

Editorial to the Main Topic “Migration and Mobility”

The Annual Review of Social Work and Social Pedagogy in Austria – Österreichisches Jahrbuch für Soziale Arbeit (OeJS) sees itself as a discussion forum where topics relevant to social work and social pedagogy can be analysed. With that in mind, this second edition focuses on current research and discussion on migration and mobility. Here, “migration” is seen as a strategic and reflexive field, where current developments, opportunities and challenges in social work and social pedagogy, and in cognate social sciences and occupational groups are particularly being made visible. On one hand, the articles featured here show that, given that the subject of refugee migration has been discussed more intensively in society for years in Austria, and in German-speaking countries as a whole, research in this field has become more specific. On the other hand, the contributions indicate that many research questions remain unanswered.

1. “Migration” as a subject of social work and social pedagogy

As a socially constructed phenomenon, migration has always been closely interwoven with social, economic and political developments (Oltmer, 2016). This is closely related to national regulations which lead to forms of geographical and social (im)mobility (Sharma, 2020; Raitelhuber, Sharma, & Schröder, 2018), accompanied by discourses on social security and control (Ferrera, 2005; Wagner & Zimmermann, 2003; Bommers & Geddes, 2000; Torpey, 2000). The concepts found in these discourses can be both exclusionary and partially or selectively inclusionary (Mezzadra & Neilson, 2013; Nail, 2015). This is illustrated by categories such as a “foreigner” or an “European citizen”, as well as by the changing attributes and uses that go along with them (Moccia, 2018; Anderson, 2013). The ambivalent effects of such constructions of “otherness” can be seen not just in social work (e. g. Nobe-Ghelani, 2017; Chambon, 2013) and – more generally – in personal social and health services (e. g. Schweitzer, 2020; Eliassi, 2015; Grove & Zwi, 2006), but also in “alternative” and less formalised (social) education and

social support (e. g. see Schrooten & Meeus, 2019; Raithelhuber, 2019a; Duscha, 2019).

Over the past decades, migration and associated categorisations such as “refugee” or “labour migration” have found their way into different fields of social work practice and social pedagogy on various levels. In German scholarship – for example Yıldız (2018), Raithelhuber (2018a), Scherr (2018) and Janotta (2018) – there has been a controversial discussion on the research tradition and practice of primarily addressing migrants from a nation-statecentric perspective, which is presumed as a norm, examining “their” deficits, applying a binary logic and seeing them as a supposedly homogeneous group. Criticism of this kind that has been voiced for some time (e. g. Hamburger, 2009) has also led to the development of new approaches to dealing with “migration” in social pedagogy and social work, broadening horizons. Examples include research and discussions on potential clients’ and users’ cross-border living circumstances, transnational social support (Chambon, Schröer, & Schweppe, 2012), transnational social work (Withaecx, Schrooten, & Geldof, 2017; Negi & Furman, 2010) and transnational professionalism (Bartley, Beddoe, Fouché, & Harington, 2012). All this has also increasingly shifted the focus towards notions of mobility and immobility which permit more pluralistic understandings of time and space, and which can make connections between different forms of social (in)equality and different scales, broadening horizons (Glick Schiller & Salazar, 2013).

2. The view of “migration and mobility”

These developments in contemporary societies are precisely what sparked the call for this special volume. In selecting this topic, the aim was not only to move forward these new discourses but also to open them up further and bring them into focus using the two terms “migration and *mobility*”. This means that we utilise the “New Mobilities Paradigm” (Sheller & Urry, 2006, p. 207), even if social work researchers have as yet rarely got to grips with the perspective of the rapidly growing, interdisciplinary research field of “Mobility Studies” in their research and publications. Some exceptions so far have been the studies by Raithelhuber (2019b), Roy (2017) and Ferguson (2016).

This issue of the OeJS is thus not only primarily interested in “migrants” who have moved their “one” place of residence across national borders in the medium or long term. It is also about shedding light on interaction

between mobile people, practices and meanings, in the context of existing old and new forms of (im)mobility and types of social organisation and institution. This extended perspective reveals two important socio-political developments in Europe and beyond. On one hand, “border regimes” (Tsianos, Hess, & Karakayali, 2009) are shifting “inside” nation states, where they create social differentiation on various levels (Anderson, Sharma, & Wright, 2012). On the other hand, the attribution of belongings and their meaning in practice are also changing. Examples include the production and processing of the figure of “*the unaccompanied refugee minor*” in practical social work and social pedagogy, produced ambivalently with regard to legal constructs (e. g. Kaukko, 2019; Raithelhuber, 2018b), or the stereotypical and homogenising attribution of “*the oppressed woman who has undergone genital cutting*”, regardless of individual biographical experiences and regional differences, as Lang’s contribution (in this issue) shows.

