OPPRESSION OR LIBERATION? THE FUNCTION OF SOCIAL WORK IN MIGRATION MANAGEMENT

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16. OPPRESSION OR LIBERATION? THE FUNCTION OF SOCIAL WORK IN MIGRATION MANAGEMENT

Tanja Kleibl and Nikos Xypolytas

Introduction

Antonio Gramsci (1971), one of the most frequently referenced political theorists and cultural critics of the twentieth century, starts his Prison Notebooks by profoundly questioning the historical formation of the intellectual, associated with the modern Western university, as it emerged about 400 years ago. In his notebooks, Gramsci asks an important question, which we have chosen as an orientation for this chapter: are intellectuals an autonomous and independent social group, or does every social group have its own particular, specialised category of intellectuals? We aim to apply this question to practitioners and educators in the field of social work, to analyse the specific functions that social workers fulfil in the current divisive system of migration management. The analysis will be undertaken from a range of perspectives - social, historical, post-colonial and political economy. The objective of this process is to consider the critical need for re-orientation of the social work profession to which is more in line with the teaching of Paolo Freire and Ignacio Maritín-Baró on liberating social action centring on the notion of praxis, reflection on action for transformation (Mayo 2020)

The role and function of the intellectual, hegemony and the 'Southern Question'

'All men are potentially intellectuals in the sense of having an intellect and using it, but not all are intellectuals by social function' (Gramsci 1971, p. 1) For Gramsci, the role of the 'new' intellectual – a role he certainly adopted and took very seriously during his lifetime - is to create consciousness for a social group, that can bring meaning and understanding to one's position in society, and their role in life. Once this consciousness has been built, the role may be compared with the function of a 'glue' that bonds social and political forces in an alliance against oppression for positive change. Type of education, cultural influences and

geographic positionality are all influential factors in people's lives, embedded in their 'common sense', and informing their worldviews and practices which, in turn, are influenced by various types of intellectuals. In this chapter, we combine Gramsci's category of the 'intellectual' with his analysis of the 'Southern Question' in a move towards liberation theory and the social action approaches of Paulo Freire and Ignacio Martín-Baró. Their transformative thoughts will guide our arguments for an urgent need to re-orientate Social Work towards political empowerment, with a specific focus on refugees and migrants.

Capuzzo and Mezzadra (2012) underline the contemporary relevance of Gramsci's thoughts for understanding uneven global development, based on his conceptualization of the 'Southern Question'. Referring to Edward Said's (1979) work, the authors claim that in particular the importance Gramsci attaches to 'space' opens up the 'possibility of using his concepts in order to reconstruct historical and contemporary dynamics of global capitalism in its multi-scalar hierarchies, relations, and conflicts' (Capuzzo & Mezzadra 2012, p. 48). Gramsci's international analysis and perspective about the worsening 'hierarchy of exploitation' (Young 2012, p. 19) in the context of global capitalism, puts further emphasis on critical global power dynamics. This analysis provides a useful approximation to the understanding of the divisive relationship between former European colonizing states and their dominant social groups, and migrants and refugees[50] moving from former colonized regions towards Europe.

Considering the roles of the intellectuals in migration management within the context of the colonial power matrix (Quijano 2000), will allow us to take Gramsci's transformative

[50] The terms migrant and refugee will be interchangeably used in this paper, as the distinction between the two becomes increasingly arbitrary in the present context (Turton 2003, Crawley and Skleparis 2018). Furthermore, it represents a categorical classification that supports the institutional interests of European political and economic elites and not the lived experiences of people on the move in the 21st century.

thoughts and apply them analytically at a lower more concrete level. The level in question is that of the flawed Western Migration Management system, and its associated 'helping system', in which Social Work operates within a dialectic of care and control (Lavalette 2020). Gramsci (1971, p. 1) sees the world as being composed of various 'capitalist entrepreneurs' that are organized around their disciplines, e.g., Political Analysts, Organisers of New Cultures and, of course, Social Workers. For him it was the type of leadership, as well as technical and intellectual capacity, which distinguished 'traditional' from 'organic' intellectuals. This differentiation was crucial to his analysis of the influence of the elitist educational system, the role of intellectuals within it, the position of culture, as well as his understanding of the production of 'common sense', hegemony, and the role of political and civil society therein. Hegemony, a central term in Gramsci's conception of civil society, is best described using his own words:

> What we can do, for the moment, is to fix two major superstructural 'levels': the one that can be called 'civil society', that is the ensemble of organisms commonly called 'private' and that of 'political society' or 'the State'. These two levels correspond on the one hand to the function of 'hegemony', which the dominant groups exercise throughout society and, on the other hand to that of 'direct domination' or command exercised through the State and 'Juridical' government. The functions in question are precisely organisational and connective. The intellectuals are the dominant group's 'deputies' exercising the subaltern functions of social hegemony and political government (1971, p 12).

