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Transcending disciplinary, professional and national borders in social work education

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The following contribution addresses the questions: Is social work education prepared to promote the goals of the 'Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development – Commitment to Action' presented to the United Nations in Geneva in 2012 by the three international associations (International Association of Schools of Social Work [IASSW], International Federation of Social Workers [IFSW] and International Council on Social Welfare [ICSW])? What changes in education and practice are needed, when social work and social policy are focused on a transnational frame? The starting hypothesis is that the influences of globalisation and world society on social problems cannot be ignored anymore. What does this mean for the organisation of the disciplinary knowledge, the professional mandate and its ethical base in human rights, social justice and democracy? Are they 'globalisable'? And, as a consequence, how could we overcome the deep dividing line between micro and macro practice? How this could be done is illustrated with two examples: first, the development of social care-chains for the problem of deportation of migrants or asylum-seekers; and second, world-poverty, which requires influencing social cause chains.

Globalisation and world-society – two independent, but since 1945 interdependent, constellations

In many texts and discussions globalisation is a phenomenon which developed at the middle or end of the 20th century and means mainly economic globalisation. However, to make 'globalisation' a synonym for Westernisation, Americanisation or capitalism is an incorrect Eurocentric view of world society. Arabic, Indian or Chinese influences are much older and lasted much longer – over 1000 years or even more. Of course, globalisation has also to do with capitalism, but the expansion and colonisation of Spain and Portugal were examples of feudal colonisation. Genova and Venice were motivated by capitalism, but always in a fragile partnership with Byzantines, the Mongols, the Mamelukes and finally the Ottomans. Only since the rise of the Netherlands and England can one identify clear capitalististic colonisation and exploitation, defined as the dominant search for profit

in trade relations. Thus, capitalism is only one source of globalisation. Other sources are the missionary impetus of monotheistic religions and the political goals of power-regimes to establish a hegemonic order over parts of the world or even dominance over the whole world (Menzel 2007, 55–57).

Following from this short historical overview, globalization can be described as a process within world-society, but not identical to it. Therefore I shall use the concept of world-society as the broader concept. Heintz (1982) describes world-society as a system of social units and different system-levels, which show a characteristic structure and processes of reproduction and change. A second idea, more often the strong conviction of many citizens and politicians, that the national history, its level of socioeconomic development and technical as well as cultural accomplishments are completely home- and self-made, leading to a fundamental ethnocentric prejudice leading to harmful superiority feelings over the rest of the world. And these can be harmful to migrants who try to get a small share or dividend for their and their descendants' benefit. Third, in relation to social work, there are other factors which narrow the perspective on world-society:

- the successful universal cultural colonisation by the neoliberal agenda decided in Washington in 1989 (see later) which means a forced focus on work with individual clients as units of help with privatised, self-caused social problems which have to be solved by self-responsibility, self-management, self-empowerment
- the cultural persuasion or even dogma that social justice and democracy can be guaranteed only within a national state context and that they can be practised only when they are codified as nationally institutionalised law and legislation; and finally the sociostructural characteristic of the roles set as members of different social systems.

If one has to practise dominantly internal roles within the family, the social agency (e.g. direct casework with clients, not having to address transformation of privatised troubles into public issues), it is difficult to develop a perspective of a world citizen. The gender-related division of labour between internal and external social roles of social systems is a broad topic of feminist theory which is also relevant for the size of the social space envisioned by individuals (Heintz & Obrecht 1980). Education cannot in the face of these serious obstacles produce miracles, but it can try to develop the relevant disciplinary, professional and practice guidelines for transcending local and national borders, some of which I shall discuss in the next sections.

