld orientation, and eventually this became the main paradigm in social work debates and in the training of social workers. As importantly, also in 1990 a law of youth and welfare that was inspired in the lifeworld approach was passed, and it is still in use today. I am regularly invited by polytechnics to talk about the lifeworld orientation, because this is a central topic in the training of social workers and social pedagogues. I feel very happy about it.

**DS: Have you noted some changes in the ground with the new law?**

HT: Yes, there have been some changes, but we need to put that into the larger context. Since the 1990s, partly due to the passing of the new law, you could observe an approach that has more elements of a lifeworld orientation. In the last decade and a half, many social workers have incorporated a lifeworld approach in their development work, be it in relation to street work, foster care, migrants, gender issues, youth, or seniors. The problem is that, during the same period, we had the ascendance of brutal capitalism and the dominance of market interests, and this led to the terrible financial situation that we have now in many parts of the world. All this came together with the hegemony of neoliberal ideas of the sort advanced by Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher.

**DS: What were the implications of the neoliberal ideology for social work and social pedagogy?**

---

<sup>8</sup> Karel Kosík (1926 – 2003) was a Czech Neomarxist philosopher. His most famous philosophical work is *Dialectics of the Concrete* (1963).

HT: One of the elements of the neoliberal ideology is the victimization of social problems and social needs. Those excluded by the system are labeled as lazy and are deemed unable or unwilling to participate in society. In this context, the state must develop new policies for the activation of people on welfare. People are seen exclusively as human capital that has to be activated, and hence the replacement of welfare policies to workfare policies. The argument is that every person should make an effort to work and contribute economically to society. And this is fine, but the limitation of this approach is that it is based on a debatable logic, which is the individualization of social problems. This approach sees the individual as lazy and weak, and focuses on changing individual's behavior through rewards and punishments.



**DS: How do you see social pedagogy today?**

HT: I think that there are two areas that provide opportunities for renewal. One relates to the main fields of intervention, like family support, youth support, youth education, and the like. The other is to focus on social problems, like migration, crime, delinquency, alcoholism, and the like. We need to understand that community spaces are spaces for social work. At a moment when individualized approaches are privileged, we need to recover the social dimension of social work, and this connects with issues related to infrastructure, resources,

cooperation, civil society agents, self-help groups, volunteers, and other actors. I think that there are three dimensions that require our attention. One is the theoretical dimension. What are the theories that orient our work? For instance, can a lifeworld orientation help us to better understand what is happening, and to do a better job? The second dimension relates to the connection between education and change, that is, to the praxis of an emancipatory education in the Freirean sense. The third dimension relates to issues of professional work and the professionalization of social workers and social pedagogues.

**DS: What are your views on the professionalization issue?**

HT: On the one hand, social workers and social pedagogues should have expertise on certain fields like foster care or counseling. On the other hand, they should be able to work in collaboration with educators, the justice system, the school system, the health system, or the crime prevention system. In this case social work interphases with other tasks and fields. Community work should be done in collaboration with other actors like urban planners, employment services agencies or community police. Social workers are in between them, a sort of transmission belt among these agencies and between agencies and the communities. One of the issues that we see here is the identity and the status of social work and social pedagogy.

**DS: The issue of identity and status is an interesting one. Are there some areas where the role of social pedagogy is more recognized than before?**

HT: One example would be early childhood education, which is part of child and youth welfare, and this is traditionally the field of social pedagogy.

**DS: Is social pedagogy also connected to formal educational institutions like schools in Germany?**



HT: Yes, the relationship between social pedagogy and schools is usually observed through projects. We also have social workers in schools, and this was something that we imported in the 1970s from the U.S. as a field of practice. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century here in Germany we moved from half day schooling to full day schooling, and now there are more connections to social pedagogy via school social workers and youth workers. But then, a question that we can ask ourselves not only in relation to educational institutions but to many other institutions is this: Is this organization a form of lifeworld, or a system to execute rules designed by somebody else?

**DS: What type of lifeworld organizations are you thinking about?**

HT: I am thinking about the creation of new institutions, new types of social organizations. One example would be social economy organizations. This connects to the question of alternative economics, like cooperatives and the like. I find this interesting because here we witness the encounter of the old socialist traditions and the new social movements that are developing creative projects and new experiments. By the way, and this is encouraging, there are more and more social experiments with different groups, like with old people, with sick people, with the unemployed, with the disabled. We could see some of the seeds of these current projects in the community work and the alternative movements of the 1960s and 1970s and the unemployment of the 1980s. Today there are many new creative intergenerational projects, and this is a growing movement that includes a variety of interesting grassroots projects.

