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Social Work and Civic Professionalism

Sometimes there are fortuitous synchronicities in one's life! I was working on my autobiography dealing with the role as President of the European Regional Group of Schools of Social Work in the 1980s, when I was invited to contribute to a publication honouring the work of Professor Ewa Marynowicz-Hetka. I gladly accepted, because participating in this undertaking provides the opportunity to refresh my memory relating to what in hindsight I think was a key moment in the history of European social work: the 1989 biannual conference of the European Regional Group in Bled, a famous tourist resort located in what then was still Yugoslavia.

The contribution is neither a typical book chapter nor a scholarly essay. Rather, I am going to tell a story, actually *my* story, of the circumstances in which the Bled meeting took place and the impact it had on promoting a common European understanding of social work education. In the first section, I set the stage for the story I am going to tell by describing the institutional environment in which European social work education was embedded in the 1980s. In the second section, I focus on the role that Professor Marynowicz-Hetka and I, as President of the European Regional Group, played in the 1990s in building a platform of shared learning to negotiate what it would mean to develop a common understanding of social work education in Europe. In the third section, I describe how I began moving away from the conception of social work as a human service profession towards framing it as a form of civic professionalism, after I had left the European social work scene to assume a new teaching position at The New School for Public Engagement in New York. At the end of my contribution, the story told turns into a personal appeal to Ewa to join me in retirement and arguing in an extracurricular setting in support of social work as a form of civic professionalism.

The institutional environment of European social work education in the 1980s

At the time when the European Regional Group met in Bled, the Iron Curtain still divided the continent into Western and Eastern Europe. Unlike in the East, social work education in most countries of the West has always been rooted in a long tradition going back to 1929, when Alice Salomon organized in Berlin the first meeting of the International Committee of Schools of Social Work to discuss common standards of social work education with mostly European attendants. These common roots not withstanding, social work education in Western Europe had morphed sixty years later into a heterogeneous institutional landscape. For instance, Brauns and Kramer (1986) found in their report *Social Work Education in Europe* that, at the time of their writing, the term social work covered widely diverse institutional realities in the 21 Western European countries (including Yugoslavia) being analyzed. In member states of what then was still called the European Community (EC) social work education was integrated into regular universities or universities of applied sciences (referred to in Germany as Fachhochschulen). In many non-EC Western countries, however, professionals got their social work diplomas from publicly recognized, but privately run academies/schools of social work that were not part of the university system. To add to the complexity of this institutional landscape, it was common practice in German speaking countries, especially in private institutions, to differentiate between two separate professional fields, one termed 'Sozialarbeit', the other 'Sozialpädagogik'.

Table 1. Divisions in the institutional landscape of European social work education

Type of division		**Where division occurs**		
Political	East	EC countries		Non-EC countries
Institutional		University	Fachhochschule	Fachhochschule
Professional				Sozialarbeit Sozialpädagogik

Source: own research.

The situation portrayed in Table 1 does, however, not mean that in the 1980s the institutional landscape of social work education in Western Europe was in a state of stable equilibrium. On the contrary, across the continent both the social work profession and its educational institutions were undergoing a process of transition, both in terms of institutional structure and curricular content, from a more local or

national to a more regional or even a global framework (Wagner 1992, p. 122). Like with all institutions, such processes of transition from a local/national to a regional/global framework represent a creative interplay of diversification and integration, whereby integration and diversification are not always in balance. At various stages, a phase of self-correction becomes imperative: towards diversification, if integration is dominant, and towards integration, if diversification has gained the upper hand. I believe that the 1980s epitomize a phase in Western Europe, when it was appropriate for social work education to counterbalance too much diversification with more integration of both the professional standards of social work and the curricula of the corresponding educational programs. There are basically two available options for individuals (students, teachers, professionals), schools, and educational/professional associations to engage on such an integrative path of institutional change: integration based on transactions of *exchange* in a common market, subsidized by the relevant national, respectively regional authorities and/or integration based on transactions of *sharing* through mutually beneficial arrangements of the parties involved (Wagner 1992, p. 124–126).