Gramsci's attention to geographic and historical positionality gave rise to a new understanding of hegemony associated with his refreshed interpretation of 'philosophy of praxis' (in both space and time). From a Gramscian perspective, intellectuals are not only interpreting social movements from a neutral position, but they are themselves organic elements of the formation of

hegemony (Apitzsch 2016). This is something which lies at the heart of our argument. Whilst the organic intellectuals are the organisers of masses (and social groups or movements), traditional intellectuals (e.g., scholars, artists, clerics) have a specific association with the mode of production. This originates from the feudal mode of production, where they have been integrated, and where they re-function according to the new practices and needs of the capitalist system (Gramsci 1971, pp. 10-11). With expanding capitalism, Gramsci problematized the increasing co-optation of organic intellectuals into the hegemonic system of capitalist production, where they began to function as 'confidence builders' (Gramsci 1971, pp. 5-6). This co-optation distances intellectuals from the masses (see also Apitzsch 2016, p. 30) and any questioning of the powerful establishment.

From a subaltern perspective, a position from which Gramsci wrote, intellectuals are tasked with developing an understanding of their problematic entanglement with hegemonic forces and their function as 'confidence builder'. This would imply associating themselves with members of subaltern social groups and movements (becoming intellectuals through a social function), identifying common concerns, building class alliances and, through this process, initiating the absorption of the body of intellectuals for a common counterhegemonic struggle. The prerequisite for this would be the development of organic intellectuals as ideological leaders of their respective social groups, as well as the articulation of a principle, capable of absorbing other classes and social groups into a new emerging hegemonic system. This absorption can only happen within civil society, outside of political society, alongside the production of a new 'common sense'. Or, as Ramos 1982 states, the success of such a task would depend 'on the perception by these classes that the hegemonic class no longer assumes a representative appearance vis-a-vis the subaltern class elements'. A principle that Jacques Rancière (2006) further conceptualized is his reformulation of the political, which he saw as a struggle between the established social order and its excluded part. Indeed, Rancière, like Gramsci, considered the very idea that only

traditional intellectuals occupy society's 'thinking space' as preposterous (Garrett 2020).

Fanon (1967), during his participation in, and analysis of, the African decolonization struggles, attributes importance to the colonized/native intellectual, requesting the intellectual to return to his people, and articulate their revolutionary project, through the construction of national-popular literature (cf. Srivastava 2012). For Capuzzo and Mezzadra (2012, p. 49) it is 'in this framework that the figure of the "subaltern" becomes a subject of history, with a specific gaze on the cultural forms of expression'. Hence, the public struggle for social transformation by civil society, with the participation of the 'countless multitudes', in modern societies (cf. Buttigieg 1995, p. 20), forges social alliances between intellectuals and social groups and begins to articulate alternative hegemonic projects, orientated by ideological intellectual leadership (Ilal, Kleibl & Munck 2014).

Gramsci asserts that it is through the activities and autonomous organisations in civil society that the subaltern masses will acquire their freedom, or independence from the ruling capitalist classes and their allied intellectuals, who uphold the ideology of the ruling classes. At this point we can see parallels between Gramsci's conceptions of the intellectual, the education system and civil society (1971), Paulo Freire`s elaboration of the 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1970) and Franz Fanon's understanding of the role of the colonized intellectuals (1967). Gramsci, just like Freire and Fanon some years later, puts the development of independent political consciousness and ideological leadership of the subaltern, or oppressed masses, at the centre of his theory of social and political change (based on the critical analysis of the education system and the type of intellectuals it produces):

> Education, culture, the widespread organisation of knowledge and experience constitute the independence of the masses from the intellectuals. The most intelligent phase of the struggle against the despotism of career intellectuals and against those who exercise authority by divine right consists in the effort to enrich culture and

heighten consciousness. And this effort cannot be postponed until tomorrow or until such time as when we are politically free. It is itself freedom, it is itself the stimulus and the condition for action (Gramsci cited in Buttigieg 1995, p. 20).

