Social pedagogy: Historical traditions and transnational connections

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Abstract: With over 150 years of history, social pedagogy is both an interdisciplinary scholarly field of inquiry and a field of practice that is situated in the intersection of three areas of human activity: education, social work and community development. Although social pedagogy has different emphases and approaches depending on particular historical and geographical contexts, a common theme is that it deals with the connections between educational and social dynamics, or put in a different way, it is concerned with the educational dimension of social issues and the social dimensions of educational issues. The first part of this paper analyzes the history of the field of social pedagogy since its origins until today, with a focus on transnational flows between Europe and the Americas. The second part of the paper discusses the main issues raised in this special issue of EPAA, and extracts the main threads and connections among the different papers included in the volume.
Keywords: social pedagogy; historical traditions; community education; transnational flows.

Pedagogía social: tradiciones históricas y conexiones transnacionales
Resumen: Con más de 150 años de historia, la pedagogía social es tanto un objeto de reflexión académica e investigación interdisciplinaria como un campo de prácticas concretas que se localiza en la intersección de tres áreas de actividad humana: educación, trabajo social y desarrollo comunitario. Aunque en la pedagogía social se pueden identificar diferentes énfasis y perspectivas dependiendo de contextos históricos y geográficos particulares, una temática común es que establece conexiones entre dinámica educativas y sociales, o dicho de otra manera, se ocupa de la dimensión educativa de los problemas sociales y de la dimensión social de las prácticas educativas. En la primera parte de este trabajo analizamos la historia de la pedagogía social desde sus orígenes hasta nuestros días, prestando especial atención a los flujos transnacionales entre Europa y algunos países de las Américas. En la segunda parte del documento examinamos los principales temas tratados en este número especial de la revista AAPE, extraemos los principales temas, y establecemos algunas relaciones entre los diferentes contribuciones.
Palabras clave: pedagogía social; tradiciones históricas; educación comunitaria; conexiones transnacionales.

Pedagogia social: conexões históricas e transnacionais
Resumo: Com mais de 150 anos de história, pedagogia social é tanto, um objeto de reflexão acadêmica e de pesquisa interdisciplinar como um campo de praticas específicas localizado na intersecção de três áreas da atividade humana: educação, assistência social e desenvolvimento comunitário. Embora na pedagogia social e possível identificar diferentes perspectivas e ênfases dependendo dos contextos históricos e geográficos, um tema comum é que ela estabelece conexões entre a educação e as dinâmicas sociais, ou dito de outra forma, lida com a dimensão educativa dos problemas sociais e da dimensão social das práticas educativas. Na primeira parte deste artigo, analisamos a história da pedagogia social desde suas origens até o presente, prestando especial atenção aos fluxos transnacionais entre a Europa e alguns países das Américas. Na segunda parte do trabalho, examinar os principais temas abordados neste dossiê da revista AAPE, extraímos os principais temas e estabelecer algumas relações entre as diferentes contribuições.
Palavras-chave: pedagogia social; tradições históricas; educação comunitária; conexões transnacionais.

Introduction

In this paper we provide a brief account of the pre-history and the history of social pedagogy, describe different traditions, discuss transnational flows of ideas and practices, and introduce the main arguments of the ten articles that are included in this special issue of EPAA. To the best of our knowledge, this volume of Education Policy Analysis Archives constitutes the first special issue of a North American journal dedicated exclusively to social pedagogy. The volume includes papers in English, Spanish and Portuguese from continental Europe, the UK, Scandinavia and the Americas that deal with a variety of contexts and situations. With over 150 years of history, social pedagogy is both an interdisciplinary academic field of inquiry and a field of practice that is situated in the intersection of three areas of human activity: education, social work and community development. Although social pedagogy has different emphases and approaches in different historical and geographical contexts, a common theme is that it deals with the connections between educational and social dynamics, or put in a different way, deals with the educational dimension of social issues and the social dimensions of educational issues.

Like any other educational or social intervention, social pedagogy could be used to reproduce societal inequalities and reinforce mechanisms of social control, but it could also be used

to empower oppressed groups and contribute to social transformation. Without ignoring the former, in these pages we would like to focus on those humanitarian traditions of social pedagogy that have emancipatory and progressive goals. These traditions tend to work primarily with the most marginalized members of society, have a holistic approach to learning, are oriented towards community building, draw on the experience and knowledge of participants, connect the curriculum to local problems, encourage a dialogical relationship between educators and learners, and acknowledge that, in order to be effective in the long run, pedagogical interventions must be accompanied by justice-oriented policies.

It is pertinent to note that the literature on social pedagogy also acknowledges the existence of writers and practitioners who have not necessarily referred explicitly to social pedagogy in their work but have made significant contributions to social pedagogy. Among the many examples (some of them noted in the articles of this issue) are Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, Robert Owen, Anton Makarenko, John Dewey, Jane Addams, Myles Horton, Moses Coady, Grace Abbott, and Paulo Freire. In different ways and in different degrees, they combined principles of social work, community development and education. They also shared the humanitarian and empancipatory aims of social pedagogy, as well as its confidence in the potential of community action to change society for the better.

