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**Green, Lorraine and Clarke, Karen. *Social policy for social work : placing social work in its wider context*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016, 240 pp., ISBN 978-0-7456-6082-0.**

The first thing I would like to say is that this is a good book. It is easy to read, very well structured and organized and the content is clear and ordered. The text adopts the structure of a university manual, offering a broad, rich and profound perspective on the evolution and current state of social work and changes in how its professionals act. An evolution that has taken place within the diverse and changing framework made possible by the different conceptions of and proposals for social policy in the United Kingdom, particularly throughout the last century.

As a manual, it is organized in a very didactic way, which without doubt facilitates reading. Each chapter is structured to include an introduction presenting the theme to be addressed, the concrete aims of the chapter and its potential contribution for social work scholars and professionals. The main points are then laid out and each chapter finishes with conclusions summarizing the main ideas. A series of discussion questions and a short supplementary bibliography for further reading on the subject close each chapter.

As the authors themselves point out, the book is aimed at students, professionals and educators interested in the links between social policy and social work. The aim is to offer a critical perspective on the current problems facing social work in the UK. With this in mind, it describes and provides an in-depth analysis of the political, social and economic context in which social work has evolved in that country.

Over seven chapters, which begin with an introduction and end with a final chapter of conclusions, the authors present and provide an exhaustive and highly documented systematic analysis of the evolution and the main social, political and economic issues that have affected, influenced and limited the professional development of social work in the UK.

The introduction is a statement of intent in which the authors explain what the reader will find in the text. First, they state the aims of the book and the audience to which it is addressed. This is followed by two questions: What is social work? And what is social policy? These questions serve as a starting point from which to highlight the different problems faced by social workers within the frameworks that social policy has defined for them at different points in its history. The way of understanding what is constituted and meant by “social problem” and the corresponding forms of intervention for addressing or resolving it will be key to understanding what social work is and what social workers can do in any given situation. The authors note that social workers act in complex, dynamic and high-risk situations that require interdisciplinary knowledge, the necessary powers to operate between the different agencies and administrations and, finally, highly effective analytical and communicative skills.

The final part of the introduction explains the logic behind the book and summarizes the chapter contents. Although the book constitutes a whole and each chapter is built on the knowledge of the previous one, the authors state that it is also possible to read each one as a separate unit.

The first chapter is historical. Given that social work has constituted an important part of welfare provision since the nineteenth century, it is necessary to explain both the roots of welfare and the role played by social work professionals in this respect. To this end, an analysis of the beginnings and expansion of the welfare state in the UK is presented, along with the changes undergone by social work and social workers under the respective frameworks of Thatcherism, New Labour, the Third Way and the 2010-15 Coalition Government.

The second chapter analyses the main ideologies that have supported or shaped welfare policy in the UK. The authors' idea here is to provide readers with a critical eye to help them interpret both social policies and the methods by which they are implemented. The chapter focuses on the presentation, analysis and contrast of Liberalism and Neoliberalism, Conservatism and Neo-conservatism, Marxism and Socialism and, finally, the Third Way. Based on this analysis, the authors evaluate the impact each has had on social work professionals and the role each of these political perspectives assigns to them.

The following chapter focuses on why, how and under what circumstances a given situation comes to be defined as a "social problem". Identification of the social problem is a social and political process that is constructed on the basis of how it is understood; in the authors' view, this is always linked to a certain theory on society. Knowing different sociological perspectives regarding the nature of society and ways of building and recognizing social problems is key to social workers, as they have to cope with a great variety of problems. The authors position themselves in favour of the perspective of social constructivism as being the most useful for social workers.

The fourth chapter presents an analysis of a whole set of concepts and perspectives that are key to social workers' objectives and actions. Concepts such as citizenship, human rights, social justice, diversity, equity, inequality and oppression are presented and analysed by highlighting the ways in which they are interpreted, the semantic disputes that surround them and the ways in which they are used within the framework of different theories regarding social justice. The authors present these by evaluating the way in which social workers use them in the context of Anti-Discriminatory or Anti-Oppressive Practice (ADP/AOP).

The next chapter analyses the changes that have taken place in institutions and organizations that employ social workers, in the ways of providing services based on relationships between central and local governments, and in the processes of marketization to which many services have been subjected. All of these processes affect both the development and shaping of social workers' professional identity, as well as their relationships with other professionals.

Chapter six analyses the practice of social work based on the relations existing between the state and individuals. The socio-political evolution of recent years induced by a highly competitive market has meant that what were previously “clients” for social workers are now “consumers”. Likewise, the criterion of access to services has changed from “necessity” to “risk”, with the consequent need to establish evidence to account for this risk.

Although the book focuses on the UK, chapter seven addresses social work and globalization processes, as more and more supranational institutions and organizations increasingly influence and shape the policies implemented in different countries. This chapter analyses the impact of globalization processes (technological, social, cultural, economic, etc.) on social work and the actions of its professionals.

As mentioned earlier, the book ends with a chapter of conclusions summarizing the key ideas developed in it. It also highlights some ways in which social workers can apply the approaches presented in the book to defend social work and pursue those objectives which are proper to the profession: social justice, equality and human rights. When all is said and done, as the authors point out, *“social workers are, after all, ‘social’ workers, not teachers or healthcare workers, so they need to understand the social and the political (p. 174).*

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