Looking at the continual denial of the recognition of refugees as equal citizens and associated with this, the rejection of their knowledge and agency, human rights, and dignity, we can see how the various roles of intellectuals are contributing towards the hegemonial colonial power matrix, enshrined in the migration management system. This, according to Apitzsch (2016), seems to be an 'under-analysed' central argument of Gramsci's thoughts in the context of contemporary migration management debates. Turning then to the position of Social Workers within this system, it is unclear if, under the globally dominant Western understanding of Social Work, they could be categorized as 'organic' or 'traditional' intellectuals. This, as we will argue, depends on the Social Worker's political consciousness, understanding of culture, closeness to subaltern struggles and the approach being taken to issues of social justice. In order to explicate this, in the next section of this chapter we will look at the historical developments and positionalities of Social Work, and the various functional changes it has gone through. This will be followed by a discussion of social work's entanglement with contemporary migration management.

Social Work – a historical perspective

Since its origin, Social Work was closely associated with the emerging capitalist industrial society of the late 19th century. Whilst its history can be tracked in different ways and from various perspectives, the confrontation with the 'social question' was always central to social work's ambition. In Britain, the Charity Organisation Society (COS), founded in the 1870s, responded to the increasing misery of large parts of its population by distinguishing between the 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor, a distinction supposedly based on a 'scientific case by case' analysis. The COS approach was later significantly challenged

from the almost oppositional 'Settlement Movement', which began in Britain in the late 1800s, later also spreading to America (Ferguson 2009).

The reformist Settlement Movement took a much broader social justice approach to alieviating poverty. It aimed to directly support the increasingly struggling urban poor, including immigrant worker communities. Its high point was the 1920s when British and American social workers began to follow the broad vision of the movement. They were inspired by the work of American Settlement Movement theoretician, Jane Addams, who was also a feminist and peace activist. Her vision, and that of other Settlement leaders, was to bring the rich and the poor, as well as the various cultural influences from immigrant communities together, in physical proximity and social interconnectedness. Through the establishment of so-called 'settlement houses' in poor urban areas, services such as day care, education and healthcare were provided for the marginalized poor, alongside community organizing and support for the unification of exploited workers (Wade 2004). These Social Work strategies, in a Gramscian sense, could be viewed as an attempt to create a new 'common sense', linked to a multitude of cultural worldviews. They were also part of a political Social Work response to the structural barriers poor immigrant families were facing in their spatially segregated neighbourhoods (ibid). In Germany, Social Work followed a similar dual approach of charity and social movement approximation (Niemeyer 2012).

Around this time, the dominant classes in the Global North were trying to solve the enormous social question, exacerbated by the global economic crisis, through the institution of various social reforms within the existing capitalist system. In central Europe, the rise of the welfare state led to a certain professionalization of Social Work. In this context, Social Work became the executive organ of government social policies and responsible for counteracting the more negative impacts of the capitalist system on the people at the lowest level of the capitalist class system. Co-opted as 'confidence builder' by policy makers, Social Work was positioned between the state and the workers' precariat in a time of capitalist expansion. On the one side, it was

tasked with the hierachization, subordination and integration of the work force, alongside social categories such as race, class and gender. On the other, it was influenced by social movements such as those of women, workers and migrants, and their fight for rights for their members. Within this absurd system, social workers have often chosen contradictory responses to systemic exclusion and structural violence. In Germany, where the Nazis came to power in 1933, Social Work's initial emancipatory potential was replaced with fascist ideology, that eventually absorbed social workers into the National Socialist German Workers' Party's (NSDAP) Department of Health. Here, they became the front-line workers tasked with identifying individuals and families considered 'life unworthy of life' (Salustowicz 2012, Gehlenborg 2008, Kunstreich 2003), in a dehumanizing political system which killed millions of Jews, Sinti and Roma, Communists, People of Colour, the Disabled and Homosexuals.

