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## Research article

# Social pedagogy in transnational translations: the settlement house approach in the transatlantic discourse on national social reforms

Stefan Köngeter<sup>1,\*</sup> 

<sup>1</sup> School of Social Work, Eastern Switzerland University of Applied Sciences, Switzerland

\* Correspondence: stefan.koengeter@ost.ch

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## Abstract

A new interest in social pedagogy has arisen internationally since the beginning of the twenty-first century. This new development is accompanied with considerations on how to translate abstract notions such as social pedagogy to fit new social contexts. The umbrella term 'social professions' helps to gain an international and transnational outlook, as it does not solely focus on a single profession that has become dominant in the social sector of a single nation state. This article aims to show that there are important interconnections in the histories of social professions in the various nation states which have influenced both social work and social pedagogy. Instead of focusing on the distinctions between the various social professions, this approach aims to reveal the boundary objects which have facilitated the links between the different developments without causing the social professions to become homogeneous. During the progressive era in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there was a transatlantic discourse that influenced those professions' further development. It is argued specifically that the settlement house movement and its understanding of and work with the community

affected the development of social pedagogy, as these ideas and practices were adapted to comply with the changing face of social pedagogy in the second decade of the twentieth century.

**Keywords** social pedagogy; social work; social professions; settlement house movement; community; transnationalism; progressive era; translation; boundary object

## Social pedagogy and the social professions

A new interest in social pedagogy has arisen internationally since the beginning of the twenty-first century. We now have the *International Journal of Social Pedagogy*, the UK-based Social Pedagogy Professional Association (SSPA), the Social Pedagogy Association, which mainly comprises members in the Americas, and a new initiative to establish a global alliance for social pedagogy. This new development is accompanied by considerations on how to translate an abstract notion such as social pedagogy to fit new social contexts. Walter Lorenz (2008), a leading expert in both social work and social pedagogy, demands historical reflexivity on the content–context relationship in which social pedagogy emerged as a theory, a field of action and a collection of methods. His starting point is pivotal for the argument below; he contends that ‘the social professions in Europe overall have their origins in the fundamental transformation processes that confronted societies with the advent of industrialization and the political revolutions that replaced feudalism with political systems based on democratic procedures’ (Lorenz, 2008, p. 628).

The umbrella term ‘social professions’ helps to gain an international and transnational outlook that prevents methodological nationalism (Köngeter, 2009) as it does not solely focus on a single profession that has become dominant in the social sector. Furthermore, it can reveal the changing meaning of the ‘nation’ as one of the important cornerstones for the development of national welfare systems. Research on welfare systems often focuses on the path dependence of variations in welfare systems (Kaufmann, 2003), but historical research also reveals the important transnational dimension of these developments (Abbott and DeViney, 1992; Rodgers, 1998). It is thus important not only to focus on the last 20 years but also to consider the history of social reform and its relationship with social pedagogy and social work, starting back in the mid-nineteenth century.

Adopting a *transnational perspective*, it is important to take the nation-specific context into account to understand both social pedagogy and its transnational interconnections in the era of reform in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This period spawned many different social reform processes, including the establishment of new social professions, the emergence of nation states as welfare states and a new, belligerent form of competition among nation states. Taking that context into consideration can reveal important historical interconnections between the histories of social professions across the various nation states.

This article is based on extensive archival research, particularly on the transnational history of the so-called settlement house movement, which emerged in the 1880s in London and was quickly embraced and adopted both in continental Europe and in the USA (Köngeter, 2020). Instead of focusing on the distinctions between the various social professions such as social work and social pedagogy, this kind of historical approach aims to reveal the boundary objects (Star and Griesemer, 1989) which facilitated the *translation* of reform movements, such as the settlement house movement, without causing the social professions and national traditions to become homogeneous.