During much of the 1980s, in member states of the European Community bilateral faculty and student exchange programs, funded by the ERASMUS programme, represented the default approach to compensating with a more integrative perspective too much diversity among social work programs. Complementing such an approach, the 1989 Council of Europe *Directive on Higher Education Diplomas* further emphasized the need for more integration for so called regulated professions such as social work (Wagner 1992, p. 119). The *Directive* was based on the assumption that by giving members of such professions the right to work in any member state, Europe would almost automatically evolve from a large common market for goods and services into a regional social space and finally, into a political union.

One of the main reasons, which in the early 1980s led to the establishment of the European Regional Group, was to question this functionalist misapprehension so characteristic of EC policies at the time. If not to counter, at least to compensate for this strategy focusing on transactions of exchange, the Board of the European Regional Group promoted the idea of mutually beneficial processes of shared learning. While the former strategy was supposed to serve the foremost economic purpose of giving social workers access to the EC labor market, the latter one encouraged scholars to negotiate with each other different curricular conceptions and what constitutes the essence of social work. In order to achieve this goal, the European Regional Group organized initially, in Vienna in 1981, a seminar for the faculty of European schools of social work. During my presidency, this first convention was followed by a series of biannual conferences in Angers (1985, France), Sitges/Barcelona (1987, Spain), Bled (1989, Yugoslavia) and Liège (1991, Belgium), each of them attracting a diverse

body of faculty members speaking different languages and representing various curricular frameworks for teaching social work. In this context, the Bled conference constituted a turning point in the effort of the European Regional Group to find a common denominator of social work education. The conference of 1989 was attended by the so far largest constituency of social work educators from Western Europe and, of course, representatives of the hosting school of social work in Ljubljana (Yugoslavia), with one exception: Professor Marynowicz-Hetka, who represented the Department of Pedagogika Społeczna (Social Pedagogy) at the University of Łódź in Poland.

Professor Marynowicz-Hetka's presence at the Bled conference was important mainly for two reasons. The Executive Board of the European Regional Group had tried for years to get in touch with social work educators from what was then referred to as the COMECON (Council for Mutual Economic Assistance) countries, established in January 1949 to facilitate the economic development of Eastern European countries, where social work education had almost completely disappeared since World War II. With the Bled conference the Board's years long research process was finally completed a few weeks before the Berlin Wall fell and COMECON began to disintegrate. Furthermore, at least I, as President of the European Regional Group, was aware of the fact that Professor Marynowicz-Hetka wasn't attached to just any institution, but one that represented a distinct school of thought in social work education. Being aware of what a meaningful contribution Professor Marynowicz-Hetka could make to complement with her knowledge and expertise the European Regional Group's network of shared learning, Professor Marynowicz-Hetka was asked at the conference to join the Executive Board (Wagner 1992, p. 122).

The origin of the school of thought Professor Marynowicz-Hetka represented is indelibly linked to the name of Helena Radlińska. Just a few years after Poland had emerged from World War I as a sovereign and democratic state, Radlińska became, in 1925, the director of the Social Work and Education Studies Program (Studium Pracy Społeczno-Oświatowej) at the Polish Free University in Warsaw (Wolna Wszechnica Polska). In this position she developed her own understanding of *societal* (społeczna) rather than *social* (socjalna) work and launched an educational program, enabling professionals to reconstruct society and work for the common good (Lepalczyk, Marynowicz-Hetka 2001, p. 191). While the German Army occupied Poland during World War II, regular teaching at the Free University came to a halt, but Radlińska participated in conspiratorial meetings and continued pursuing her educational mission through clandestine teaching (Lepalczyk, Marynowicz-Hetka 2001, p. 192). After World War II, Radlińska took her curricular conception of social work to Łódź and began organizing the Department of Pedagogika Społeczna at the University there. It was with this move to a different academic environment