After World War II, British and American Social Workers, involved in the reconstruction of Western German social services and Social Work education (Salustowicz 2012, Thole 2012) opted for the adaptation of clinical casework, despite some opposition from people linked with the 'settlement movement' (Ferguson 2009). In contrast, in Eastern Germany and the wider Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), Social policy and Social Work were designed to serve exclusively the goals of the communist state, and social work education focused broadly on theories of collective social justice and equality (Zaviršek 2014). Towards the latter half of the 20th Century new studies critiqued the Western mainstream individualist clinical approach to Social Work, pointing out its failure to address problems associated with increasing structural poverty (Ferguson 2009). In the US, Raul Alinsky's (1971) influential radical social work ideas emerged, associated with his book 'Rules for the Radicals', inspiring social workers all around the world to reconnect to progressive social movements and community organizing. However, due to conservative governments coming to power around the 1980s, radical Social Work experienced a rapid decline and the so-called 'cultural turn' moved Social Work further away from structural

class-based Marxist analysis to questions of identity and difference (Williams 1996).

With the end of the cold war in the late 1990s and the the globalization of neoliberalism, Social Work moved further towards an evidence-based managerial profession, linked to social administration of the poor and those considered deviant. Case management became the preferred method of Social Work intervention in the Global North (Thole 2012) and beyond. What followed was the academization of Social Work and its approximation to modern positivist natural science methods. The profession associated itself closer to the expansion of capitalism and neoliberalism. Both are systems that look at social problems as the product of individual deviances, rather than, following Marx's analysis, as 'public causes of private pain' (Lavalette 2020).

Looking to the Global South, where Social Work was 'imported' during colonial times, the same ideological orientation continued beyond liberation. This led to an alienation of Social Work approaches from the deep structural and poverty-related problems associated with colonial and postcolonial violence. The neoliberal structural adjustment programmes imposed by the World Bank and the IMF, requiring African governments to privatize entire public service sectors, further amplified this trend. This led to the increase in the presence of Western INGOs, with whcih some Southern Social Workers found employment (Kleibl et al 2020). To varying degrees. INGOs took over many of the postcolonial state tasks, in particular those related to poverty reduction and social cohesion. This, inevitably, led to a weakening of the newly born postcolonial states' capacity to attend to their populations needs, at a time when decolonization of the economic and social spheres was an unfinished endeavour. In this context, Social Work in the Global South became strongly associated with Western cultural imperialism, and the continuation of colonial hegemony, through the implementation of a Western top-down civil society concept. It was applied through an apolitical INGO social service-delivery model. subordinating local conceptions of civil society linked to revolutionary change (Kleibl 2021). Gramsci's 'view from below'

concept of civil society, providing space for counterhegemonic activities, would have been more attuned to Southern realities.

It was in Latin America around the 1960s, where the profession turned again into a more critical and political profession, influenced by Dependency Theory:

> Thirty-five years ago, when people began to talk about the reconceptualization of Social Work in Latin America, a process characterized by the conscious analysis of the reality and identity of Latin America was beginning. Philosophy and the theology of liberation, the awakening of the Dependency Theory, in education the arise of Liberalizing Popular Education in Social work led to the reconceptualization (Eroles, 2004 p. 99)

This critical and political model of Social Work appears particularly well connected with concepts Gramsci elaborated during his lifetime, in particular the 'Southern Question' in combination with his understanding of the "'new' intellectual. Under these influences, Social Work in the South started to develop its own intervention theories, approaches and methods, while in the Global North, it remained broadly bound to a positivist and individualist way of working. While Social Work representatives from the South are still impacted by colonial imports, they argue in favour of a model independent from its 'exploitative colonial roots' and recognising 'indigenisation, localisation, authentication and reconceptualization' (Lutz, Kleibl & Neureither 2021). Paolo Freire is one of the most influential representative of this Southern approach and his popular education and liberation pedagogics have since been deconstructed and reconstructed, in the contexts of changes caused by globalization and new forms of power (Mejía 2016). All of this is part of a post-colonial critique of Western hegemonial Social Work approaches, with its often-decontextualized human rights orientation that regards itself as being universal and context-independent (Röh 2020).

We would argue that these anti-colonial and counter-hegemonic arguments are influenced by Gramsci's views on the

'Southern Question'. If writing his prison notebooks in the context of today's globalised world, he would certainly link the exploitation of raw materials and the need for cheap labour from countries of the Global South with the economic growth agenda of the Global North and the existence of its privileged welfare systems. Uneven development, which he wrote of in relation to the 'Southern Question', is the main stimulator of today's global forced migration regime. Looking back at the history of Social Work in Germany, as discussed above, it is striking to note that in today's migration management system, we see the revival of human categorization along national and religious lines, and dispersal of people on the basis of their being refugees, black, asylum seekers, Muslim Arab, 'economic migrants' etc…(Mayo 2016, p. 143).