Against the background of theories of translation (Steiner, 1992), it can be shown that social pedagogy embraced important insights from the settlement house movement, one major contributor to the establishment of social work as a profession in English-speaking countries during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The ideas behind the settlement houses were built into the changing face of social pedagogy in the second decade of the twentieth century. It is therefore argued that an investigation should be made into the roots of social pedagogy that goes beyond the German-speaking sphere and focuses more on the transnational translations of the social professions across time and space.

## Social pedagogy in transnational translation

We live in a transnationalising world that is shaped by constant translation across time and space. Translation is no longer seen only as a linguistic practice; now it is viewed as a form of social and cultural action that constantly negotiates boundaries between different social worlds with their own characteristic ways of thinking, doing and knowing. The new discourse on translation shows that it does not search for an expression in a new language that creates something identical, but seeks to understand and negotiate meaning in a new language (Eco, 2006). It is not possible to copy the original: we have to create something new. This applies not only to translating texts but also, particularly, to cultural translation (Buden, Nowotny, Simon, Bery and Cronin, 2009). Cultural translation produces a new order that promises to correspond to the original order, but also reflects the boundaries of the two or more social worlds (Köngeter and Engel, 2019; Schmitz, Köngeter and Lau, 2019; Trans|Wissen, 2020). Translation problems of this kind occur when attempting to translate social pedagogy to other social worlds with no previous history of the notion. Similar translation problems occur when trying to understand the changing meaning of social pedagogy over time. As George Steiner (1992) emphasises, every act of understanding throughout history has involved translation. The problem is that terms used in the past seem to be identical, but the entire historical context has changed, meaning that we are confronted with an illusion of understanding. Diachronic translation (between texts from different times, often in the same language) is therefore as challenging as translation between different social worlds (in different places, often between different languages). Both kinds of translation take place when it comes to the question of transnationalising and internationalising social pedagogy.

Florian Eßer (2019) analysed the strategies used to introduce social pedagogy to readerships not familiar with the tradition in social professions. He identified three typical steps. First, we find references to classic works of social pedagogy: Karl Mager, Adolph Diesterweg, Paul Natorp and Johann-Heinrich Pestalozzi are considered to be the founding fathers of social pedagogy. Making reference to such well-known thinkers is a strategy for legitimisation in a country that is not familiar with social pedagogy. Second, authors typically search for kindred approaches in those countries, connecting that national context with the social pedagogy tradition from abroad. Third, challenges and opportunities are identified for further development in the new national context. Usually, it is emphasised that adaptation to that context is necessary. Eßer's analysis reveals that these transnational practices combine translation across time and space. To legitimise the introduction of social pedagogy in a new social context, these authors rely on the authenticity, authority and charisma of historical figures in social pedagogy. At the same time, the adaptation seems to be necessary, as the modern context differs from that in which the classic thinkers developed their ideas. This approach, however, is based on a normative idea of 'translation proper' – an understanding of translation that involves reproducing the same meaning in a different medium or language. As explained above, new theories of translation emphasise that translation is not copying, but creating something new that is related in certain ways to the object that is translated. The 'translation proper' idea neglects the context as something invariable or natural, as well as the world-making meaning of words. Words are used to promote changes in worlds, and worlds change the meaning of words to make them useful in their environment: 'Words offer special insight into the remaking of worlds at different scales because they condense past motion in their material form' (Tsing, 2009, p. 11).

This is important with respect to the notion of social pedagogy. If we see the term 'social' not from a perspective of sociology or social theory, but as an empirical phenomenon and a highly contested term in a political arena, then it is evident that we must investigate the changing meaning of the social, and what is related to this idea of the social. The analysis by Eßer (2019) and the insights offered by new theories of translation reveal that the social context is often related to the idea of the nation. This is the reference point for many of those attempting to translate social pedagogy across time and space. Transnational translations activate our understanding and our desire of the nation as it should be. Benedict Anderson (1983) identified the nation as an imagined community. It is precisely this idea of the nation that can be perceived in such translations. The nation is still one of the most powerful concepts in the political arena that shapes our understanding of these social professions and their political role. There is a need to better understand the role of such notions to understand the world-making that takes place when social pedagogy is translated.