Social pedagogy: A brief historical account

The foundations of social pedagogy: 19th century precedents
Social pedagogy has a long tradition that can be traced back to 19th century Europe. The literature on the topic tends to identify German educator Karl Mager (1810-1858) as the person who coined the term 'social pedagogy' in 1844. However, some authors (e.g. Sinker and Braches-Chyrek 2009) argue that it was an older contemporary of Mager, namely the educational philosopher Friedrich Diestersweg (1790-1866), who introduced the concept for the first time. Regardless of who introduced the concept for the first time, both Mager and Diestersweg shared the belief that education should have a social mission, and that such mission should go beyond the individual's acquisition of knowledge and focus on the acquisition of culture by society and on activities oriented to benefit the community. Several of the ideas put forward by Mager and Diestersweg were influenced by the educational principles of Swiss pedagogue Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827). In the social pedagogy literature, Pestalozzi is usually recognized for two contributions. One is his holistic approach to education that aimed at a balance between 'head, heart and hands'. The head refers to the role of education in stimulating intellectual curiosity and in developing cognitive capacities. The heart is a metaphor that alludes to the emotional dimension and the moral orientation of education, and refers to instilling a sense of direction, a moral compass that recognizes the dignity of all human beings, the importance of love, compassion, and concern for the less fortunate. In short, Pestalozzi's approach integrated intellectual, moral and practical dimensions of education (Heafford 1967; Soëtard 1994; Rosendal Jensen in this issue). Pestalozzi's second contribution to social pedagogy was his attempt to reconcile the tension between the individual and social goals of education. This implies the development of educational principles and practices to foster the autonomy, freedom and self-realization of learners, on the one hand, and the development of responsible and engaged citizens who are concerned with the common good.

Pestalozzi, in turn, in turn was inspired by the some of the ideas of Swiss-French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), the author of *The Social Contract* and *Emile*. Indeed, as Valerie Petrie points out in this issue, in the DNA of social pedagogy it is possible to recognize the ideas of several 18th Century enlightenment philosophers and visionaries. Alongside Rousseau, Petrie

mentions the ideas of Voltaire, Kant, Fichter, and Owen. The case of the utopian reformer Robert Owen (1771-1858) is particularly relevant here, not only because he discussed the key role of education in social change (as expressed, for instance, in his 1816 essay *A New View of Society*) but he also because he attempted to put his ideas into practice in two continents, first in New Lanark (Scotland) and later in New Harmony, Indiana (USA). In these communities, Owen promoted social welfare and cooperation, integrated children's education and adult learning activities in the same buildings, and proposed an educational approach that foreshadowed some of the principles of social pedagogy:

> Where are these rational practices to be taught and acquired? Not within the four walls of a bare building, in which formality predominates … but in the nursery, playground, fields, gardens, workshops, manufactures, museums and class-rooms…The facts collected from all these sources will be concentrated, explained, discussed, made obvious to all, and shown in their direct application to practice in all the business of life (Owen,1842).

In Owen's proposals we can observe a holistic approach to education that is guided by a social project. Interestingly, Owen's educational approach was partly inspired by Pestalozzi. Another contemporary of Owen who tried to put philosophical principles into practice was the humanist thinker Nikolaj Grundtvig (1783-1872), the founder of the folk schools in Denmark. Guided by the concepts of 'living word' and 'school for life', Grundtvig's educational work focused on the poorer members of society, and the folk schools emphasized individual enlightenment and cooperative work (Fleming 1998). The curriculum of the folk schools promoted personal development through a broad variety of topics that went well beyond vocational training, provided a high degree of pedagogical freedom for teachers and students, and did not have final exams. In the folk schools, teachers and students lived and worked together, learned from each other, and shared the running of the school. Moreover, they connected their activities to cooperative agriculture, community associations and the like (Lindeman 1929; Lawson 1994). As we will see below, the ideas of Grundtvig and the inspiration of the folk schools would eventually cross the ocean in the early 20th century and influence the North American adult education movement through the work of progressive educators like Joseph Hart, Edward Lindeman, Royce Pitkin and Myles Horton.

Social pedagogy in the 20th century

As a field, the social pedagogy emerged in the early 20th century. There is a consensus in the literature on the topic that the founding father of social pedagogy was the German philosopher and educator Paul Natorp (1854-1924), who in 1899 published the book *Sozialpädagogik: Theorie der Willensbildung auf der Grundlage der Gemeinschaft* (Social Pedagogy: The theory of educating the human will into a community asset). Natorp argued that all pedagogy should be social, and that educators should always consider the interaction between educational processes and societal processes. For this reason, he observed, the field of social pedagogy should be concerned both with the social aspects of education and with the educational aspects of social life (Natorp 1904:94). As Wildermeersch suggests in this issue, Natorp reacted against the individualizing psychological and educational approaches prevalent at that time.