Consequently, looking into the function(s) of Social Work in migration management requires consideration of the postcolonial context that allocates migrants in Europe to a subaltern position, based on their ex-colonial and postcolonial histories. This leads us to the crucial question of 'Identity Politics' and Social Work's ambivalent role in relation to migration policies. Hall (1978, p. 31) observes that 'race' can function as a key 'lens through which people come to perceive that a crisis is developing' and can be 'the framework through which the crisis is experienced.'

Migration Management and Social Work

In this section of the chapter, we bring our focus to the social worker's role in migration management, specifically in the context of the 'refugee crisis'. There is one word that can accurately summarize the goal and principles behind the European management of the 'refugee crisis' and that is *deterrence*. From the moment the EU – Turkey deal was struck in 2016, it was evident that the intention was to deter prospective migrants from undertaking travel to Europe in the first place. The narrative pointed to the dangers of the perilous journey to, and across, the Mediterranean Sea, the extremely long periods of waiting in poor detention facilities and the insensitive, lengthy and, often biased, asylum granting processes. This view of the European approach was initially greeted with scepticism and

seen as belonging to a politically radical cohort. But in the light of continuous developments in the 'refugee crisis', it became more widely accepted and documented in academic analyses (Vedsted-Hansen 1999, Mountz 2011, Oliver 2017, Xypolytas 2018, 2019). Over the past seven years, it has become abundantly clear that the combination of obstacles and dangers faced by mobile people has resulted in countless traumatized migrants and an enormous, and unknown, number of deaths. While many individual cases of trauma and death have been reported, causing worldwide shock and outrage, official political discourse in the European Union, and its member states, continues with the rhetoric of human rights and European values.

There is a profound irony in the fact that, despite the extreme efforts of Europe, these deterrent migration policies have proved unsuccessful. Not only have they failed to deter people from attempting to cross European borders, but they have also led to an unprecedented legitimation crisis within the European Union (Carrera et al 2019), as the cloaked rhetoric of benevolence stood naked in its malice in the light of migrants' misery and despair. However, the official response from Europe to increasing migration and its own internal crisis, was to further the authoritarian character of migration policy, and to pander to the xenophobic and neo-colonial voices, in seeking a European-wide consensus on the necessity for this type of migration control (Schinkel 2017).

There are certain key changes in the everyday practices of refugee management that demonstrate this move towards greater authoritarianism. *Firstly*, the illegal pushbacks, in which not only the various Coast Guards of different member states are involved (mainly Greek, Turkish and Italian), but also the European Border and Coastguard Agency (FRONTEX). Reports from NGOs and media networks suggest that thousands of refugees have been illegally sent back in the past couple of years, and often in a manner that is clearly and unashamedly putting migrants' lives in extreme danger (Fallon 2020, McKernan 2021). This has led to a problematic relationship between EU and FRONTEX officials (Nielsen 2020), as the active engagement in pushback severely

undermines any humanitarian narrative from official institutions of the European Union.

Secondly, there has been a clear move towards the utilisation of 'closed' refugee camps along the European borders, which replace the previous more 'open' living arrangements. The outbreak of COVID-19 provided a narrative of public health to legitimize such detention, even though it has actually been a critical aspect of migration policy since 2015. An aspect of this situation and attendant narrative which is particularly reprehensible is that, while there are references to the need for social distancing in order to minimise the spread of the COVID–19 virus, this relates not to the living conditions inside the camps, but to minimizing the contact refugees with the local population. Meanwhile, within the camps, people live in cramped conditions, with absolutely no safety protocols in place. These new closed camps are being build in various islands in Greece, like Lesvos and Samos. Unlike the situation with the previous camps, these are officially set up and run by the European authorities, this is a critical point of departure from the previous European strategy which attributed the 'dysfunctions" of refugee management to institutional decisions and actions taken by member states (Xypolytas 2019). This new situation makes it impossible for the EU to disassociate itself from its deterrent migration policy.