that in designating curricular content, the term ‘Praca’ (Work) was replaced by the term ‘Pedagogika’, while the term ‘Społeczna’ (societal) instead of ‘Socjalna’ (social) was kept. Radlińska’s academic career at the University of Łódź ended in 1950, when the communist regime came to power and she was given a compulsory leave of absence (Lepalczyk, Marynowicz-Hetka 2001, p. 192). Fortunately, Irena Lepalczyk was able to keep some of Radlińska’s educational mission alive and later passed on the torch of Pedagogika Społeczna to Ewa Marynowicz-Hetka. When I met her in Bled, she was just about to begin building what today is the Department of Pedagogika Społeczna in the Faculty of Educational Sciences at the University of Łódź. Considering the early date before World War II at which Radlińska began developing her curricular ideas on social work education, the concept of Pedagogika Społeczna at the Department chaired today by Professor Marynowicz-Hetka, represents in the European history of ideas, a unique example of interrupted – as a matter of fact: twice interrupted – continuity.

Building a platform to negotiate a common European understanding of social work education

That the twice interrupted curricular concept of Pedagogika Społeczna was going to last and possibly even spread to the rest of Europe was all but certain, when the academic path on which I was engaged intersected in 1989 with the one of Professor Marynowicz-Hetka. Therefore, we both decided to work as a team to create the Pedagogika Społeczna curricular concept now known across Europe. From the outset, this decision affected both of us not least in a personal way, as we began interacting with each other as professional colleagues, rather then as professorial dealmakers acting in the interest of the academic institutions each of us represented. In the years after the Bled conference, Ewa invited me several times to her Institute at Łódź University, where she asked me to participate in workshops and seminars with local (Łódź), national (Poland) and international audiences, in which participants were both contributors and recipients. Around the turn of the century, these contacts led under the leadership of Ewa to a more institutionalized network of shared learning with an impressive output of edited volumes addressing issues relating to curriculum building for Social Work/ Pedagogika Społeczna (Marynowicz-Hetka, Piekarski, Cyranska [red.] 1998; Marynowicz-Hetka [red.] 2009; Wagner 1998, 2007, 2009).

In the many discussions we had, there was one overarching issue we came back to again and again: whether the different designations used internationally (Social Work) and in Poland (Pedagogika Społeczna) to describe curricular content in the social work field will rather promote or hinder a European understanding of our

common educational mission. To find an answer to this question, we looked at how scholars dealt with this issue of academic designation in another discipline, albeit one that shares some common characteristics with social work: social anthropology.

In 1958, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who taught existential philosophy at the prestigious Collège de France, conducted a lobbying operation to promote Claude Lévi-Strauss to be appointed to the Chair of Ethnology. To this intent, he advanced an argument that was both semantic and strategic, namely to rename the Chair to be occupied by Lévi-Strauss 'Social Anthropology', instead of using 'Ethnology', as was common at the time in France. His proposal to rename the Chair was *semantic* in nature, as 'Ethnology' was rooted in the local tradition, while 'Anthropology' moved the discipline into an international context of meaning (Loyer 2017, p. 611). But Merleau-Ponty combined his semantic argument for international recognition with the *strategic* consideration of repositioning anthropology within the intellectual tradition of the human and social sciences, thereby building a bridge between them and his own field, existential philosophy. Furthermore, by attaching the term 'Social' to 'Anthropology', he wanted to emphasize that the discipline Lévi-Strauss was going to represent, once he has been appointed to the Chair of Social Anthropology, dealt neither with things (*choses*), like Biology, nor with ideas (*idées*), like Philosophy, but with "social facts", namely human relationships and societal structures (Loyer 2017, p. 608).