**DS: What role does social pedagogy play or could play in this context?**

HT: People are constantly inventing new things, like intentional communities, deciding on new housing models, and social pedagogy sometimes plays a role, and sometimes it could play a role. For social pedagogy, the call to action should be 'go out and experiment'. The role of social pedagogy is to continue working for the rights of the poor, continue working to make a reality the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the rights that are included in national constitutions. Many of these rights are not respected. Our society has a vision, and this vision is based on human rights and the principles adopted in the constitution. The problem is the gap between the vision and the reality, and social pedagogy is one attempt among others to bridge the gap and to claim the rights. This is an ongoing struggle between an economic system that disrespects human dignity, on the one hand, and the project of justice, on the other. The outcome of this struggle is open, and I am anxious to see the end of this conflict. In the meantime, I see no alternative than to do our work every day.

**DS: What type of work?**

HT: Social pedagogy has specific opportunities in working in areas where social justice is denied, where there is poverty, where there is suffering. Social pedagogy sees society from the bottom up, from the problems that our society produces, and it has a specific mandate to insist in bridging the gap between the utopian vision and the reality.

**DS: What do you mean by 'utopian vision'?**

HT: The utopian vision I am talking about is not a pie in the sky, but a utopia grounded in human rights. Moving towards this utopia involves two tasks. The first is to help people in concrete situations, to reduce poverty and suffering, and enable them to improve their lives. The second task is to get involved in the public debates and in the development of a more democratic lifeworld in the workplace, in institutions, in the family, and in the community. The first task is more pedagogical in nature, and the second is more political. Together, the two tasks help people to solve social

problems, to overcome their situations and to develop better life and social conditions. Of course, these tasks should always be carried out with a clear understanding of the context in which we operate.

**DS: How is social pedagogy today undertaking these tasks in the European context?**

HT: In Europe, social pedagogy and social work programs and services are mainly funded by the state, but they are delegated to civil society organizations like faith based organization, the Red Cross, trade unions and other NGOs. These organizations have power, and they could use some of this power to advocate on behalf of the poor. In this context, social pedagogy can have a clearer voice to say what it sees. We have very high unemployment rates, we have asylum seekers dying in front of Lampedusa<sup>9</sup>, we have many social and economic problems, and the political system is unwilling or unable to solve them. The world is burning, and the political parties are not up to the circumstances.

One of the roles of social pedagogy is to say what is going on, to participate in the public debate and bring the insights from the real world to those debates. Unfortunately, social work and social pedagogy are often too quiet. I call this 'the poverty of the clients and the poverty of social work'. As I said before, we have two main tasks: the social and pedagogical task of developing forms, methods and arrangements in community affairs, and the political task of creating public awareness and advocating systemic reforms, and the two should go together.

**DS: This is an interesting point, because often the need for systemic reforms and the frustrations of the day-to-day practice of social pedagogy are connected.**

HT: Exactly. The doctor in the emergency room sees every day the victims of street accidents, and he also sees the problems of traffic rules. On the one hand the doctor has to help the biker who was injured by a car but at the same time knows that the rules of the traffic must be changed to protect the bikers. However, he has a low status and little power to fight the car industry. There is little power, yes, but this not an excuse for not speaking up.

**DS: And you could take this example of the individual doctor to civil society organizations doing social pedagogy work, which also have little relative power compared to big corporations or to the state...**

HT: In most cases the organizations have little power because the funding comes from the state, with which they have a relation of dependency and a system of rewards and punishments. For this reason the aim of social pedagogy is to nurture more autonomy, more self-determination and more organization among marginalized people. For this reason the question of participation is key in social pedagogy. Participation is a way to learn about autonomy and to develop autonomy. Participation is the antidote to the institutional approach that is premised on the colonization of children, youth and families. Participation helps to prevent colonization. Social pedagogy has developed many forms of participation based on talking to each other and working together. Instead of managing people through discipline, social pedagogy should enable people to develop collective solutions of social problems. It is about nurturing responsibility and political participation. At the same time, we need to be pragmatic and realistic in term of the possibilities and limits of our work.

---

<sup>9</sup> A few weeks prior to this interview, over 350 African migrants died when their boats sank in front of the Italian island of Lampedusa.