However, the role of member states should not be entirely discounted in this new situation as internal developments within states also impacts on approaches to refugee management. For example, the election of a right-wing government in Greece in 2019 contributed to deterioration of an already very bad situation, as it pursued a deterrent migration policy, making specific changes to honour it. In the past two years, there has been a reduction in asylum-granting decisions. Concerns have been raised about the changed criteria for establishing vulnerability and about the way in which asylum-seeking interviews are conducted (Psaropoulos 2020). Furthermore, punitive and far-reaching court rulings are often handed down to refugees without evidence of wrongdoing having been established (Smith 2021),

The role of social work in migration management

We suggest that it becomes evident from the outline of the migration management system which we have presented here, that the role of social workers within it is a complex one and that any analysis and evaluation of it must reflect that complexity. From the outset, one can see the non-harmonious coexistence of different approaches to social work by different actors (Munteanu and Barron 2021). Variations in approach are informed by both institutional and personal characteristics and are profoundly influenced by the historical development of social work as presented earlier. Essentially social work operates on a continuum between two extremes. At one end of the continuum there is a more or less uncritical adoption of European migration policy and adherence to it. A little further along is passive acceptance of the policy, combined with efforts to maximize the benefits for the refugees within its confines. At the other end, is a conscious effort to support refugees by effectively monitoring, questioning, and undermining European migration policy. It is also the case that positioning on the continuum is not necessarily static, as developments affect individual and organisational decisions. Furthermore, as migration policy moves closer to an extreme form of official de-prioritization of human rights and authoritarian disciplining, it becomes increasingly difficult for actors to situate themselves in more mid positions along the continuum. The result is an increasingly divided outlook on the role of social work in the 'refugee crisis' as well as on the ethical aspects of this involvement.

The two pole positions, as outlined, clearly lead to very different approaches to the work and in the field, such as in hotspots on the Greek border, they manifest themselves in a variety of ways. On the one hand, we see a considerable rise in the active engagement of NGOs whose goal is the monitoring of human rights violations in the context of refugee management, effectively questioning and undermining official migration policy. Social workers within these organisations are in the front line as they actively engage in scrutinizing and publicizing illegal pushbacks perpetrated by the Greek Coast Guard and FRONTEX or provide legal defence for refugees who are at the mercy of,

frequently, punitive court decisions. On the other hand, many NGOs, as well as public sector social workers, operate inside and outside the new 'closed' camps trying to maximize benefits for their 'clients', within the European migration framework. However, it is not only in social work organisational decisions or individual actions of social workers that one sees the difference. The polarisation is increasingly evident in consumption choices, socialization practices and the overall lifestyle of people who spend their working day in what is called refugee management (Tsartas et al 2020).

The fact of this radically divided approach to social work within the migration field, leads us to two questions which this chapter has set out to address. Firstly, what are the factors that have led to this division? Secondly, taking direction from the work of Gramsci, Freire and Fanon, what do we see as the role and function of social workers in this field into the near future. In other words, where does the profession need to position itself, based on its human rights orientation?

In attempting to answer the first question, we focus on one feature that seems to define all others, that is the conscious effort to depoliticize the refugee experience and co-opt social workers into a supposedly EU value-based and regulating migration management system. Since 2015, when the reality of the permanent need for mobility for hundreds of thousands of people kicked in, the management of migration has been profoundly political. This is not purely as a result of governments' decisions for dealing with the situation. It also arises from the conscious exercise of power over the refugee population, which takes place in zones of exception where the 'common sense' of European human dignity seems to be switched off. Refugee management consists of a range of disciplining mechanisms that are there to inform migrants of their social position in European societies. But the reality is that each of these mechanisms is concealed by a veil of bureaucracy, or the utilization of science, making it difficult for the migrant to access. These hurdles are presented as inevitable in the context of significant levels of migration. For example, the long waiting periods, which are an essential discipline and

pacification tool, are presented as a bureaucratic complication (Auyero 2011, Jacobsen et al 2021).

We now turn to the use of scientific discourse and practice to victimize and depoliticize both the migrant subject and the refugee experience. It is in this process that social work is heavily involved (alongside other disciplines, e.g., psychology) and it is the main influencing factor in the division of approaches of professionals in the field.