## Social pedagogy in translation across time

The historiography of social pedagogy in Germany has changed our perspective on the emergence of social pedagogical ideas, theories and practices since the beginning of the twenty-first century. Particularly, research on the developments that took place during the nineteenth century has revealed that they were interconnected with the question of how to educate citizens in a profoundly changing society that was yielding new forms of economics and government (Tröhler, 2007). In the wake of the French Revolution and an emerging discourse on new forms of political participation, the German discourse on social pedagogy emphasised an education designed to harmonise the relationship between the individual and society. Education for the community and the nation-to-be was the goal for theorists of social pedagogy such as Paul Natorp. Class conflicts were to be settled by an educated community. In that context, the idea of a 'citoyen', a citizen that transcends the boundaries of the nation and the nation states, had no place in the social pedagogy theory of the nineteenth century (Henseler, 2007). That changed when social reforms leading to a modern welfare state began to be discussed and implemented in Germany. Social pedagogy was then seen as an integral part of that development intended to curb the destructive tendencies of industrial capitalism with its class conflicts and the marginalisation and pauperisation of large parts of society (Böhnisch and Schröer, 2007). A broad network of social reformers with various disciplinary, national and ideological backgrounds cultivated an exchange across national boundaries (Rodgers, 1998) that involved different social movements, for example women's movements (Rowbotham, 2010).

As a result, social pedagogy appeared as one of many approaches in the progressive era. The new fields of practice in this arena of social reform emerged against the background of new academic disciplines and discourses. This can be identified as a highly volatile situation involving new social professions that claimed or abandoned different 'turfs' (Abbott, 1995). Social pedagogy was successful in claiming certain aspects of these new fields by developing a down-to-earth understanding of a discipline and a profession as reflected in the much-criticised definition by Gertrud Bäumer (1929), who described it as all sorts and forms of education outside the school and family. Bäumer also located this new field of action in the larger developments of social reform and social policy, and made social pedagogy compatible with the transatlantic discourse on social reform.

The embeddedness of social pedagogy in transnational social reform networks, on the one hand, and its role in the emergence of country-specific social reform developments, on the other, must be considered in the historiography of social pedagogy. The transatlantic reform networks sparked a broad discourse about social and democratic reforms, about the idea of the nation and international collaboration, about the meaning of citizens, of communities, of education, of solidarity and so on. This is important not only for the German discourse on social pedagogy, which is very much focused on the national *Sonderweg* of social pedagogy, but also for the international discourse on social pedagogy. It opens up the discussion on social pedagogy to include traditions and ideas that have influenced the development of social professions across national boundaries.

One of the many transnationally cross-cutting notions in the history of social professions is the term 'community', which translates into various German words, including *Gemeinwesen*, which provided the name of the field of community organising or community work. However, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the term *Gemeinschaft* (community) was more important as it was used in opposition to the term *Gesellschaft* (society), a contrast that was, among other things, important for the discourse within social pedagogy (Dollinger, 2006, 2010).

## Community in the transnational settlement house movement

Friedrich Siegmund-Schultze was one of the protagonists of the settlement house movement in Germany. An honorary professor of social pedagogy at the University of Berlin in 1925, he was forced to leave Nazi Germany in 1933. Returning after 1945, he was offered a chair in social pedagogy at Humboldt University in 1946, but refused and eventually took up another honorary professorship at the University of Münster in 1947. Siegmund-Schultze's (1990) theory of social pedagogy was built on the ideas of Paul Natorp (1907) and centred on the relationship between the individual and the community: social pedagogy is (1) educating the individual to act properly within a community, (2) educating the community to act properly towards the individual and (3) educating communities to act properly with one other.