There are two lessons that apply to the academic field of Social Work/ Pedagogika Społeczna that Ewa and I used to draw from this famous case of renaming an academic chair, one relating to the semantic, the other to the strategic issue implied in it. As far as the strategic issue is concerned, I always argued (Wagner 2008) that Social Work as an academic discipline deals with social facts and that it therefore makes sense to signal with the term 'social', respectively 'societal', that Social Work/Pedagogika Społeczna belong to the intellectual tradition of human and social sciences or what Plato had already referred to as the realm of human affairs (*ta toon anthropoon pragmata*) (Arendt 1958, p. 25). With respect to what above I termed a semantic issue, the Lévi-Strauss case contributes to deciding, whether 'Work' or 'Pedagogika' used as academic markers move our discipline deeper into a semantic field that provides international recognition. The advantage of 'Pedagogika' lies in it having an accepted meaning in an academic context, but at the same time refers to the relatively restricted semantic field of central European countries (Austria, Germany, Poland, Switzerland). For 'Work', however, just the opposite holds: 'Work' as a disciplinary designation has no accepted meaning in an academic context, but in combination with 'Social' the term moved our discipline into a semantic field of global recognition. The reason for this success of 'Social Work' as a disciplinary designation is clear: the term

was first used in the United States and with English becoming the *lingua franca* of our time, it spread from there to every country in the world.

At least in the context of European (or worldwide) cooperation of social work educational institutions, the semantic argument for global recognition seems to speak in favour of using 'Social Work' instead of 'Pedagogika Społeczna' as the academic marker of choice. This recommendation not withstanding, Ewa and I always felt the need in our discussions to focus also on the strategic issue of emphasizing the overlap between Social Work/Pedagogika Społeczna and the intellectual tradition of dealing with human affairs. Viewed from this perspective, it was initially not at all clear to us how we could achieve this goal, when using 'Work' (together with 'Social') as a disciplinary designation, until we discovered Hannah Arendt's (1958) treatise *The Human Condition*. The author proposes dealing with three elementary articulations of the human condition: Labour, Work, and Action. Through labour, humans engage with nature and, as a matter of fact, with the biological processes of life itself; through work, they engage with the unnatural, that is the artificial world of man-made things; and finally, through action, understood as "the only activity that goes on between men without the intermediary of things or matter" (Arendt 1958, p. 7), they engage with the constant presence of others in society. From this philosophical perspective it appears that Arendt's explanation of what makes up the human condition provides the ideal conceptual framework for placing Social Work/ Pedagogika Społeczna within the intellectual tradition of dealing with human affairs or what, since the advent of modernity, has become the field of the social and human sciences.

Table 2. Social work and the elementary articulations of human activities

	Elementary articulations of the human condition		
	LABOUR	**WORK**	**ACTION**
Curricular content/Professional activities	Labouring, nursing, raising, developing, educating, caring	Fabricating, producing, manufacturing, making, providing services	Organizing, developing community, state building
Term used to designate generalist educational programs		Social Work	
Terms used to designate specialized educational programs	Pedagogika Społeczna Social Pedagogy	Social Work	Pedagogika Społeczna Public Engagement

Source: own research inspired by Arendt (1958).

In Table 2, Row 1 Arendt's three elementary articulations of the human condition are used to describe both the curriculum of social work educational institutions and the professional activities of social workers. Row 2 lists the most common designation of generalist educational programs, Row 3 the designations in use for specialized educational programs of social work. The term 'Social Work' appears twice, first in Row 2 to designate educational programs with a generalist curriculum and then in Row 3 to designate educational programs with a specialized curriculum focusing on social work as a human service profession. Also 'Pedagogika Społeczna' appears twice, albeit for a different reason, being used in Row 3 to describe both specialized curricula focusing on activities of labouring, such as educating, raising, and caring (Column 1) and those emphasizing political action such as community organizing and state building (Column 3). The fact that 'Pedagogika Społeczna' appears twice in Row 3 makes reference to the curriculum Helena Radlińska developed in 1925, which mentioned both types of activities, (a) engaging with society as a professional agent by educating ordinary people and (b) engaging as a professional agent/citizen together with other citizens in joint state-building in what was in 1925 the nascent Polish Republic.