In the development of these ideas, he was influenced by German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) and by his contemporary German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies' (1855-1936). Kant called for an ethical community based on mutual trust. Tönnies, at the age of 32, published an influential book titled Community and Civil Society (1887), in which he discussed the tensions

between Gesellshaft (large society) and Gemeinshaft (small community), and argued that while the former is characterized by individualism, the latter is guided by solidarity. As suggested by the subtitle of his book, Natorp believed that the model of Gemeinshaft had more potential to build a world of universal happiness in which people would achieve their true humanity (Hämaläinen 2012; Stephens 2013). At that moment, social pedagogy would no longer be needed. Natorp believed that social pedagogy could make a contribution to the larger project of democracy and his overall approach, based on the mobilization of the labor movement, was progressive and emancipatory.

After WWI (1914-1918), in the context of the democratic reforms of the Weimar Republic, social pedagogy took an impetus thanks to the influential work of another German philosopher and educator: Herman Nohl (1879-1960). Through the combination of theoretical and practical elements, Nohl played a key role during the 1920s in developing the basis for social pedagogy as an autonomous discipline and as a movement. With Nohl, social pedagogy took a more critical stance, interpreting reality from a hermeneutical perspective and developing a more structural analysis of the causes that produce social inequalities and human suffering. Nohl argued that the departure point of theory development in social pedagogy is a concrete reality, that social pedagogy should help to integrate all the youth initiatives, programs and efforts, and that the main purpose of social pedagogy is to foster the overall wellbeing of participants. To pursue this purpose effectively, social pedagogues should undertake specific social pedagogical actions but also contribute to the transformation of the social conditions that affect the welfare of participants.

For Nohl, the specific social pedagogical interventions should focus on social help, which he conceptualized as a holistic educative process based on love, awareness, and human dignity. Nohl's approach was holistic because he contended that social help should be considered as educative actions that take into account the particular historical, cultural, personal and social contexts of a given situation. Nohl also helped helped to design a university training program for social pedagogues. Given Nohl's perspective, it is not surprising that, as a discipline, social pedagogy became more closely associated to social work and sociology than to psychology. Moreover, at that time social pedagogy was also associated with work with homeless children and orphans. The locus of social pedagogical interventions was situated in the 'third milieu' outside the family and the school. Hence, in those years social pedagogy had a particular focus on the protection of vulnerable children and youth, and was understood as the theory and practice of child and youth services (Nohl 1974; Hämaläinen 2003; Cousée and Verschelden 2011). Later on, it would take a lifelong perspective and would cover all ages, but the identification with children and youth has been so strong that even in a recent book, Kornbeck and Rosendal Jensen (2011) felt necessary to clarify in the title of their introductory piece that social pedagogy is "not only for infants, orphans and young people".

Despite the humanitarian and democratic intentions of its founders, in the 1930s and 1940s social pedagogy was misappropriated by the Nazis, who adapted its community building and service elements to the education of the Hitlerian youth. It would take several decades for social pedagogy to disassociate itself from that dark and painful episode of its history (see Lorenz 1994; Sunker & Otto 1997; Smith 2009; Rosendal Jensen in this issue). After the Second World War, and particularly during the 1960s and 1970s, a new generation of progressive social pedagogues revisited Noll's ideas. Among them were German educators Klaus Mollenhauer (1928-1998) and Hans Thiersch (1935-), who were influenced by the Frankfurt School and whose approach drew on critical hermeneutics and critical theory. Mollenhauer and Thiersch continued Nohl's enterprise of shaping social pedagogy as an autonomous discipline, but now with a stronger emphasis on social criticism and social emancipation through flexible and experimental non-formal education programs. In those years, the theory of social pedagogy moved away from philosophy and anthropology and moved

towards critical sociology (Hämäläinen 2003). During the 20th century, social pedagogy was adopted in a variety of European countries such as Belgium, Holland, Hungary, Slovenia, Sweden and Denmark. Interestingly, in Denmark social pedagogy had problems establishing itself as an academic discipline but it was successful in becoming a legally recognized profession (Whinter-Jensen 2011). In many other countries it was possible to identify educational interventions that were generally aligned with the principles and practices of social pedagogy, but usually under different names (e.g. non-formal education, social work, community development, socio-cultural animation, andragogy, non-formal education, and so on). We will explore this situation in the next section, with a particular focus on transnational flows between Europe and the Americas.

International ebbs and flows

At the dawn of the 20th century, while Natorp was refining his ideas in Germany, a young Russian educator named Anton Makarenko (1888-1939) was developing an educational philosophy that focused on democracy and cooperation. In his first year of teaching, a young Makarenko has already made efforts to establish regular school-community relations and to undertake teaching/learning activities beyond the school walls. A few years later, he called for more interaction among different educational institutions such as families, schools, clubs, workers' cooperatives, public agencies and local community organizations. He also believed that education should be a lifelong process. In the 1920s, during the first decade of the Soviet revolution, he organized self-sufficient colonies for homeless children and juvenile delinquents (many of them orphans). As part of his a holistic approach that integrated mental, moral and physical education, Makarenko combined the school curriculum with productive labor in the farms. Unlike common practice at that time, Makarenko rejected the use of physical punishment, and established a system of self-governance in the colonies. Through this work, Makarenko achieved impressive results, integrating into society many marginalized children and youth. Although he contended that education must foster both individual development and community building, Makarenko believed, like Natorp that individual interests should be subordinated to the needs of the community and the common good. As Rosendal Jensen suggests in his article of this issue of EPAA, Makarenko's insights and accomplishments on group dynamics in youth work could be considered an important contribution to the field of social pedagogy (see also Eriksson & Markström 2003).