**DS: For instance?**

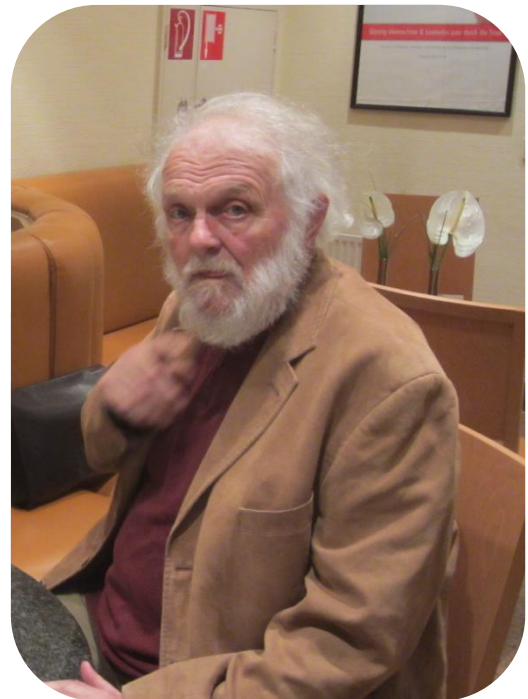
HT: For instance, let's consider the issue of unemployment. I am saying that we need to be pragmatic and realistic because social workers cannot produce jobs for their clients. Social work is not Lehman Brothers. It is true that we can help to create some jobs in the social economy, but those efforts cannot change the dynamics of the market. Having said that, there is no reason to despair. Change takes time and requires daily work.

**DS: As we approach the final part of our conversation, could you share some of the lessons you have learned through your multiple experiences?**

HT: Most of my main ideas on social pedagogy came from my life experiences with my family, friends and colleagues, and from my experiences with foster care and foster work helping organizations, particularly organizations dealing with drug addictions. There is too much authoritarianism in our institutions. I lived that for many years, because I was in the board of directors of a social care institution for 30 years and worked as a supervisor in social care institutions. It took me some time to learn to become less authoritarian. Also important were my experiences with students. The university tends to disrespect students.

**DS: How was that process of learning to become less authoritarian?**

HT: I learned a lot from discussing with students their projects in their practice placements. I learned from many great projects at the community level. The main learning was to respect people and their particular way of being, thinking and acting. The other learning was to fear the power of social pedagogy to colonize the other and to fear a distrust of people's capacities. Yes, probably the most important learning was to trust the capacities of the people and to believe in the possibilities of human beings. As Ernst Bloch used to say, people are in love with hope and not with failure. I am aware that it may sound cynical to talk about hope in today's world, with all the inequalities that exist, but we have no alternative but to hope.

**DS: To hope even in a context of despair?**

HT: Yes, even in a context of despair. In addition to large inequalities, today's society is characterized by higher levels of individualization and by a loss of solidarity, and sometimes social work and social pedagogy align with this world, and this is not good. At the same time, alternative forms of living are emerging, and they need new forms of support. Social pedagogy cannot stagnate. We need to develop new institutions and professional competencies to prepare social pedagogues to do their work. We need to do better work in the field, and we need to refine the theories that orient that work. We need time and opportunities to reflect and to discuss opportunities. We need to discuss standards of justice in different parts of the world. Social pedagogy alone cannot solve all the world problems, cannot address all the individual problems of people and cannot eliminate the fact of pain,

but it can be there to help. The task of social pedagogy is to develop small steps to be together with people in despair and not let them be alone. It is a long process, but a necessary one.

### *Acknowledgements*

Hans Thiersch and I want to thank Professor Barbara Stauber (University of Tübingen) and Professor Andreas Walther (University of Frankfurt) for helping us with the English-German interpretation during our conversation. Both Barbara and Andreas did their doctoral dissertations under the guidance of Hans Thiersch.

For further readings, see Thiersch, H. & Grunwald, K. (2009). The Concept of the 'lifeworld orientation' for social work and social care. *Journal of Social Work Practice*, 23(2). In German, see Otto, H.-U. & Thiersch, H. (2011, eds.). *Handbuch Sozialpädagogik/Sozialarbeit*. Munich: Reinhard-Verlag.

\*\*\*

\* **Daniel Schugurensky** is the coordinator of the Social and Cultural Pedagogy Program at Arizona State University (ASU), where he is a professor in the School of Public Affairs and the School of Social Transformation. Before coming to ASU, he was the coordinator of the Adult Education and Community Development Program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) at the University of Toronto. Among his recent publications are *Volunteers for democracy: informal learning through participatory budgeting* (2013), *Social pedagogy: historical traditions and transnational connections* (2013), *Volunteer work and informal learning: a conceptual discussion* (2013), and *Paulo Freire* (2011).

*Correspondence to: D. Schugurensky, Arizona State University, School of Social Transformation, P.O. Box 876403, Tempe, AZ 85287-6403, USA. Email: dschugur@asu.edu*