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Book Reviews

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organisations. Chapter 5 considers *Community development, education and the Hantam Community Education Trust*, followed by Chapter 6 about *Community development, community cohesion and the Nelson Mandela Foundation*, Chapter 7 on *Community economic development and Abalimi home and community garden movement*, Chapter 8 on *Community development, political practice and the Southern Cape Land Committee*, and Chapter 9 on *Community development, the 'craft' of community-based education and training and the YMCA*. This third part concludes with an *Interlude* discussion on *The process of community development: In dialogue with Es'kia*, (Mphahlele Es'kia, who has written extensively about African families and community development); the author explores the influence of Es'kia's view that community development activity should be developed and led by communities themselves, rather than by external powerbrokers. In Part 4, *Exploring state-led community development*, Chapter 10 discusses the *Dilemmas of South Africa's state employed community development workers*, followed by Chapter 11 on *Community development and cooperative development within South Africa*, and Chapter 12 on *Training of community development workers within South Africa*. The book ends with a *Conclusion* that sums up the book's arguments.

Although the content of the book is intended for practitioners and policy-makers, its scholarly academic style sometimes obscures the practice wisdom it wishes to communicate. I wished the author had not used 'the poor' as a designation but instead had used 'poor people'. This is a book with an important message about the benefit of particular kinds of community development initiatives. The book's specificity to South African community development initiatives may obscure its applicability to other countries and societies. It is a matter of regret to me that in the UK, for example, community development is not widely practised. The message of the book should be relevant to social work practice, but much depends on the prevalence and status of community development in other countries and whether it forms part of the social work curriculum. I found this to be a carefully written detailed book that reflects the author's wish to disseminate contemporary practice in community development to a wider audience. The book would be difficult to read through in a single sitting, but its chapters can be scrutinised, considered, and reconsidered as situations require.

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**Le Travail Social entre Résistance et Innovation. Soziale Arbeit zwischen Widerstand und Innovation**, edited by Sabine Voelin, Miryam Eser Davolio and Mathias Lindenau, Geneva, IES & Lucerne, Interact, 2014, 386 pp., ISBN 978-2-88224-097-2, 978-3-906413-98-3

This is a complex book, with 34 chapters in either French or German, each prefaced in the other language. It is a selection from a conference held in Geneva in March 2010, with contributions not only from Switzerland, France and Germany, but also from Belgium and Canada. The overall aim is to report the reaction of social work

practitioners, researchers and teachers to the constraints imposed by the philosophy of New Public Management. It is suggested that this has provoked resistance in some areas, but also innovations in practice. There is general acceptance of the importance of including vulnerable people in society, but also acknowledgement that social work practice has often failed to live up to its theoretical claims, because of financial and managerial constraints. The central question is how the profession of social work can find an autonomous position in such a world.

In the nature of conference reports, the book is a miscellany, with no overall argument, and variable content. There are 48 authors in all; the chapters are not numbered and there is no index. These factors add to the challenge—to Anglophones at least—of the chapters in German, which are primarily theoretical and linguistically complex. The book is divided into five sections as follows:

- The place and role of social work in democratic society
- Social work and the evolution of public policies
- Social work faced with the risks of instability
- Approaches and processes of professional practice
- Rethinking contemporary research in the field of social work

Part I draws attention to the fact that social work is now in a situation where:

les logiques marchandes, les critères propres à l'entreprise se confrontent à des principes de l'ordre du don et du care, and for which there needs to be fresh negotiation about: 'les interactions entre le pouvoir institutionnel, le savoir universitaire et le savoir pratique.

Voélin sets the scene, describing the present context as one in which the consumer enjoys cheap prices, but at the expense of poor countries, where economic lobbies are able to paralyse the political process, where 'inclusion' depends on access to work, and qualifications have been exchanged for 'competences' and where it is assumed that there will be supernumerary people, but where their problems are defined in individual terms. In this double bind, social work is reduced to 'evaluation' of individuals, which often excludes interpersonal dimensions.

Another chapter in Part I reports research (Tabin, Frauenfelder, Togni, & Keller 2008), showing that those who receive social assistance are not placed there by bad luck or personal deficits, but by membership of certain social groups: especially single mothers, young people, foreigners, and people who are sick, unemployed or poorly educated. The German contributions place significant emphasis on the effects of globalisation and digital capitalism on the population as a whole, chiefly through the precariousness of the labour market and its consequent effect on all levels of working society. Migration and uprootedness are also identified as causes of exclusion. The problems of creating autonomy of action in social work are analysed: the profession has been subject to changes that it did not initiate, which have led to loss of power, decentralisation, merchandising of intervention, managerial rationale, ad hoc solutions and the individualising of intervention. The social work field, unified only in the 1970s, has disintegrated, with a multiplicity of posts, with various titles, occupied by people of different backgrounds and competences. It has also been divided by horizontal specialisms, such as family care or adult care. Working conditions have also been degraded. Social work does not control its own training nor

entry to the profession. Social workers are frustrated at being disregarded by political institutions whose aim is rationalisation and efficiency, as opposed to the democratic values of inclusion and redistributive justice.