Also in the first decades of the 20th century, some North American educators came in contact with some progressive European educational philosophies and practices, even if they were not called 'social pedagogy'. As noted in the first section of this article, people like Joseph Hart, Edward Lindeman, Royce Pitkin, and Myles Horton were particularly interested in the ideas of Grundtvig and in the working of the Danish Folk Schools. Hart visited Denmark, and was impressed by the Folk Schools for acting as community learning centers that activated the collective intelligence of the people to address community issues, for promoting self-governance through citizen community councils, and for applying the scientific method to solve social problems (Hart 1926).

Around the same time, Eduard Lindeman, arguably the most important North American adult educator of the first half of the 20th century, also visited Denmark, and he was inspired and influenced by the Folk Schools. As in the English workers' education movement, Lindeman saw in the folk school movement a real example of social and educational interventions with high potential not only for individual growth but also to promote community wellbeing and social change (Lindeman 1926; Stubblefield 1988). As he proclaimed in his influential *The Meaning of Adult Education*, "adult education will become an agency of progress if its short-term goal of self-

improvement can be made compatible with a long-term, experimental but resolute policy of changing the social order" (Lindeman 1926). Some years later, in *The Sociology of Adult Education,* he would make a statement that nicely summarizes the essence of social pedagogy: "every social action group should at the same time be an adult education group, and I go even as far as to believe that all successful adult education groups sooner or later become social action groups (Lindeman 1945).

In the late-twenties, Royce "Tim" Pitkin, a graduate student at Columbia University (New York), learned about the Danish Folk Schools through a book authored by Edgar W. Knight, an education professor at the University of North Carolina who had spent some time doing research in Denmark and devoted parts of the book (titled *Among the Danes*) to analyze the effectiveness of the folk schools. Pitkin, who was studying with John Dewey, was particularly interested in connecting educational institutions to the community (a central theme in social pedagogy) and in adapting the Danish model to residential adult education. With these goals in mind, in 1938 Pitkin founded Goddard College, the first college to offer residential programs for single parents receiving public assistance, and one of the first to include adult learning in its charter. Goddard College soon became a progressive and innovative institution, and today it combines undergraduate programs with nontraditional graduate programs and adult residential programs (Knight 1927; Benson & Adams 1987; Stubblefield n/d).

Also in the late twenties, a young student from Tennessee named Myles Horton was in New York searching for an educational model that could be appropriate to the realities of the Deep South. While studying at the Union Theological Seminary, Horton visited labor colleges and settlement houses, and other innovative educational initiatives of that time. By 1930, he attended the School of Sociology of the University of Chicago, and there he became familiarized with the work of Jane Addams at Hull House (see Köngeter & Schroeer in this issue). The next year, a Danish Lutheran Minister named Aage Moller suggested the folk schools as a model for his educational project. Excited about this prospect, Horton began to study Danish culture and language to better understand the potential of folk schools for developing an educational project where participants become agents of social change (Adams and Horton 1975). An avid reader, he became acquainted with the Danish folk schools through Lindeman's *The Meaning of Adult Education* and Hart's *Light from the North*, both published in 1926. The next step for Horton was to travel to Denmark to learn first hand about the folk schools. He went to Denmark in 1931, and became impressed by the flexibility of the curriculum, the cordial and friendly teacher-student interactions, and the use of culture as a vehicle for learning. Horton returned to the USA in early 1932, and in November of that year founded the Highlander Center, which became a paradigmatic example of popular education in North America and that today still conceives itself as a catalyst for grassroots organizing and social movement building.

When talking about Pitkin we briefly mentioned John Dewey (1859-1952), who taught at the University of Chicago and Columbia University, and is considered one of the most influential educational thinkers of the 20th century. Again, without necessarily using the concept of 'social pedagogy' as such, Dewey shared several of its principles. For instance, he believed in the importance of social learning, which values the experience of learning while participating in a community, and in the role of education to help people to apply their associative intelligence to address issues of concern, and to foster societal democratization and social change. Some of the ideas of Dewey travelled to South America through Anisio Teixeira (1900-1971), a Brazilian intellectual and prolific writer who studied at Columbia's Teacher College with Dewey in 1928-1929. Inspired by the tenets of progressive education, pragmatism and humanism, Teixeira introduced Dewey's ideas to an entire generation of Brazilians through his translation of *Democracy and Education*

in 1936, and even tried to implement some of those ideas in the public education system (Geribello 1977; Gadotti 2001).