How significant Radlińska's 1925 contribution to social work curriculum building in Europe was, is demonstrated in Table 3. Firstly, each of the three categories of human activities is characterized based on the outcome achieved, the institutional make-up in which the activity occurs, the underlying values, the logic of the action and the historical timeline showing when a particular category emerged. Then, at the end of Table 3 the three categories of human activities are assigned to two different domains of engagement with the world in general and society in particular: Labour and Work to the socio-economic domain and Action to the political domain. Both the world of *Homo laborans* (Labour) and of *Homo faber* (Work) are worlds determined by the value of utility, worlds in which the efficiency and effectiveness of means lie in producing ends, which then become other means producing other ends, an unending chain of means and ends. As Arendt (1958, p. 154) writes: in a strictly utilitarian world, "all ends are bound to be of short duration and to be transformed into means for some further ends". By contrast to this utilitarian world, Action is being assigned to the political domain, a world representing an end in itself: the civil union citizens join unite when building their state. Radlińska deserves credit for having recognized early on that Pedagogika Społeczna, unlike the curricular conception of social work that still prevails today, deals not only with the utilitarian world of labour and manufacturing, but also with the political world of serving the civil union as an end in itself.

Table 3. Assignment of categories of human activities to the private and public spheres

	LABOUR ***Homo laborans***	**WORK** ***Homo faber***	**ACTION** **Citizen**
Result achieved by activity	Survival	Product (a thing or a service)	Civil union
Institutional make-up in which activity occurs	Home and Family	Exchange Market	State (its laws and its institutions)
Underlying value	Love, respect	Utility	Liberty and equality
Logic of action	Instrumental: a world in which means serve personal needs	Instrumental: a world in which everything becomes a means to the of end of being exchanged in the market place	Civil union as an end in itself, which citizens ought to join
Historic timeline	Since the human species appears in the Holocene	Since the transition during the agricultural revolution of *homo sapiens* during the Neolithic period from a lifestyle of hunting and gathering to one of agriculture and settlement	Since the American and French Revolutions

Domain of activity	**Socio-economic domain**	**Political domain**

Source: own research inspired by Arendt (1958).

As I explained elsewhere (Wagner 2013, p. 245), it is Immanuel Kant (2006/1793), the leading philosopher of the German Enlightenment, who in his 1793 essay *On the Common Saying: This May Be True in Theory, but It Does Not Hold in Practice* attributed to the "Pactus unionis civils" the property of being an end in itself – an end which all citizens *ought* to have. With this statement Kant – at least according to Arendt (1958, s. 156) – did not merely utter a tautology, that is, attribute the property 'end' to an end, but rather meant to relegate the means/end category to its proper place and prevent it from being used in the political domain of society. But attributing the property of being an end in itself to the civil union was for Kant more than a rule for how to use language in the political domain of society, as can be deduced from a passage in Part II of his *Critique of Judgment* (Kant, 2010/1790). There he deals in a few paragraphs (§62–68) with organisms, regarded by him as perfect examples of purposive systems that cannot be fully comprehended as means to an end (or what Kant calls *nexus causalis*), but are

determined by the end to which they are directed (that is comprehended through a *nexus finalis*) (Wagner 2014, p. 810). Attached to the text is a footnote, in which he refers to "a great people" (undoubtedly a reference to the American Declaration of Independence of 1776), which used "in a recent transformation into a state the term 'organization' for the regulation of magistracies, […] and even the whole body politic" (Kant 2010/1790, p. 201). Kant then goes on by saying that in analogy to a purposive system every part of such a body "should surely be purpose as well as means, and, whilst all work together toward the possibility of the Whole, each should be determined as regards place and function by means of the Idea of the Whole" (Kant 2010/1790, p. 201). "Whole" in this context refers to the civil union, understood as an end in itself and the moral authority that assures the freedom and equality of all citizens.

Social work as a form of civic professionalism

Kant's vision of citizens assembling in a state to form a civil union, not unlike Radlińska's curricular conception of social as *societal* work, ought to be understood as a utopia of society, rather than a concrete political program. When I began in my teaching and research to translate this utopia into a more concrete way of how citizens can engage with each other and work for the common good, I had already left the European scene of social work education to assume a teaching position at the New School in New York. Fortunately, the platform that Ewa and I had built for negotiating a common European understanding of Social Work/Pedagogika Społeczna did not disintegrate after I had left for New York, but the geographic separation had nevertheless an impact on our model of mutually beneficial shared learning. Therefore, the purpose of the last section of my contribution is not only to inform Ewa about all the new insights I gained with respect to how human service professions such as social work are embedded in society, but also to let her know that the new academic environment helped me to better understand that community development and state building are an integral part of a social work curriculum.