3. Current thematic contours

Several trends can currently be observed in the research into migration and mobility which takes into account social security and social control. From the very beginning, critical research on migration and mobility has tackled the mechanisms by which borders are established between nation states or Europe and the “outside” (Hess & Kasperek, 2010). While the creation of “secure” geographical boundaries continues to be examined in the research, the “inwards” shifting of the “bordering” is a subject of particular discussion in international research on migration and social security (Amelina, Carmel, Runfors & Scheibelhofer, 2020; De Genova, 2015; van Houtum & van Naerssen, 2002; Huxel et al., 2020). Following this approach, the analytical focus is not necessarily on drawing a border *along* what are imagined to be effective lines between nation states’ territories as a means of controlling or hindering geographical mobility *before border crossings* take place. Instead, borders shifting “inwards” is more about practices of drawing borders *after* spatial mobility and *through* processes of spatialisation and territorialisation (Senghaas, 2018), as a result of which, for example, welfare organisations become the actors behind border and mobility regimes (e. g. Guentner, Lukes, Vollmer & Wilding, 2016; Voorend, 2014). More detailed discussion and research are required to assess the extent to which this creates changes, opportunities and limitations to such organisations’ social mandate (see Weber, 2019).

Another line of the emerging research on migration and mobility scrutinises national and continental constructions of belonging, and those connected to crossing borders. The main focus here is on how the discourse creates mobile or immobile political and social affiliations (Anthias, 2018; Yuval-Davis, 2011). For example, the figure of the apparently freely moving “migrant” acts as a canvas on which a multitude of social problematisations and populist attributions can be projected. Not only can these projections be mobilised at short notice, as the last election campaigns in Austria show, but they can also be constantly recombined and rescaled. Current examples include the European states closing ranks to keep out hundreds of thousands of people seeking refuge at the EU’s external border with Turkey in Greece. In the context of the mobility of people and diseases (cf. Ticktin, 2017), we are vividly witnessing a demonstration of the mobilisation of populist and racist attributions as current policies and discourses on the fight against the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus attest.

4. Overview of the articles in the special issue

The contributions in this volume, which fall under the category of “Migration and Mobility” can be divided into three themes: “refugee migration and solidarity”, “basic support: internal bordering” and “exclusionary constructions of belonging”. They include both conventional academic articles and one interview held among researchers.

4.1 Refugee migration and solidarity

Since 2014 at the latest, the political crisis in Europe has been closely linked to the discourse on refugee migration. At the same time, new forms of civil society solidarity for and with refugees have emerged in many parts of Europe (cf. Feischmidt, Pries, & Cantat, 2019; Vandevordt & Verschraegen, 2019; Pries, 2018). As a result, many new individual and collective actors have entered the social sector and education. Meanwhile, pre-established charitable organisations have become involved in migration- and refugee-related forms of “assistance” for the first time. As used in social practice within the “Refugees Welcome” movements, the term “solidarity” appears to follow something of a cosmopolitan logic (Beck, 2004), meaning that these solidarity movements may differ from the two conventional forms of solidarity: mechanical (or particularistic) and organic solidarity, as defined by Émile Durkheim (1992).

With a cosmopolitan logic, the civil society organisations currently involved in these efforts differ not only in terms of their institutionalisation and professionalism, but also in terms of their spatial and temporal structure, and their social network relationships. What “assistance” has emerged here? And what effect do they have on other fields? How are “new” and “established” actors cooperating? Based on a survey conducted at the German Youth Institute (Deutsches Jugendinstitut, DJI) among principals of lower secondary school, the article by *Christine Steiner, Frank Tillmann* and *Birgit Reißig* examines the extent to which schools work together with civil society actors, and how civil society actors help recently arrived migrant pupils through school socialisation processes. The authors came to the conclusion that the schools they surveyed in Germany are currently mobilising both long-standing cooperative projects and new volunteers to pursue their educational mission.

Solidarity with and for refugees can also be understood as an expression of social change through migration. The contribution by *Juri Kilian* and *Daniel Bendix* analyses resistance to activists’ expulsion in Germany and Mali, where social support is developing after their departure. The authors argue that social work needs to take the resistance movement seriously and get to grips with it academically, both before and after deportation. This research demonstrates practices of cosmopolitan solidarity, which can (at times) transcend national borders.

4.2 Basic support: internal bordering?

The article by *Ivana Acocella* and *Margherita Turchi* tackles two state-regulated models for housing and caring for refugees after they migrate to Italy. One model follows the idea of resource-oriented support for refugees provided by a multi-professional team and involving integrating people into social spaces. The other model functions as a total institution as described by Goffman (1961). It produces extremely controlling, de-individualising institutions with minimal personnel standards. The authors show how, after the change in Italian politics and the populist use of the figure of “the refugee” to temporarily get through political crises, total institutions are put in place as a dominant model for social work with refugees. This controlling reception system in Italy is a pertinent example of new forms of “internal bordering”.