World-society as subjective perceived reality and transdisciplinary framework for social work

The historical start for the reorganisation of the international order and the slow consolidation of word-society as a social structure of subsystems and interdependent social levels is 1945, the end of World War 2. The process of de-colonisation (still today not completed) and the founding of many new nation-states created the conditions for a new worldwide field of interaction. The old and new states started to describe themselves as sovereign entities, but having an institutionalised supra-national interaction platform at the United Nations and other emerging supra-national organisations. States and many individuals shared the idea of human rights and the development of common political, economic and educational institutions which transcend on national barriers and thus the North–South as

well as the East–West divide. Supported by the worldwide student revolt of the 1960s and 70s people began to define social differences in economic and educational terms; they saw income development within and between nations as social injustice and claimed wellbeing and freedom for all individuals. There was a scientific and political search for the common development of transnational social policies to reach this goal.

With the fall of the Soviet regime in 1989 followed by the declaration of the Washington Consensus in the same year, this development was stopped. Prime ministers, politicians, diplomats and a legion of lobbyists with vested interests celebrated – with many inhabitants of the Western societies – the 'death of socialism' and founded the World Trade Organization (WTO). Its new world policy-document – called the Washington Consensus (1989) – begins with the following first article: 'The most important goal of economy is growth; economic growth produces jobs, wealth, development, equality and democracy'. This credo is followed by nine articles – the effects of them we know by now very well as:

- economic globalisation; opening all borders for the free trade of goods, social services, capital, investment (yet not in human beings)
- privatisation, deregulation, constraining the role of the state
- global free trade, not local production is the source of wealth
- reduction of taxes for entrepreneurs and corporations
- restriction of the role of the state concerning health, education and social welfare (i.e. opening them up for the free market of insurance companies)
- unrestricted competition of all against all to promote (output-oriented, efficient) performance (Meyer 2009).

The WTO regime with its ten neoliberal articles of faith began to colonise almost the whole world – not only the economic development and consumption, but also politics, education, culture, health, social welfare, many systems of legislation and last, but not least, social work and social policy (Meyer 2009).

World-society defined by people and by theoretical disciplines

World-society can't be seen and observed. Yet it is a fact of life, more precisely a fact which affects the life of people worldwide. They have to live with this fact, even if they don't want to know about it and its influence upon them, their life perspectives and decisions – e.g. to open a bank account or not, to stay where they are born or to migrate or seek refuge in another area or country. But when they feel in some way affected by it, they construct an image of it mainly determined by their social membership, cultural affiliation and personal codes, as well as aspirations, interests and goals.

How do social work practitioners, faculty members, field instructors define world-society? Looking at the literature, the bulk of contributions focuses on individuals, families, small groups, ethnic groups, then in rapidly declining numbers on local communities – ending at the national borders. Conferences and journals about international social work are mainly a collection of very interesting accounts about social work endeavours, problems, goals and successes without identifying influences from or for a broader social context. If we want to go a step further, we have to have a disciplinary notion of world-society. Society is today a worldwide complex interaction field of individuals with multiple or no memberships in social micro-, meso- and macro-systems. Thus the object base of

human development, sociology, politics, economy, cultural studies etc. has to be within the frame of world-society. One can hardly find a social problem –poverty, unemployment, forced migration, displacement, discrimination, racism, sexism, classism, religious and other intolerance, traffic in children and women, political persecution and torture and last but not least wars – which doesn't have distinct causes in the structure and dynamics or processes of world-society (Heintz 1982; Wobbe 2000).

The approach outlined by Heintz (1982) and Wobbe (2000) identifies the following transnational sub-systems interacting in different ways to understand the dynamics of world-society, namely:

- the transnational stratification system of the world-population, which encompasses the position of the individuals along the dimensions of education, occupation, income and urbanisation and their evaluation of these social structures in relation to need satisfaction, freedom versus oppression, (ill)egality, (in)justice etc. – all are topics of ecology, psycho-biology, psychology, social psychology, sociology and cultural studies;
- the transnational economic system of transnational corporations – and the more recent development, the increasing power of the financial industry – a main topic of economic theory;
- the international state-system of the hegemonic political-military-power-system – a main topic of political science;
- the transnational intercultural system – symbol-systems as philosophy, religion, science, ethics, ethnic subcultures, public discourses – transported by internet communication and social media.