That I had to move to the United States to comprehend the full significance of the lesson taught by Pedagogika Społeczna may sound paradoxical. There is, however, a reason that the mission of the university at which I thought in New York reminded me so much of what happened at the end of World War I in Poland and in Europe. It was there, in 1925, that Helena Radlińska launched her Social and Education Program at the Free University in Warsaw, "to *reconstruct* [my emphasis] collective life based on eliciting, multiplying and improving human strengths, and organizing them to work for the good of people" (Radlińska quoted in Lepalczyk, Marynowicz-Hetka 2001, p. 193). Only eight years before, also at the end of World War I, one of the most publicized debates over the issue of academic freedom

occurred at Columbia University in New York, which two years later led to the formation of the New School, the university at which I taught. In the fall of 1917, two Columbia Professors, Charles Beard and James Harvey Robinson, resigned from their university appointments in protest over the dismissal of two colleagues, who refused to support the war policies of Congress and President Wilson (Rutkoff, Scott 1986, p. 2). Unlike the dismissed professors, Beard and Robinsons supported the decision to intervene in World War I, but defended the principle of academic freedom to voice disagreement concerning American national policy. In their opinion, protecting the freedom to disagree with public authorities was a necessary precondition for the United States to lead the world in a postwar *reconstruction* (my emphasis) that guaranteed economic justice, self-government, personal liberty, and world peace. To launch such a campaign for reconstructing society after World War I, Beard and Robinson joined a preparatory committee to form a new type of university, a "New School" that could become one of "the greatest social science laboratory in the world" (quoted from *A Proposal for an Independent School of Social Science*, Rutkoff and Scott 1986, p. 12, fn. 38). In February 1919, almost exactly a hundred years ago from this writing, The New School opened for its first classes in New York's Chelsea neighborhood.

When I moved there in 1999, I very quickly realized what an ideal academic environment The New School offered to someone, who throughout his academic career had focused on citizenship and social policy. What came as a relief for me as a trained economist was that instead of taking a narrow disciplinary approach to teaching and research, The New School valued a critical and structuralist understanding of human and social sciences. Eager to translate Radlińska's and The New School's reconstructionist approach to society into a political program, I began studying early on in my new teaching position, how in a moment of great danger in World War II, Great Britain became engaged in a major project of restructuring its social policy to grant citizens personal liberty and social justice. In 1942, Sir (later Lord) Beveridge presented a report to Westminster entitled *Social Insurance and Allied Services*, which became known in social welfare literature as the *Beveridge Report* (Beveridge 1942). Six years later, he published *Voluntary Action: A Report on Methods of Social Advance* (Beveridge 1948). In the first report, Beveridge concerned himself almost entirely with action by the state to guarantee "freedom from want" through government provision of social services. In the *Report on Methods of Social Advance*, however, he warned "urgently" against organizing social security in a way that "stifle(s) incentive, opportunity, responsibility", instead of "leaving room and encouragement for voluntary action" (Beveridge 1948, p. 7).

Throughout his second report, Beveridge uses "voluntary action" in the context of private initiatives of citizens outside their home, not under the direction of any authority wielding the power of the state. However, despite being *private*, this kind

of civic engagement is nevertheless action for a *public* purpose: to improve the living conditions of fellow citizens and to work towards the common good. But Britain's greatest social reformer in the 1940s also understood – as did Helena Radlińska in 1925 – that professionally trained agents such as social workers, public school teachers (Pilch 1997) and nonprofit managers would have to lend their support to private citizens, if their project for reconstructing society should succeed. In this respect, Poland in 1925 and Great Britain in 1948, represent outstanding European examples, which emphasize two principles that lay at the core of sustainable public engagement: (a) that working towards the common good should never be left to politicians alone, whose goal to be reelected in office is driven by particular interests and who rarely serve the citizenry at large; (b) that there has to be a division of labour in contributing to the common good between a publicly engaged citizenry (what today one would refer to as 'civil society') and a broad category of human services professionals, including social workers, committed to civic professionalism.