Part II deals with the development of public policy. It is argued that social work has proved ineffectual in increasing social justice, and needs to pay more attention to this, and that it requires finding new ways to professionalise its engagement in political action. One chapter describes how the paradigm of social services has changed in France, with social workers being subjected to norms, procedures and protocols, which reduce their room for discretion, and reduce their role to that of broker. This has led to a growing resistance movement since 2000, with several regroupings, such as *MP4-champ social*. Their manifesto, issued in 2009, is cited in full (pp. 146–148). In Switzerland, there have been similar processes, in which public services have been replaced by individual contracts, evaluated by social services and where clients are subject to sanctions if they do not fulfil the contracts. Some 15 new job titles have appeared (e.g. ‘*intervenant en protection de l’enfance*’), each of which has a narrow focus, and no one has an overview or a critical stance.

Part III addresses specific social problems: long-term unemployment, street children, burnout and employment of people with handicaps. Superficially, this section of the book turns the argument on its head, proposing that there is a need to avoid socio-economic solutions, and to emphasise individual ones. In relation to employment, this is expressed as a change from ‘placement’ to ‘accompagnement’, such as support when young people have not had opportunities in earlier life. It is argued that social work should play a more active and better-defined role in industry. In relation to street children it involves recognition of the street as a place where people can find themselves in a ‘*détour par la marge*’, which allows them to form fictive families, and find discipline, adventure and creativity. It is, however, recognised that for some people the street can lead to self-negation. The theme of creative fiction recurs in an interesting discussion about the concept of social distance, which has to be negotiated by social workers in a ‘transitional space’ where there is a great deal of ambiguity. Social workers are seen as ‘*passeurs*’ (meaning ferrymen or smugglers?), and use metaphor to sidestep too much clarity.

Part IV presents some positive examples of current practice. It discusses the aims and dilemmas of certain professional activities: a day centre for adolescents, drugs policy in Switzerland, neighbourhood contracts and artistic workshops. Swiss drugs policy has moved from criminalising users, or regarding them as sick, to harm reduction, which recognises their right to use drugs, but seeks to minimise risks to the public and themselves. Neighbourhood contracts have also changed from consultative mechanisms to genuinely participative ones. Theatre workshops were found to increase self-confidence, facilitate self-expression, the development of competences and a sense of freedom. Part V is about research in the social field. After a discussion of the nature of social research it makes the point that research has to stand outside the object of study—an argument that it should be free from the demands of management. A discussion of research on migration illustrates how research can identify problems that are obscured by the dominant assumptions of one culture when looking at another. Often the rules are not well enough defined to accommodate immigrants, and professionals are then faced with difficult dilemmas, not readily recognised by management.

In conclusion it is argued that social work is in a paradoxical situation, because demands are increasing while resources decrease. This has led to a change from

'action sociale' to 'intervention sociale'—to technical management instead of real action based on social justice. It is suggested that social work has been muzzled by norms and procedures that prevent innovation, and needs to find a new place on the political 'chessboard', and to become more assertive. The only real recommendation for doing so is that it should go global, like the forces it wishes to resist. The general theme will be recognisable in all countries where professional values have become subservient to managerial thinking and accountancy, and where social work has failed to assert its professionalism. The challenge is to reintroduce the values that originally infused social work practice, and place them at the core of a welfare state approach to those made vulnerable by globalisation. So far this has not happened anywhere in a coherent way, and this book makes only a small contribution to the process. It is, however, interesting because of the evidence it brings from several European countries.

#### Reference

Tabin, J.-P., Frauenfelder, A., Togni, C., & Keller, V. (2008). *Temps d'Assistance. Le Gouvernement des Pauvres en Suisse Romande depuis la fin du XIXe siècle*. Lausanne: Éditions Antipodes (Reviewed by David Anderson, *European Journal of Social Work*, 12(1), 2009, 125–127)

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**A different home: a new foster child's story**, by John DeGarmo and Kelly DeGarmo, illustrated by Norma Jeanne Trammell, London, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2014, 47 pp., £9.99 (hardback), ISBN 978-1-84905-987-9

This book is meant to be read together with a new foster child. The story hits many of the questions of such children who do not know why they are placed in foster care, for how long time and how to deal with your biological parents and siblings. We follow Jessie's anxieties, anger, uncertainty and her many relevant questions to the social worker, the foster parents and herself. The story is not an exception, according to social workers or experts working with children who are going to be placed in foster care.

In the Afterword (pp. 45–47), the authors—who are foster and adoptive parents—explain that:

we wrote this book for foster parents to read to a foster child upon placement into their home. Foster children often experience a myriad of emotions when they are first placed into a foster home. Powerful emotions of loss, grief, sorrow, confusion, and even fear may quickly overwhelm a foster child during this time of transition. As a result, a foster home can quickly descend into a state of turmoil, leading to a very unhealthy environment. Foster parents need to be prepared to meet the challenges raised by these