This theoretical approach must be accompanied by a conceptualisation of world-society as a multi-level structure of social actors and social systems: the individual, family, group, local community and organisational levels which are already very familiar in social work texts. But in a globalised world we have to add the national, regional/continental, inter- and supra national level. So, the question is: what could teaching and practice include, if social work, or at least a part of it, should be one of the many players in a globalised world-society?

The global agenda for social work and social development 2012

A program for strengthening social work's role in setting an agenda for global action was recently developed, enlarged and reinforced in 2012 by an international document of the IASSW, IFSW and ICSW called 'Global agenda for social work and social development – commitment to action', presented at the United Nations. It states:

> We believe that now is our time to work together, at all levels, for change, for social justice, and for the universal implementation of human rights, building on the wealth of social initiatives and social movements. We . . . recognise that the past and present political, economic, cultural and social orders . . . have unequal consequences for global, national and local communities and have negative impacts on people. (IASSW, ICSW, IFSW 2012)

These inequalities are listed as:

- only a minority of the world's population has access to the respect, protection and fulfilment of human rights through national states
- poverty, followed by damaged wellbeing and poor health due to unjust and poorly regulated economic systems, non-compliance to the international standards of labour conditions and lack of corporate social responsibility
- missing respect of cultural diversity and the right to self-expression, especially for indigenous and first nation peoples
- disruption of supportive, caring social relationships in families and communities
- victims of direct and indirect violence, such as war, ethnic/religious conflicts, natural disasters, pollution and climate change (IASSW, ICSW, IFSW 2012).

The list of social problems closes with an international, regional and national commitment to advocate for a new world order which makes a reality of respect for human rights and dignity. It addresses a different structure of human relationships, promoting social and economic justice and community participation in governance, environmentally sensitive development, and finally ensuring appropriate education, practice and research for the implementation of these goals. One can read the document as one possible alternative answer to the policy program of the Washington Consensus of 1989 which has not only neglected, but suppressed any reference to the needs of people and their wellbeing, to social problems, social justice and social rights. Its assumption is that economic growth is the panacea for everything. This urges social work to clarify the following central issues: the (re)definition of the relevant societal context within which it operates and accordingly the scope of its professional mandate; old and new actors for social change, and the way of linking social micro-, meso-, and macro-practice which I shall call the development of transnational 'social work chains' (Staub-Bernasconi 2012).

The professional triple-mandate of social work – a mandate for social work without borders

A common assumption is that social work has a double mandate, one of the client and one of the social agency, sometimes characterised as 'help and control'. Yet, the profession has in fact a triple-mandate: from the client, the social agency and the profession itself. The third mandate of social work has two dimensions, namely science-based interventions (in common with other professions) and the explicit orientation towards human rights and social justice as professional ethics. In a world-society with very different political regimes, legislation and cultural differentiations, social work must also be possible in nations which aren't welfare states, and the same should also hold for those that are considered as corrupt or even failed states (Gore 1969; Midgley 1997, 2000). In these cases social workers might not be able to refer themselves to a national consensual, official professional code. Yet, they still can rely on the common documents of the international associations IASSW/IFSW/ICSW – which are also relevant for social workers not organised in a national association.

The third mandate gives to social work the possibility to formulate a self-defined mandate based on the identification of pressing, unfulfilled needs, social injustice, violence, and human rights violations in general without having to wait for a mandate from society or a state which may never come. Ideally, it should get it from the people in distress – if possi-

ble in combination with and with support from social movements, NGOs or philanthropic efforts – in short, from civil society. The idea is not so new, but has to be revitalised: professional social work started in many countries with initiatives by self-mandated women – be it through direct help in the local community or social policy and legislation on the national level and even for world politics, e.g. in relation to suffrage and World War 1 (Addams and the Women of Hull House; Alice Salomon from Germany, Clara Ragaz from Switzerland, Radlinska from Poland). Today we know of 'doctors without borders', followed by 'reporters without borders' and an initiative in Switzerland called 'law without borders'. Inspired by John Ruggie, UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for business and human rights, this NGO alliance calls on parliaments to make regulations law in order to oblige companies and their worldwide subsidiaries to implement human rights and environmental protection. At the same time it opens the way for individuals, groups and populations who are damaged or come to grief to access the judicial system. The central idea is that corporations should be responsible for the whole production chain from the beginning regardless of the country of residence of their headquarters.