Although social workers (together with other civic professionals) often play a role in reconstructing society, I am of course aware that the bulk of social and human services they provide as professionals is part of what in Table 3 is referred to as the socio-economic domain of society. Taking this fact into account, I suggest differentiating between two modes in which social workers contribute towards the common good, one direct and the other indirect. A good example for what I term a *direct* mode of social work professionals engaging in the political domain of society is developing communities locally, often a necessary prerequisite for building a sustainable form of civil union at the national level. By contrast, the *indirect* mode of practicing the profession in the socio-economic domain of society relates to what constitutes the essence of social work professionalism: using means methodically for achieving social ends. The fact that by providing services social workers achieve results that can be valued in monetary terms and exchanged in the market place does not mean that what they do has no impact on the betterment of society. Contemporary examples for how social workers can engage in the socio-economic domain and still contribute to social justice and work towards the common good is by addressing in their projects issues relating to early childhood or the integration of refugees into society.

However, finding an equilibrium between the role social work plays in the socio-economic and in the political domain of society is not the main problem the profession faces today. What really concerns me is that social work, both as a discipline and a professional activity, is gravitating towards a strictly utilitarian world of means and ends. Much of this gravitational pull can be explained by the ever more extensive monetization of societal transactions both in the private and public sectors of society. The private economy is governed by the law of supply and demand, which determines the price and therefore the value of goods and services exchanged in the market place. In the public sector, a new philosophy of administration, termed New

Public Management (NPM) has become the common practice of copying the process of exchange in the market place by attributing a monetary value to publicly provided goods and services. Being caught in this instrumentalist logic of action, social work professionals are themselves often in danger of becoming means used to achieve ends that at best represent unintended consequences and at worst are antithetical to the professional values to which they are bound.

In concluding this article on civic professionalism, I would like to make a radical proposition that should be understood as sort of an antithesis to framing social work as a marketable human service profession. Along this line of thinking, I suggest coalescing, on a voluntary base, existing social work programs across Europe under the curricular umbrella of Human Affairs Education (HAE). The long-range effect of such a proposition would be twofold. Firstly, instead of continuing to use 'Social Work/Pedagogika Społeczna' as a somewhat ambiguous designation of a scientific discipline or – even worse – to simply consider for semantic reasons 'Social Work' as the English equivalent for 'Pedagogika Społeczna', a HAE curricular umbrella would be understood as signalling a common European understanding of social work education. Second and more importantly, a HAE curricular umbrella would complement the prevailing instrumentalist paradigm for social problem solving with the reconstructionist approach to society, through which social work and other civic professionals become engaged in serving the common good and attending to the end in itself that is the body politic.

On my first visit to Łódź in the early 1990s, you, Ewa, told me that the kind of reconstructionist approach to society Helena Radlińska envisioned in 1925 is also being referred to in Poland as 'organic' work. Only when I was writing this text, did I realize, almost thirty years later, that Immanuel Kant (2010/1790) used the same metaphor in the famous footnote of the Critique of Judgment to compare the body politic to an organisme, describing it as a purposive system, in which every part "should surely be purpose as well as means". In the same text, Kant also reminds us that all parts of the body politic have "(to) work together toward the possibility of the Whole". As University Professor and Chair of the Department of Pedagogika Społeczna, you did your share in contributing to building Poland's body politic: on the one side, by further developing a curricular template that represents an outstanding example of interrupted continuity; and on the other, by making a lasting contribution to a common European understanding of social work education, anchored in the intellectual tradition of Human Affairs Education.

And now, dear Ewa, as you join me in retirement, let us work together and revive the platform of shared learning that we began developing in the years after the Bled Conference. It provides an effective extracurricular setting for us – not as Professors, but as Public Intellectuals – to continue arguing in favour of social work as a form of civic professionalism.

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