Whereas Siegmund-Schultze sees an overlap in the first task with what he calls individual pedagogy, he claims that the latter two tasks are key to social pedagogy. This definition is strongly influenced by the ideas and practices within the settlement house movement and by Natorp's idea of social pedagogy. In the following, these different translations of the settlement house idea and how its understanding of community changed as it moved through different (social) spaces will be delved into.

The settlement house movement is considered one of the main roots of professional social work in the UK and the USA. The starting point for this movement was the social segregation during the nineteenth century that was highly visible and problematic in urban agglomerations. Since the mid-nineteenth century, the divide in society had been condemned by members of the bourgeoisie, such as Adele Schreiber, an Austrian feminist and politician. Pouring scorn on the ignorant bourgeoisie, she recapitulates the beginnings of the settlement house movement in London:

In the seventh and eighth decades of the old century, London was gripped by 'slum fever'. This was not a malignant disease spreading from the overpopulated, dirty streets of the East, the so-called 'slums', into the capital city, but instead a sudden, feverish interest on the part of the educated in getting to know the long-ignored dens of poverty, as if they were a completely new discovery rather than something long in existence that had evolved gradually, over a period of decades. (Schreiber, 1904, p. 1<sup>1</sup>)

This 'slum fever' developed into criticism of giving alms without targeting the roots of slum-dwellers' pauperisation. In contrast to the more systematic approach of casework that was developed within the Charity Organization Societies, the settlement house movement emphasised that there was a problem in society and the conflicting groups or classes within it. The Bourgeois protagonists of the settlement house movement believed it necessary to bridge the gap between the poor and the workers on the one hand, and the prospering bourgeoisie on the other. This led to the idea of establishing settlements of so-called educated people (Picht, 1913) in these city districts, who would come into contact with the workers and the poor as 'neighbours', get to understand them better, offer educational opportunities and thus counteract the social divide. One of the founding declarations of the settlement house movement was a lecture by Canon Samuel Barnett, who, along with his wife Henrietta Barnett, founded the first settlement house, Toynbee Hall, in 1884.<sup>2</sup> Barnett delivered this speech to a group of young men at St John's College, Oxford, in 1883, in which he motivated his audience to move to London. His main argument clearly shows the link between social criticism and social work that is typical of the settlement house movement:

Many have been the schemes of reform I have known, but, out of eleven years' experience, I would say that none touches the root of the evil which does not bring helper and helped into friendly relations ... Not until the habits of the rich are changed, and they are again content to breathe the same air and walk the same streets as the poor, will East London be 'saved'. Meantime a Settlement of University men will do a little to remove the inequalities of life, as the settlers share their best with the poor and learn through feeling how they live. (Barnett, 1915, pp. 104–5)

Numerous settlement houses were established in England and USA on the model of Toynbee Hall (Davis, 1967). Particularly in the USA, the settlement house movement evolved quantitatively and qualitatively into a constitutive factor within the social professions.

The historiography of the settlement house movement focused for a long time on the UK and US tradition and tried to differentiate between the 'national' traditions within the settlement house movement. The UK approach of settlement houses was thought to focus on the education of the bourgeoisie and the labourers in order to overcome the gap between the classes. The US settlement house movement, in contrast, was seen as one focusing on social reforms as a means of changing policies and legislation. Until recently, little attention has been paid to how the settlement idea was translated to other European countries and worldwide (see Köngeter, 2020).

This methodological nationalism in historiography has its roots in the narratives of the contemporary protagonists contributing to the notion of national pathways. George H. Mead (1907–8), the Chicago-based sociologist and close ally of the social settlement movement, wrote:

It is an interesting fact that settlements have flourished only where there has been a real democracy. Neither France, with its layers of society, its social castes, nor Germany, with

its fundamental assumption that the control of society must take place from above through highly trained bureaus, have offered favorable soil for the growth of settlements. In France it is mutually impossible for men in different social groups to domesticate in other groups. In Germany nobody out of his own immediate milieu undertaking to enter into relations with others is at ease unless he has on a uniform indicating by what right he seeks information, gives advice, or renders assistance. (pp. 108–9)