While the universality of scientific, transdisciplinary epistemology and research procedures is – sometimes more, sometimes less – accepted, social work has to face the fact that the universality of human rights is partially contested; for example, as Western colonisation in the guise of charity. It was a big issue at the Vienna World Conference of 1993 where most of the national delegates reinforced the idea of the universality and indivisibility of human rights. This was possible, despite dictators from Asian and African states ignoring the claims for the liberty and democracy of their populations and the many NGOs present there. Yet the claim for the universality of human rights is still an important and critical issue of the mandate of social work. To support this claim, I restrict myself to four arguments (see Staub-Bernasconi 2011, 2014).

First, analysing the rich literature about philosophical, religious and secular-humanist approaches to human dignity and human rights, I suggest that there is only one approach left for the justification of the universality of human rights as a minimal ethic, which doesn't colonise and/or exclude individuals, minorities of every kind or even national indigenous populations (first nation peoples), namely: the one which refers to the biological, psychological, social and cultural needs common to all human beings and the manifold consequences if their fulfilment is violated. As almost all international social work theories refer in some way to human needs, it might be plausible that their fulfilment must be (legally) universally protected. Yet needs should not be confused with wishes and aspirations mainly influenced by socialisation and the cultural context (Antweiler 2007). The violation of needs have a long history of individual and public articulation and transformation into values of freedom, participation/democracy and social justice (see the history of slavery; the Freedom Charter of the ANC during the apartheid regime; the liberation movements in Latin-America; the Hong-Kong Asian Charter formulated by hundreds of NGOs; the first claims during the Arabic Revolutions since 2011). Second, contextual, subcultural philosophical, ethnic or religious adaptations of human rights are acceptable, unless they legitimise the violation of human rights. Third, there can be no subordination of the individual person under the declared absolute superiority of social systems of any size – from family to organisations, nations etc. This refers to the problem of oppression, dictatorship in the name of a superior social whole. The same holds for the subordination of social systems under the absolute superiority of the individual in the name of an unlimited freedom; for example, for property and economic trade which doesn't care about the

breakdown or destruction of social relations and social rules which guarantee needs-fulfilment for all individuals – meaning here the whole world population. If one doesn't divide the UN Declaration into its two parts – the liberal and the social rights – then we have a model of human beings as, 'individuals in social contexts'. Finally, the supra-national law of human rights is a yardstick for the analysis of the legitimacy of a national law systems and their implementation. Not only in nation-states, but also the preamble of continental, African, Asian and Islamic human rights declarations agree with the universality of human rights, but don't accept international interventions threatening their sovereignty. This paradox must be understood as an understandable safeguard in the face of European colonisation history. To tackle this paradox seems to be perhaps the most difficult and is shown by the long learning process nations have to go through, such as the actual problems of the International Judicial Court in The Hague.

The task for teaching 'social work without borders' in the face of its triple mandate will then be, first, to place its long and large tradition of needs-based social work and social policy into the broader framework of human rights and human dignity (Ife 2001; Reichert 2003; Wronka 2008); second clarification – if religious, ethnic, political or other particular worldviews which ignore or negate human rights or replace them by inhuman world-views or theories. But the main task of social work and social policy will be to try to introduce – as far as possible – human rights as a regulative idea into the main topics of education and practice on the national and international levels (Staub-Bernasconi & Wronka 2012; Staub-Bernasconi 2014).