It was precisely via Anisio Teixeira that a young educator called Paulo Freire learned about Dewey's contributions. In his doctoral thesis, which was based on his experiences in a university extension program, Freire made references to the work of John Dewey. At that time, Freire also became acquainted with the work of Anton Makarenko (briefly discussed above), especially with his texts on authority, obedience and freedom (De Castro & Ghiggi 2009). Years later, the ideas of Paulo Freire would travel to North America and Europe, particularly after the publication of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in 1970. Freire (1970) emphasized ideas that were central to social pedagogy, including the importance of group work, dialogue, reflective action, consciousness raising, local knowledge and community building in the project of humanization, emancipation and social transformation (Schugurensky 2011). For this reason, it is not surprising that Freire is considered a significant figure in the field of social pedagogy, even if he didn't use this term. For a more detailed discussion of Freire's contribution to social pedagogy, see Stephens 2013, and the contributions of Wildermeersch, Rosendal Jensen, Turlau and Machado to this issue of EPAA.

We could include many other examples of transnational flows of social pedagogical ideas between Europe and the Americas. For instance, we could talk about inter-oceanic influences in social work and in the new settlement movement, but this is a topic that Köngeter and Schroeer cover in depth in their article of this issue. If we had space, we could also discuss the university extension of work carried out by Moses Coady and his team in Nova Scotia (Canada), which brilliantly combined adult education and cooperativism, and ignited the Antigonish Movement. This work, like the work of Freire, Dewey, Horton, Addams and others, were premised on the same basic assumption of social pedagogy, that is, that education can make an important contribution to changing social circumstances (Hämäläinen 2003:71).

In any case, we have raised these few examples in this section to illustrate three main points. The first is that on numerous occasions, scholars and practitioners in youth and adult education, community development, social work and related areas have espoused social pedagogical principles, values and methods in their theories and practices without necessarily using the term 'social pedagogy'. The second point is that, although social pedagogy was officially born in Germany and took off in a few European countries in the early 20th century, it is possible to identify social pedagogical ideas and practices in many countries around the world, even if the term is seldom used in those countries. For these reasons, the literature on social pedagogy often acknowledges these contributions to the field. The last point is that social pedagogical ideas have been flowing back and forth during the 20th century in formal ways, but also in many informal ways that are difficult to capture by researchers.

The 21st century

The main themes and concerns of 20th century social pedagogy are still present in the 21st century. Among them are a holistic approach to learning that considers the whole person, an integrated approach that considers the interplay of individual and social dynamics, an interdisciplinary approach that brings together different theoretical and professional fields, and an overall interest in addressing social problems –and fostering social change- through educational and social interventions. The focus on humanization, democratization and social justice remains, as well as the emphasis on the most excluded and marginalized populations. At the same time, with the intensification of communication technologies and the spread of the internet, the classic concept of community of Tonnies' era (geographical communities, often small villages) is changing, and

becomes more complex and fluid. For instance, there are social pedagogues today working with diasporic communities that often include online communities.

Also, although in the past some social pedagogy practices have focused on children and youth, other practices on adults, and others on seniors, the present consensus is towards an integrated and encompassing approach. Indeed, today social pedagogy has a lifelong perspective, and therefore includes all age groups. Likewise, although in the past many social pedagogy interventions were guided by a deficit orientation, today we can observe a shift towards a developmental orientation that recognizes and values the experiences and knowledge of participants and the assets of the community, and attempts to better understand dynamics of resilience in adverse contexts (see Martins & Barros Araujo in this issue).

In the 21st century we also notice the incorporation of themes that were not sufficiently attended in the past, like environmental issues, the arts, or GLBQT rights. Moreover, with the detrimental effects of neoliberal policies becoming more evident, there is an interest to examine the impact of government policies on people's well being, and the potential of social pedagogical efforts to change those policies (see articles by Rodriguez Fernandez and by Counsell and Boody in this issue). There is also growing interest for understanding the connections between social pedagogy and social movements, like the disability movement or the landless movement (see articles by Eriksson and by Turlau in this issue).

In the early 21st century, we are observing a revival of social pedagogy, and a growing interest for it in the United Kingdom, in Spain and Portugal, in North America, and in Latin America. We are also observing the publication of books on social pedagogy in English language (something very infrequent in the 20th century) and the creation of undergraduate and graduate programs on social pedagogy in many different contexts. For instance, to provide just one example close to home, the Arizona State University has a Masters program in social pedagogy that is located in the School of Social Transformation, and the University of London has a Masters program in social pedagogy hosted by the Institute of Education (see Pat Petrie's article in this issue). Moreover, today there are several national and international associations of social pedagogy that bring together academics and practitioners. Among them are the Sociedad Iberoamericana de Pedagogía Social (SIPS) and the Nordic Educational Research Association (NERA). Some conversations are taking place about the organization of a world congress of social pedagogy that could bring together the different associations.

Social pedagogy: ten international perspectives

Among the common tensions encountered within the field of social pedagogy is an argument over the academic and professional ambiguities that prevent us from delimiting its nature, form, and scope. In his contribution to this special issue, *Exploring different perspectives of Social Pedagogy: towards a complex and integrated approach*, Xavier Ucar of Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and President of Iberoamerican Society of Social Pedagogy, points to six "misunderstandings" that have undermined formation of a coherent conception of social pedagogy as an occupation, a space for scholarship, and an educational practice. He discusses these misunderstanding in relation to six areas: cognitive, political, scientificity, action, normativeness, and social.