These statements are based not so much on sociological analyses as on notions of national communities. We can find such arguments on both sides of the Atlantic. One of the experts best acquainted with the settlement house movement was Alix Westerkamp, one of the first women in Germany with a PhD in law and a forgotten pioneer of social work and social pedagogy. She visited the Chicago Commons (one of the well-known settlements in the USA) in the 1910s and stated in a letter to a friend in Germany:

It is unbelievably different to Germany – life in the street, in the tram, in the train, in assemblies, in public buildings. The people are, to quote your Christmas sermon, '*fellow passengers*', not just at Christmas, but all year round. The wonderful words of the Declaration of Independence, '*that all men are created equal*' – they are not literally fulfilled, just as they are not intended to be understood literally, but they are *at least somewhat of a reality here*. The differences are there – differences in wealth, in education, in social position, and many others, just like in our country, but in everyday life those who are at a disadvantage are not constantly reminded of it. (Westerkamp, 1917–19, IV, p. 120, quotations in italics are in English in the original letter)

From a historiographical perspective, these statements should not be interpreted as an accurate statement on the reality in the nation states and how they caused different developments in the settlement house movement in the respective nation states. Instead, these explanations are an expression of nations as imagined communities (Anderson, 1983). The 'nations' and their supposed characteristics are not the cause, but the effect of such narratives (Bhabha, 2006). They are expressions of a disagreement on what 'the nation' is supposed to be and how the settlement house movement contributes to these national developments. Since the settlement house movement originated in the social diagnosis of a divided society, the aim of bringing the nation together again clearly needs this kind of concept of the nation as a community. Examining the history of social pedagogy and social work from a transnational angle, we can understand how these new social professions and social movements perceived the nation as something that had to be transformed into a better community.

## The settlement house movement in the transatlantic dialogue on social reforms

The settlement house movement is considered to be an integral part of the history of social work. However, when the first settlement houses came into being in the 1880s and 1890s, neither the term 'social work', nor the profession, nor the academic discipline were in existence. The term 'social work' only gained currency in the 1910s, as James Leiby (1985) has shown. The fields of practice it comprises were called 'philanthropy', 'charities' and 'correction', and the actors who promoted these activities were typically connected in social movements such as the settlement house movement, Christian socialist movements, women's movements and so on.

Dayana Lau (2019) analysed how such social movements contributed to the formation of social work as a profession. At the turn of the twentieth century, we had a broad range of transnationally interconnected social movements. Daniel Rodgers (1998) shows in his encompassing history of the progressive era that many of the protagonists of US social reform were influenced by the developments in the UK and Germany. In particular, the Verein für Socialpolitik, the association for social policy established in 1873 in Germany, was a hub for reform-oriented scholars and activists. This association opposed the laissez-faire policy of Manchester capitalism and sought an alternative to the revolutionary socialist movements. Gustav Schmoller, who led the association between 1890 and 1917, promoted its main idea of lifting up, educating and pacifying the lower classes to the extent that they could be integrated into the existing social order, an idea which clearly resembles what the settlement approach stands for.

There are several protagonists of the settlement house movement who had close contact with social scientists and their ideas in continental Europe. Two, in particular, stand out. First is Stanton Coit,

who established the first settlement house in the USA in 1886. Coit was a student of Felix Adler, the founder of the New Yorker Society for Ethical Culture and later a professor at Columbia University. Adler motivated Coit to go to Germany and study at Humboldt University. His further trips also led him to the UK, where he visited Toynbee Hall. He finally founded the Neighborhood Guild in New York, which aimed to establish networks for the labouring class. A second of continental Europe's influence on the transnational settlement house movement is Florence Kelley, a later member of Hull House. She studied in Europe, had close connections to Germany, Switzerland and the UK, and brought many reform ideas to the USA. She translated Friedrich Engels' study on the working class in England, developed one of the first social surveys in the USA – the Hull House Maps and Papers – and had a lasting influence on the development of US social policy (Sklar, 1995). There are, of course, far more stories of settlement protagonists who were inspired by social reform ideas in continental Europe. It is important to see that although the settlement house approach was initiated in the UK, its further development was influenced in a transnational arena of social reform movements in which the German discourse on social policy played an important role (Rodgers, 1998).