In the form of a scientific interview, *Stephanie Sladek*, Senior Protection Assistant at the Austrian National Office of UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, holds a discussion with *Eberhard Raitelhuber* on the current ac-

commodation of so-called “unaccompanied refugee minors” in Austria, examining the topics of the best interests of the child, standards of legal representation and the guardianship situation. The discussion is based on research carried out by the UNHCR in Austria in standard out-of-home child and youth welfare institutions, among other places, and in special facilities offering general, basic support for young refugees, as well as Raithelhuber’s case study on a community-based youth mentoring project for unaccompanied refugee minors (Raithelhuber, 2019c).

4.3 Exclusionary constructions of belonging

Carolyn Hollweg’s contribution provides a microanalysis of multilingual interpreting in the context of the monolingually oriented official and administrative language used in German child and youth welfare. It draws on support planning discussions involving interpreters. These interviews are central to the further provision, design and rendering (or indeed the termination) of professional, legally enshrined children’s social care services by public child and youth welfare services.¹ The author of the article comes to the realisation that even the question of what information is shared in what language during the support planning makes the German language the legitimate language of interactions. If this linguistic capital is not available to refugee children and young people, important opportunities for participation remain sealed off to them.

The contribution by *Katharina Lang* deals with the question of the extent to which social work is involved in reproducing the processes by which clients are othered. Lang addresses this question in the field of Female Genital Cutting (FGC), with a firmly feminist, post-colonial perspective on intercultural approaches within social work practice. Against the background of controversial cutting practices, the author reflects on the social construction of gender and religious affiliation in the context of social work. She also discusses implications for “culturally sensitive social work” rooted in human rights.

The final article on this topic examines issues related to methods and methodologies. As in other fields, publications on the subject itself pre-

1 In Germany, children’s social care services are set down in Articles 28 to 35 of the German Social Code (SGB) Book Eight (VIII – Child and Youth Welfare); the support planning process (as regulated in Article 36) is designed as a participatory means of creating an individual support plan. However, it is a great challenge for social work to get everyone involved to participate in and reflect on this process (see Loch, 2016).

dominate in research on migration, but recently research has increasingly been published on issues around the selection of methods or experience gathered during research or fieldwork (cf. Amelina, Faist, & Nergiz, 2012; Nieswand & Drotbohm, 2014; Nowicka & Ryan, 2015; Shinozaki & Osanami Törngren, 2019), with corresponding international specialist groups being established.² Taking “methodological nationalism” (Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2002) in academic practice as the basis for their work, *Anselm Böhmer* and *Simon Goebel* investigate the extent to which the cultural anthropological criticism of the “de-migrantisation of research on migration” can be applied to social work. They engage with the question of what mechanisms are used to ascribe constructions of belonging, as examined by the epistemology of social work in the context of international migration.

4.4 Regular contributions

In the general section, *Christine Würfl* and *Barbara Schörner* discuss sets of problems related to the professional self-image of school social work in Austria on the basis of an empirical study. Their contribution fills an important gap in the further implementation and expansion of this field of child and youth welfare work. Using findings from a quantitative online survey of managers working for organisations which run school social work services, they pick up on the point that social workers’ professional self-image is strongly shaped by their role as a mediator between the school and the parents. They differentiate between the roles of the “connector” and the “transmitter”. While those who see themselves as transmitters adopt an attitude of supporting a side and acting on behalf of clients to pass on information and raise awareness, those who see themselves as connectors take on a stronger role as experts offering professionally neutral advice. These differences could prove to pose a challenge if attempts are made to carry out this field of work on the basis of shared standards. This, the authors believe, would require further intensive discussion on professionals’ self-images.

The main theme of this issue is once again brought to a close with book reviews on current publications on the topic by *Miriam Hill*, *Sirkka Komu-*

2 One example is the “Critical Migration Studies” standing committee (launched in 2019), part of the European migration research network IMISCOE; another is the workshop “Challenging the conventional gaze in migration studies: reflections on multiple and unconventional positionalities”, organised by Sayaka Osanami Törngren and Kyoko Shinozaki, IMISCOE Annual Conference, Malmö, 26–28 June 2019.

lainen, Falko Müller, Victoria Reitter, Erica Righard, Annette Sprung and Laura Trott. These contributions provide further stimulating insights into current international professional discourses and research in the field of migration and mobilities.

The editors look forward to wide-ranging, interested discussion on the published articles and further participation in the discourses examined in the *Annual Review of Social Work and Social Pedagogy in Austria – Österreichisches Jahrbuch für Soziale Arbeit* (OeJS).

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Kyoko Shinozaki, Eberhard Raithelhuber and Ulrike Loch

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