More specifically, social work and social policy will have to join in the discussions about the possibility to transnationalise their meta-values of social justice and democracy (see Addams 1902), which means the overcoming of the dogma that they can only be guaranteed in and through a nation-state, and that they can exist only when they are codified as nationally institutionalised law. What then do I mean by the 'globalisation' of social and democratic citizenship?

The universalisation of social justice

Distributive social justice as a topic of social policy has been until today a national-ethnocentric enterprise. 'Theories of global justice will either point to facts about our nature as human beings . . . and are motivated by what we share simply by virtue of being human [non-relational approaches] . . . or to the fact that we share certain institutions or are bound together in some other significant way [relational approaches cf Rawls]' (Sangiovanni 2007 cited in Armstrong 2012, 25). Global or transnational social justice is, according to Armstrong (2012), 'any theory which suggests that there are some entitlements of justice which have global scope and . . . that there are some duties of justice which have global scope'. This means that there are certain things we are obliged to do, or not to do (17).

John Rawls (1973 in Armstrong 2012, 76–86), the most cited philosopher of social justice confines it mainly to the liberal rich societies and their individuals sharing the idea of free and equal citizens, an idea which is – in his eyes – not widely accepted. To impose this scheme of justice on non-liberal societies would be illegitimate and hurt the principle of tolerance. Even Rawls (1999 cited in Armstrong 2012, 76–86) is indifferent to the fact that there are rich and poor societies and that the rich societies might profit from the resources, cheap labour, former slavery and colonisation structures of the poor ones. Yet he

accepts the duty of rich societies to assistance having a defined, 'target and cut-off-point'. For him global distributional justice neglects the responsibilities of peoples for their own wealth and poverty which are homemade – actually a generalisation of the neoliberal view of self-made social problems by the individual and thus the self-responsibility of solving them. Thomas Pogge calls this position 'explanatory nationalism' (2002, 139–145). According to Mario Bunge a society has to be internally and externally just, fulfilling the needs – not wishes – of its population and not hindering the economic, social and cultural development and thus need-fulfilment of the other societies (1989, 372).

The universalisation of democracy

Concerning the universalisation of democracy, we know many highly problematic examples of legitimising democracy through wars. There are prominent theoreticians who regard the idea of a global democracy as 'unachievable' or 'that its advocates are barking to the moon' (Archibugi, Koenig-Archibugi & Marchetti 2012). Yet a new generation of scholars (such as David Held, Richard Falk, Jürgen Habermas) point out that democracy has become widely, albeit not universally accepted as the only (best?) way to legitimate political power (Archibugi et al., 2) and have thus developed different models of global democracy such as: confederalism, federalism and polycentrism (6–14) or intergovernmentalism, global governance and global polity (22–46). Many forms are combinations of two or three types. What is common to all conceptions, is the vision of a system of global governance that is responsive and accountable to the preferences of the world's citizens and works to reduce political inequalities among them (Archibugi et al. 2012). Governance may, but need not, be provided by a 'government'. It could also mean the reform of international organisations such as the UN, especially the Security Council and the WTO.

The discussion of the pros and cons of all these models isn't possible within this chapter. But what one should remember is a book of one of our own theoreticians about democracy, Jane Addams 'Democracy and Social Ethics' (1902). She introduced the notion of 'integral democracy' which requires the sharing and division of power starting with social work, continuing within the family, the industry or economic and educational system and finally in politics. In addition she requires that political democracy based on the equality of citizens and procedural fairness should be enlarged by the social dimension of social justice (for the concept of integral democracy see also Bunge 2009, 351–401).