## The German translation of the settlement house approach and its meaning for social pedagogy

Germany observed the reform developments in the UK in the nineteenth century very closely. The establishment of Toynbee Hall, for example, was an important event that was discussed seriously. Although it was only founded in 1884, Gerhart von Schulze-Gaevernitz (1887) carried out a relatively long and thorough analysis of this reform approach as early as 1887. From then on, reviews of the settlement idea were published on a regular basis, for example by Alice Salomon, who supported it strongly (Salomon, 1901a, 1901b, 1913, 1914; see also Wietschorke, 2013).

There were only a few settlement houses in Germany, most of which were based on the models of the Hamburger Volksheim, established in 1901 by Walter Classen, and the Soziale Arbeitsgemeinschaft Berlin-Ost (East Berlin Social Working Group), established in 1912 by Friedrich Siegmund-Schultze. Within this network of social reformers who promoted the settlement house idea in Germany, we can identify different interpretations of the settlement idea and its understanding of the nation as a community.

Friedrich Siegmund-Schultze presents these individuals' work as a continuation of the construction of the problem that emerged in Barnett's speech to students in Oxford. He assumes that there are profound 'antagonisms' which 'have gradually reintensified' (Siegmund-Schultze, 1917, p. 2), by which he means the confrontation between the working classes and 'ruling classes' (Siegmund-Schultze, 1917, p. 2). In an unpublished pamphlet, he puts a new slant on Benjamin Disraeli's (1845) metaphor of the 'two nations', speaking of two peoples who are irreconcilably opposed in Germany, 'who do not know or understand each other, who indeed hate each other, and wage war on each other more fiercely than two enemy nations' (Siegmund-Schultze, n.d., p. 1). He therefore sees the main task of settlement work as overcoming this division and bringing about a reconciliation of the hostile 'brothers' (Siegmund-Schultze, n.d.). He highlights a specific aspect of settlement work: the creation of a working group as a community of experience and support. He does not put his faith solely in the social education of the individual: his ultimate concern is the fundamental relationship between different groups within a society, as described above in his definition of social pedagogy. His idea of the settlement concept followed the Christian interpretation of a morally educated community.

Alix Westerkamp is one of the hidden figures of the settlement house movement. After studying law, she became the head of the central German youth welfare office. However, during a visit to the settlement house in Chicago, she had a personal crisis and finally decided to join the East Berlin Social Working Group. She describes settlement work and the settlement house movement not as a method for solving particular social problems, but as a movement which sees itself as embedded in a general political development and concerned with the pursuit of social and political goals. Although she describes the settlement work in the Chicago Commons in a few of her letters, she concentrates mostly on the political and social developments in Chicago and the USA. She regards the settlement house movement as a crucial means of promoting reforms, especially at a national level. Even when she deals with the subject of the political and social setting of Chicago, recounting the events after Ella Flagg-Young was voted out of her position as chair of the Board of Education, she eventually turns to the socio-political culture in the USA in its entirety. Westerkamp sketches a picture of a settlement house movement which, almost as a

matter of course, pursues the goal of instigating political and social reform in the context of a particular nation state, in this case the USA. In sum, her letters describe a reform movement that is situated in a neighbourhood but is ultimately concerned with the nation. Two conceptions of the nation dominate her reports. First, her passionate account of the feelings of guilt and depression in her thoughts about the class conflict in Germany reveals her view of the nation as a moral community. Second, it shows that the settlement house movement aspired to become the nucleus of a political community. This second point in fact encompasses the first, since Westerkamp considers a political approach a suitable means of overcoming, or at least lessening, the moral disparities within the nation.