Ucar's analysis of these six misunderstandings offers explanation of just why social pedagogy remains so difficult to define. However, he also finds that, despite this vagueness compared to other social science fields, the "complexity of social pedagogy fits well with the inherent complexity of the social." In this context, he asserts that the dynamic and unpredictable nature of socio-cultural

relationships presents opportunities within pedagogical practices that "open the door to the creativity of agents and to the constant search for new paths, new questions and new answers."

Given the contextual variations of social pedagogy throughout the world, both locational and temporal, it is not surprising that several writers for this special issue have taken the opportunity to emphasize just how difficult it is to quantify the field's characteristics. In his contribution, *Social pedagogy in the modern*, Niels Rosendal Jensen from Aarhus University in Denmark shares his views on the infinitely wide-ranging approaches to the practices of social pedagogy and also the changing socio-historical developments the field has experienced over time. In addition, he explicates the connection between the field's ambiguity and its internal struggle to present itself (unambiguously) as a mature science.

The tension caused by social pedagogy's often conflicting representation leads Rosendal Jensen to conclude that the field's practitioners must learn to be comfortable presenting a "Janus face" among the academic and professional communities that govern their conduct. That is, social pedagogues must be at once willing to accept strictures intended to regulate behavior while managing the inevitable unpredictability of socially and culturally constructed human relationships. In order to accomplish this rather daunting task, Rosendal Jensen envisions a cohered professional community committed the following six principles:

- An empirical justification of knowledge about the research subject, including definitions of key disciplinary concepts (theoretical development and empirical based research).
- A further clarification of social pedagogy's function determination.
- The development of customized research tools.
- An evaluation of the organizational structures as well as the professional forms of organization of work.
- An evaluation of current professional intervention practices.
- The formulation of new concepts of and to use for practice at both intervention and organizational levels.

While adherence to a formal set of tasks or ideals may seem constrictive, Rosendal Jensen concludes that this type of normalization can exist in harmony with "a relational environment" in which "institutional practices are not a foregone conclusion, but rather a (re)production of social practices." In short, he argues that social pedagogy can establish legitimacy as a self-regulated professional endeavor without losing the ability to adapt to dynamic social realities.

This special issue also includes a personal narrative from Belgium tracing more than four decades of scholarly activity within the field of social pedagogy. In *Transitions in a life-world: Looking backward and forward after forty-five years of social pedagogical research and teaching in Leuven*, the University of Leuven's Daniel Wildemeersch reflects on what has come to recognize over the course of his career as four distinct stages of evolution in pedagogic theory and practice. They are identified as an initial pioneering phase, a crisis and recovery phase, a multiplicity phase, and finally, a phase of reinvention.

The pioneering phase, arising out of a climate of increasing radicalization in the post-war, welfare-state economy of Europe, coalesced around a central theory of andragogy that "combined practices of adult education, community work, social work and personnel work." As the social pedagogy program at Leuven (and other locales) matured, the initial enthusiasm that fostered its growth began to wane as the economic viability of modern welfare states came into question. When conditions improved in the latter half of the nineteen-eighties, research and training priorities of many schools shifted from a holistic andragogic approach in adult education to an emphasis more narrowly placed on workforce development. This suggests that a split in the philosophical direction of social pedagogy programs at the university level – between proponents of "work related

education" and educationalists with more liberal socio-cultural agendas – could primarily be imputed to the epistemological orientations of the scholars leading school departments.

The comprehensive view with which Wildemeersch approaches his experience allows us to consider how social pedagogy shapes and, in turn, is shaped by ever changing social relations. At Leuven, it seems the direction of research and training in social pedagogy has returned to its project-oriented roots in an effort to address rapid changes in socio-cultural realities (resulting from accelerated technology, globalization and professionalization). Its reinvention in theory and practice has resulted in various outcomes, both positive and negative. Reflecting on these changes (looking "forward and backward"), this paper's conclusion explores various implications of societal transformation for scholarship and practice in social pedagogy.

Though it is widely acknowledged social pedagogy has a firm foothold in many European countries, its foundation and advancement in the United Kingdom (UK) is less secure. Offering a historical overview of social pedagogy's road toward recognition in Britain, Pat Petrie of the Institute of Education, University of London suggests a host of reasons why. Her paper, *Social Pedagogy in the UK: Gaining a firm foothold?,* highlights how British approaches to policy, practice, and academic (theoretical) aspects of the field have traditionally been set apart from continental developments. Not only has the UK traditionally suffered from a certain amount of geo-political insularity, but also, until quite recently little effort has been made to articulate a definition of social pedagogy in English.