Castles and Davidson (2000) discussing the many problems of migrants (difficult social integration, pressure for cultural assimilation, rejection, and discrimination) and immigration societies (emergence and segregation of ethnic minorities as consequence of discrimination, the racialisation of the nation-state), try to show that a theory of citizenship for a global society must be based on separation between nation and state. This means a new type of state that is not constituted exclusively or mainly around the nexus of territoriality and belonging. Yet in a world of migrants and ethnic groups, citizenship cannot be blind to cultural belonging. The political mechanisms that make people into citizens must take account of both of their rights as individuals and their needs, interests and values as members of social and cultural collectives. Reconciling the individual and the collective is the key problem of citizenship for a globalised society and is discussed extensively in their book.

What follows, then from all this for the conception of and teaching a social work practice to answer the social problems caused by the social structure and development

of world-society as well as to the policy-program of the 'global agenda of social work'? Many texts dealing with this question suggest vaguely what 'one should do' or they describe what social workers have already done working in international organisations. Teaching transnational social work requires something more precise: the theory-/science-based design of action guidelines which show how one can surmount the deep dividing line between micro- and macro-practice transcending national borders.

Social work chains as general action principle for the development of concerted actions of micro- meso- and macro-practice

Although one could feel completely powerless and thus reject world-society as an empirical, theoretical and normative framework of social work, it would be a mistake to define it as an unchangeable global stratification– and power– or oppression–system influencing social subsystems and their individuals in a strict one-way top-down-model with no chance to react to and actively reshape it. World society is also the product of the perceptions, interpretations, interests and resulting activities of individuals and collective actors with very different power sources and embedded in different power structures who identify and use accessible social action spaces and opportunities to realise their goals. So how can we teach this perspective? Here are examples which follow the assumption that world-society can be at least partially influenced by social work by gaining definitional (scientific) power over social problems caused by the structure and dynamics of world-society, by organising and linking micro- meso- and macro-practice together, and by building networks, coalitions and join social movements and/or NGOs which share approximately the same goals and are themselves organised or at least oriented along the mentioned different action-levels. These are the ingredients of what I call the conception and development of social work chains through trying to build professional social work chains or to influence social work chains.

Establishing transnational social care chains: human rights concerns and the deportation of unwanted migrants and asylum seekers

To diagnose the influence of the transnational social subsystems of world-society upon individuals I try to show it with the following example.

A young woman with a physical disability (as member of the transnational social stratification system of the world population) came to Switzerland because she heard that there are camps where asylum seekers could work for at least four years (perception, relevance and use of the transnational stratification system to migrate from a country with low to a country with high socioeconomic development). She (as member of the political-military power system) was sent back to the Kosovo. There she lives with her 80-year-old father. He was a partisan during World War 2 (as member of the hegemonic political-military power system) and (as member of the national stratification system) has a very small pension. It's just enough to pay the rent for the one-room apartment and each day some yoghurt, eggs, burek and onions for him and his daughter. In the kitchen, which serves also as living room, next to the television (member of the transnational intercultural system), there is a model of the Eiffel tower of Paris. The father was married twice. Both women went back

into their family because he forbade them to go out and even to look out of the window (patriarchal oppression in the family system). The young woman isn't able to – as most of the women of her age – find a job (exclusion from the local and national socioeconomic system). Individuals with disabilities don't get state subsidies as long as they can move on their own (exclusion from the social security system of the nation-state). She can't find a man who will marry her yet she has seven abortions behind her.

The main scholarly texts about migration demand from social work the best possible societal integration of migrants and refugees using intercultural sensitivity and trauma work as well as anti-discriminatory, anti-racist practices. What is almost completely neglected are the problems following deportations which grow in number since the nation states in the European Union restricted their immigration laws and made it more and more difficult to cross their borders. According to these laws everything is correct. But is legality also ethically legitimate, e.g. considering the human right of being recognised everywhere as a person before the law or the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state (Articles 6, 7, 13, 14 of the UN Declaration)? Does the mandate of social work end at the national or European border? The woman above returns not only in deplorable, violent conditions, which have destroyed her dignity, social relations and physical integrity; in addition she is sent into a social vacuum with no person or organisation to which she could go for help. What about youngsters sent back after turning 18 years old without having a chance to get education or vocational training and jobs in their home country? Are their 'career' possibilities illegal labour, criminality, prostitution or joining a politically radical organisation? Many succeed in returning illegally to an immigration country so that one could speak of a permanent rotation of migration – problems between nations (Verschiebebahnhof), where all try to solve them by their national laws almost without success – not to speak of the thousands of deaths of the 'boat-refugees'.