The settlement approach took a socialist turn under Carl Mennicke, an early member of the East Berlin Social Working Group, who later established his own version of the group in the north of the city. Mennicke reported on people's suffering, which he saw as the motivation for finding a new way of life, and understood the establishment of his settlements as a step on the path to creating a socialist society. He believed that the community-destroying power of industrial capitalism and everyday poverty meant the socialist way of life needed to be seen as pedagogy's key task; a means of helping people in the communities find self-esteem. In his study on the social pedagogical problem of contemporary society, Mennicke (1926) lamented the breakdown of cultural unity and religious consciousness, a process he believed would cause the downfall of society and shared values. Mennicke believed that the social pedagogical problem had emerged alongside economic developments over the previous two centuries. In his view, modern society was characterised by an erosion of religious awareness, deep political antagonism and the transformation of the family to a consumer community. The lack of common cultural bonds was the main source of the awkward position social pedagogy found itself in, which he highlighted in the question: How can we teach the younger generation to take part in society when society is about to dissolve? Social pedagogy, he argued, therefore had the task of creating groups to help the younger generation gain new experiences of social life and forms of community that had been lost over the previous decades. In his perspective, social pedagogy was oriented towards a political community that was about to erode and therefore needed to be revived.

## Conclusion

This analysis of the history of social pedagogy has revealed several overlapping translations of social pedagogical ideas, theories and practices across time and space. We can only understand social pedagogy properly if we see the transnational discourse on social reform in which it emerged, in the context of and in contrast with the approaches observed in other countries. On the one hand, the settlement house movement, with its focus on education and social reforms, was influenced by the ideas of *Socialpolitik* and welfare policy in continental Europe, particularly Germany. On the other, it was an important reference point for social pedagogy theory and practice in Germany. The notion of community and the nation became an important boundary object (Star and Griesemer, 1989) that helped transcend national boundaries without ironing out the differences in how each country imagined a nation and a community. We can identify a network of interconnected stances leading towards the development of social professions. Social pedagogy is the name given to an important sector of that network that is linked to positions adopted within and beyond national boundaries.

In the first half of the twentieth century, nations not only clashed on the battlegrounds of two World Wars, but also vied to find better solutions to the social question by introducing social reforms and establishing welfare states. However, the national context is not primarily an explanatory factor; rather, the nation was a notion that legitimised the aims and interventions of the social professions. The social professions became crutches for nations in crisis; for imagined communities that had to be rescued and rebuilt. As Thomas Popkewitz (2020) put it,

The knowledge generated in the educational sciences 'acted' as the modern oracle that decoded and recoded social affairs in the production of kinds of people who could act with agency – that kind of person described the citizen ... In the social and psychological sciences, this constructions of society and individuality and nation formed the citizen as a kind of person and the boundaries in which agency operated. (p. 62)

The discipline of social pedagogy was part of a knowledge system that constantly repeated the story of a crisis in society that could only be solved by modern social sciences and social professions. Social



pedagogy was successful in pushing education and community to the forefront of such discourses on reform. However, these ideas were variously influenced by and enmeshed with other social reform networks in other countries. Those networks were established and maintained by multiple, simultaneous translations across space and time.

One effect of those translations is the retrospective nationalisation of certain social reform approaches and discourses. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, we started a new translation of social pedagogy across space by promoting the internationalisation of the discipline. We should not repeat the mistakes of the past to design traditions of social professions which are mainly based on favourable imaginations on how nations should be. Instead, we should explore inspiring interconnections, forgotten stories and marginalised positions in a power-laden arena of social professions to identify innovative ideas for the future of the social professions.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Translations from the German are the author's own.

<sup>2</sup>The name derives from Arnold Toynbee, an English economic historian who moved to Whitechapel, East London, to help improve the living conditions there. He died in 1883.

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