Petrie notes that, academically and professionally, practitioners of social pedagogy in the UK have not pursued the link between the theory and practice of educating youth (so prevalent in countries such as Germany and Holland). Therefore, "the opportunity to introduce social pedagogy across the children's workforce has not been taken up and there has been no move, as yet, by central government or its agencies to develop social pedagogy either as an occupation or as a profession." This fundamental difference in the way social pedagogues in Britain reflect on (or ignore) the complex relationships between the "social" and the "pedagogic" ultimately leads Petrie to argue that such a connection – considered specifically in a UK context – is necessary to build sustainable interest to support the field in Britain.

In this special issue, by which we are presented with articles from both of the Americas and a number of reflections that focus on the field in the U.K. and Europe, it is clear that social pedagogy's reach is no longer limited to its place of origin in continental Europe. In their article, *Variations of Social Pedagogy – Explorations of the Transnational Settlement Movement*, authors Stefan Köngeter and Wolfgang Schroeer, from the Institute for Social Pedagogy and Organization Studies at Germany's University of Hildesheim, offer a specific example of how the proliferation of social pedagogic practice has occurred transnationally. Their work examines the development of the settlement movement in separate national contexts – in the UK, Germany, the United States, and Canada. Citing key texts from the settlement movements within these countries, the authors illuminate the evolution of disparate (but related) variants of socio-pedagogical thinking.

Köngeter and Schroeer argue that the establishment of social pedagogy in thought and deed is not essentially determined by the individual nation state in which it develops, but by a common "trilateral socio-pedagogical constellation" primarily concerned with the "diagnosis of social conditions, the pedagogical organization of social relations, and the expansion of normatively defined agency." This conception is posited in stark relief to canonical texts that have taken a diachronic/historical approach, which often prevents us from recognizing the place-to-place overlap of ideas and actions found in seemingly unrelated social movements. By the authors' argument, prevailing social conditions and "translation of knowledge and concepts" play a much larger role than locale in the occurrences of varied socio-pedagogical phenomena.

While several of the authors in this special issue discuss the formal recognition of social pedagogy in the professional and academic spheres (and the lack of it), Rebecca Tarlau, from the University of California, Berkeley, presents us with an example of 21st century "social(ist)" education that once resided outside authoritatively sanctioned social institutions, but now encroaches on them. Through the intertwined lenses of three critical theorists (Antonio Gramsci; Paolo Freire; and Paul Willis), *The Social(ist) Pedagogies of the MST: Towards New Relations of Production in the Brazilian Countryside*, examines the intentional pedagogical activities of a Latin American popular education effort known as the Brazilian Landless Workers' Movement's (MST, or movimento dos sem-terra).

Tarlau argues that MST socialist strategies, which call on its members to control the economic means of production and develop community-based socio-cultural identities through educational practice, have the potential to disrupt the hegemonic social relations inherent in modern capitalist states (though by no means inevitably). She presents evidence of ways in which the MST uses an emancipatory approach to education (Freire) to help residents of poor, rural communities wage a "war of position" (Gramsci) in resistance to the forces of cultural and social reproduction (Willis). Through exploration of notes from her own field work, analysis of MST documents, and reflection on social(ist) pedagogues who argue freedom requires opposition, Tarlau argues this particular brand of social pedagogy represents "a concrete attempt to interrupt social reproduction" with the potential to allow MST children to form "a collective ideology against forms of oppression."

In the article *Policies against social exclusion and their relationship to Social Pedagogy: Guaranteed Minimum Income programs and Basic Income*, Juan Ramón Rodriguez Fernandez from the Consejería de Bienestar Social de Asturias (Spain) argues that in the practice of social pedagogy it is possible to find an ambivalence between the maintenance and legitimation of an unequal social order, on one hand, and the struggle for social emancipation and the collective creation of a more egalitarian and just society, on the other. In the context of Welfare States, Rodriguez pays particular attention to the relations between social pedagogy and policies aimed at addressing social exclusion such as basic income programs. He argues that Guaranteed Minimum Income programs should not be considered as charity, but as part of a broader strategy to equalize opportunities in society and promote social change. Rodriguez argues that the dominant educational discourse is based on the notion of employability. This discourse assumes that education is the main responsible of high unemployment rates because it does not properly train human resources for the needs of the economy. A related assumption is that social exclusion is the outcome of the educational and personal deficits of individuals. He contends that the pedagogical consequence of this understanding is the widespread adoption of competence-based approaches, which are functional to the needs of the market.

In this pedagogical model, the roles of educators and students are clearly delimited: the teacher is the active subject who transmits knowledge, and the student is a passive receptor of that knowledge. This is, in essence, the banking model of education that Freire and others criticized many decades ago. The only difference is that now learners are also seen as entrepreneurial subjects who are solely responsible for their economic success of failure. In this context, Rodriguez calls for a critical and progressive social pedagogy that is part of a broader strategy for social change that includes social policies such as a guaranteed minimum income. In this strategy, notes Rodriguez, social pedagogy can play a positive role through its commitment to the cause of the most marginalized and oppressed members of society, its counter-hegemonic approach to the understanding of social and educational dynamics, its promotion of a more genuine democracy based on justice and participation, and its pedagogical practices that foster dialogue, collective construction of knowledge, cooperation, and social transformation.