One action-theoretical answer to these deportation problems should be the systematic development of social care chains for deported individuals and families through institutionalised cooperation between social welfare organisations of the country from which they were deported and organisations of the home country if they are willing to cooperate. Such arrangements exist already for victims of human trafficking. A second necessity on the national-state level is the development and promotion of the idea of global democratic and social citizenship and the adaptation of national legislation so that immigrants in the country to which they have immigrated get access to social rights such as education, work, social medicine and welfare. But their status as political citizens of the nation-state remains very fragile or is quite often denied, if right-wing-populism or racism is strong or growing. (Soysal 1994, Castles & Davidson 2000; Yeates 2001) In this case they should be able to rely on the status of a world-citizen and bearer of human rights. Furthermore, the plea for an engagement with socioeconomic development in poor regions or countries to stop the main causes of migration must be on the public agenda. In sum, the complex theoretical and practical task is to plan a coalition with actors representing each social level which is relevant for problem solving, so that there can be a continuous information flow and coordinated social actions.

Influencing social cause chains of harm: world poverty and human rights

Poverty on a local or national level and its consequences has been present at the historical beginning of social work. Today, most people in northern countries know, at least through the media that there is – far away – poverty and extreme poverty. The Treaty of Lisbon had a goal to cut down worldwide poverty by 50% by 2015. By now it is clear that this goal won't be reached (Pogge 2002, 195).

But for the media poverty statistics and millions of deaths because of poverty, malnutrition, avoidable diseases is not an issue for 'breaking news'. Why information is not morally salient to the people in rich nations has cultural and structural causes. The cultural causes are common assumptions and perceptions in rich countries, which systematically ignore worldwide poverty and negate the responsibility of transnational justice Pogge (2002, 6–11). They highly favour the popular ideas that:

- poverty is a national and thus internal matter produced by the corrupt local and national elites
- world poverty is so great a problem that it simply cannot be eradicated in a few years, at least not at a cost that would be bearable for the rich societies. It would greatly damage our lives and communities and thus is clearly politically unfeasible
- the history of failed attempts at development show that one is throwing money out of the window, and sharing money and bread with everybody would be hungry and poor
- preventing poverty deaths is counter-productive because it will lead to overpopulation and hence to more poverty deaths in the future (this is a neo-Darwinian thesis)
- world poverty is disappearing anyway. The popularity of this assumption in the developed world has less to do with actual trends than with people being eager to believe the rhetoric of politicians, economists, and organisations such as the World Bank taking good care to define and measure poverty so as to show improvement. (Pogge 2002, 139–45)

Pogge (2002) calls these ideas 'explanatory nationalism' which means that everything which exists and happens in world-society is explained with internal national structures and processes. The rich countries believe only in the success in producing economic wealth, forgetting their history of worldwide colonisation and actuality of exploitation of cheap labour and precious resources and – in the last 20 years – overlooking the enormous enrichment mainly of the (neofeudal) upper class according to their undemocratic, self-made law systems. And they use the same national frame to blame the poor and developing countries for their 'bad domestic policies and institutions that stifle, or fail to stimulate, national economic growth and engender national economic injustice' (Pogge 2002, 140). This view entirely ignores the influences of the actual geopolitical context with its domination of the transnational economic and autonomous financial industry system over the national economies and governments of the poor, but also the rich countries. Emancipated middle- and upper-class women forget that they could study, get a job and support their own family due to support from very low-paid, unregulated housework of women migrating from far away, who leave their own children behind in their home country.

Sociostructural causes: the transnational economic system as parallel society with laws and social rules without democratic legitimation

The main sociostructural causes for world-poverty are according to Pogge (2002), Fischer-Lescano & Möller (2012) the social rules of the World Trade Organization, World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and their sub-organisations, which have established a transnational economic system supported by a law system which is not democratically legitimate, and which systematically discriminates against the developing countries. It is a Lex Mercatoria of a parallel society, conceived by our prime ministers, politicians, diplomats, delegates, lawyers and lobbyists. They installed judicial courts with social laws of free trade, the right to property for huge corporations and private global investors freed of taxation, yet rising high taxes for import goods and state subsidies for national goods which expropriate huge populations from their resources, their economic development and export-chances. In other words, the transnational economic system since 1989 creates its own laws which it needs to establish its world hegemony and force national politics to suggest that there isn't enough money for education, health and social security/welfare. These mechanisms – legalised by the Lex Mercatoria – explain why there can be no concomitant social development and progress in spite of high rates of economic growth in the (financial) business and industry – in general, but also in the rich societies of the north (Wilkinson & Pickett 2009) and even in the dependent poor countries under the WTO regime. Since the financial crisis of 2008 even the existing national social legislations, the European Social Charter and the UN covenant on social rights are irrelevant – not only, but especially for Greece, Spain and Portugal. A new treaty called the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership is in the pipeline which, if implemented, will be the death of any financial state autonomy (Wallach 2013).

Influencing social cause chains of harm: implementing the negative principle of doing no harm

The harm caused by the described cultural and sociostructural determinants can be defined as follows. One harms the poorest of the world when one:

- hinders the fulfilment of their needs which is a violation of human, especially social rights
- is not able to develop an alternative oranisational design – or social cause chain – which follows the rule of 'do no harm' which means to protect the poor from human rights violations by social actors and their organisations (Pogge 2009, 32).

Pogge's suggestions don't aim primarily at the social distribution of wealth (for this goal see Shue 1996). He thinks that it is too difficult and slow to change the morals of people in rich countries. His goal is to change the social rules of the supra-national organisations ruling world-society with no democratic legitimate.

What then could be the role of transnational social work chains in influencing the chains of social harm according to a concerted multi-level strategy? I suggest the following steps:

- the meta-reanalysis of poverty-narratives and studies all over the world in different sociocultural contexts – using multiple research methods – to show empirically the harm

to the individual, familial or local community level (see McGillivray & Clarke 2006; Banerjee & Duflo 2012; Duflo 2010; Cox & Pawar 2006)

- the organisation of social platforms on the local or national level to report, anonymously or publicly, cases of bonded labour, discrimination, exploitation, oppression, corruption etc., followed by marches claiming land, clean water, food, medical services etc., which in fact identify the actors causing poverty
- the strengthening of human and social rights on the nation-state level using the instruments of state and NGO reports to the UN, followed by a monitoring of the state activities concerning the recommendations of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
- external campaigning and internal lobbying for the democratisation of the supranational organisations such as WTO, World Bank, International Monetary Fund, European Union, and their sub-organisations, together with alliances of actors, politicians, open-minded economic leaders and experts who support the democratisation claims (for a precise blueprint see Stiglitz 2006)
- diffusion of counter knowledge negating the different myths surrounding the causation of and thus responsibility for world poverty.

Concerted action within such a transnational network would have to coordinate the information-flow from the bottom to the top and back again, as well as the plans and evaluated effects of social actions on each level. It seems that young generations worldwide use the rapidly growing 'transcultural subsystem' of general and social media much more intensively, systematically and in creative ways for social protest, virtual communities and concrete social action than social workers and their teachers. To construct the suggested 'social work chains' and with them forms of critical knowledge to disrupt the inhuman chains these media are indispensable. But their use must be based on disciplinary knowledge and research about world-society and social problems, a clear professional mandate and a social practice linking micro-, meso- and macro-levels of social action.

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