Approaching social pedagogy with an eye toward an American education program, Shelly Counsell and Robert Boody, from the University of Northern Iowa, have contributed a manuscript titled, *Social Pedagogy and Liberal Egalitarian Compensatory Programs: The Case of Head Start.* In it, they make the case that Head Start, an early childhood program for low income families established during Lyndon Johnson's Great Society movement of the 1960s, has largely failed in its goal of raising the educational performance the nation's poor students (and its larger goal of eradicating poverty altogether) because it was founded on a Liberal Egalitarian lifeworld view laden with "deficit/disadvantage assumptions." Tracing the history of the program, its philosophical underpinnings, and tensions, the authors cite evidence showing Head Start's educational impact has been uneven at best – perhaps as a result of further segregating and colonizing already marginalized children. They further suggest any compensatory program that segregates participants based on socioeconomic status is destined to fail in achieving its goals.

However, the authors also note that Head Start has yielded benefits that are harder to measure. These include proliferation of comprehensive health and nutritional services for young children and their families and increases in parental involvement and empowerment. They suggest "student achievement and development as well as social justice are best achieved through individual empowerment and full participation as valued community members within integrated educational activities and settings." Counsell and Boody further maintain that Head start would be more effective if it were to become a universal early childhood program, abandoning the Meritocratic Utilitarian orientation that has undermined its success. In making this argument, they leave open the opportunity for social pedagogues, with strong commitments to educational empowerment, community development, and holistic services (social, cultural and economic), to take on the task of reinventing Head Start in order to deliver more successful outcomes for low-income children

Whether confronting issues of economic status, ethnicity, gender, intellectuality or any number of factors influencing the living circumstances of a person or persons within a society, social pedagogy is, in essence, anthropological. Its focus is indissolubly linked to matters of socio-cultural situation and station. In *Dialectics instead of dichotomy: Perspectives on the twin ambitions of the disability movement,* Lisbeth Eriksson, from Sweden's Linköping University, presents us with reminder of how social pedagogy has evolved in order to grapple with an unending range of human conditions. Relative to the field of disability studies, her consideration of the historically dichotomic theoretical conceptions of redistribution and recognition, often approached through social traditions of collective community and mobilization, bring to light tensions raised by questions of 'able-ness.'

Eriksson uses "a kind of method triangulation or method pluralism" to make meaning of her personal contacts with organizations and members of the disability movement and to reflect on her own participatory actions and interpretations of disability policy. In so doing, she suggests that there is space for bridging the gap between group differentiation based on a particular characteristic (in this case mobility impairment) in order to support that group's particular interests and (figurative) erasure of those differences in order to promote equality within a society. This opportunity, however, depends on developing a dialog between active members of the movement and the host of societal actors with whom they regularly interact. In such a scenario, practitioners of social pedagogy will be called upon to attend to the task of calling into question dominant notions of "normal."

In the article *Social Pedagogy and resiliency: Possible dialogues,* Margareth Martins and Flavia Monteiro de Barros Araujo, from the Universidade Federal Fluminense, explore the contributions of studies on resilience to the field of social pedagogy. Their analysis is the result of research conducted with urban working children, their teachers, and their schools. The research took place in the

municipality of Duque de Caxias, located in the metropolitan area of the State of Rio de Janeiro. Martins and Barros Araujo worked with children living in situations of social risk. Through life stories and conversations around the daily experiences of the children, the authors explored the conceptions of school held by these children. With a focus on the analysis of resilience, Martins and Barros Araujo discuss the implications of their findings to a Freirean-inspired social pedagogy that emphasizes autonomy and hope.

Closing thoughts

What does the wide range of topics addressed in this collection of papers tell us about social pedagogy in the 21st Century? Firstly, it indicates that the field now reaches well beyond its place of origin. Developments that surface in one nation or region will bear significant consequences for others. As a result, social pedagogy is likely to be bound by a global network of thought and practice well into the future. Yet, despite this transnational relevance, consideration of local contextual elements such as politics and policies, economics, and cultural dynamics will continue to play an important role in how pedagogues engage with those they educate. Secondly, the wide scope of subject matter reminds us that education in the social realm has come to be regarded as more than a professional activity, a subject of research, or a philosophical predisposition. Instead, social pedagogy is a phenomenon intertwined with nearly every facet of social experience, which, in turn, has become essentially a product of those experiences in aggregate.

The contributors to this special issue have presented both reflective and visionary perspectives of social pedagogy while providing ample evidence to support their varied claims. Their arguments have been offered to advance new understandings of the field in the context of an increasingly connected and rapidly shifting global society. Some help us understand how social pedagogy can be deployed in the interest of social justice and emancipatory practice. Others allow us to consider the opportunities and potentialities that lay open in front us. We hope that these works will help readers gain insight into their own thinking about social pedagogy, unlocking the spirits of inquiry and creativity so often characteristic in its design and application. If in any way this special issue can help broaden (what is sometimes regarded as) an insular academic community, then we have accomplished our goals. We hope our readers will provide us with their reactions and share in our passion for this important area of study.

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