The portrayal of the refugee as a passive victim, especially on the basis of what has occurred in the country of origin, is based on an ideologically loaded set of assumptions. In order to exemplify this, we will briefly look at Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). This is a condition diagnosed in many refugees in the camps of the European borderline. While PTSD is an acknowledged condition recognised by DSM-IV (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders) of the American Psychiatric Association, the assumptions behind its use have been heavily criticised (Becker 1995, Hernandez 2002). One of the main problems identifiesd relates to the use of the prefix 'post', as it implies that the trauma was inflicted previously and that the disorder simply involves the inability to cope with the consequences. In the context of the refugee experience this is problematic for three important reasons; a) the traumatization of individuals is not something that ends upon entry to Europe but can continue in refugee camps, b) the refugee's experience of trauma may only begin when they encounter the migration management system and the obstacles and uncertainties that are built into it. c) neo-colonial narratives are reiterated, as refugees, upon entrance to European soil, are supposedly treated for the damage (physical and emotional) inflicted upon them in countries of origin in the Global South.

The attribution of PTSD diagnoses in evaluating the refugee experience relates to the essential political process of victimization. Rendering refugees into passive victims in need of assistance depoliticizes their subjectivity, defining them as unable to control their future. Furthermore, their dependence upon western humanitarian 'experts', such as social workers or psychologists, re-inforces their lack of control and solidifies the

seemingly – albeit deceptively – benevolent character of refugee management. In other words, what appears as benign social protection, represents a crucial form of control that pacifies refugees and prevents them from questioning and actively undermining European migration policy. This construction of the *apolitical* and *vulnerable* migrant subject has been a central feature of this policy and of the overall management of the 'refugee crisis'. The granting of asylum itself depends on these two essential aspects and many professionals in the field work to construct such migrant personas in a sincere effort to help them gain asylum. Yet, the questions remain. Should social scientists and social work practitioners be actively engaged in policy and practice that effectively undermines the people they are supposed to help? And what should this help look like?

Moving away from 'social protection' to providing protection from refugee management has been a conscious decision for many social workers who have refused to play an active role in the continuation of this process of marginalization. They see the duty to promote and defend human rights and social justice holistically as an inherent aspect of the definition of social work, and impossible to safeguard in the existing refugee management context. On the contrary, it is in questioning and undermining policy that they feel closer to the principles and guidelines of their profession. How then to provide help to refugees in this context? The proposed approach is based on defending the interests of refugees, in the light of the goals of those who stand against them. What the previous analysis suggests is that migrants are confronted with a policy that aims to pacify, victimize, and remove from them the ability to alter their environment, an ability that is absolutely central to notions of human freedom and sovereignty. Following Gramscian theory, this would imply that 'traditional' social scientists, not only analyse, but precisely recognize their inherent social function, through taking part in monitoring human rights abuses and supporting the building of progressive social alliances. Through this process, they initiate the absorption of the body of intellectuals in a conscious effort of resistance against the goals of European migration policy. In order for this to be grounded in subaltern realities, organic

intellectuals and ideological leaders within the refugee communities will need to be supported and 'new' principles and values, based on the dignity and human rights of all, will need to be defined and demanded. This absorption can only happen within civil society, where the development of a new 'common sense' can take place.

We contend that the further development of policy and action for the emancipation of refugees is not the role of those of us who are not migrants ourselves. It is up to refugees themselves to define such plans. What we can offer is access to knowledge and experience gained from other emancipatory projects throughout the world, and to open a new 'thinking space' in which freedom can be practiced, and refugees have the opportunity to critically engage with their reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of migration policies. This would be an entirely democratic exercise, linked to the seeds of freedom planted in other areas of the world in their struggle against colonial and imperialist oppression. It is a struggle that begins with understanding one's social position in relation – and in opposition – to oppressive political power (Freire 1970). This form of intervention is, above all, educational in character, providing to refugees the tools with which they themselves will claim what is rightfully theirs, their freedom and sovereignty.

Social Work as Liberation

Inter-ethnic solidarity necessitates work of an educational nature to contribute towards improving the situation. Providing effective anti-racist education, predicated on an understanding of colonialism and neo-colonialism, and grounded in both cultural understanding and political economy, is one of the greatest challenges facing those committed to a socialist, anti-neoliberal politics in the Mediterranean and elsewhere. This work is broadly educational as was the work which Gramsci was engaged in when attempting to generate revolutionary working-class consciousness in this country (Mayo 2016, p. 144)

The above quote describes quite well what education programmes with, and for, refugees affected by the postcolonial 'refugee crisis' in Greece and other European countries should be about. We, as academics, must look to the work of significant political educators, such as Antonio Gramsci, Paolo Freire and Ignacio Martín-Baró, as pathways to new consciousness. They point us to the needs and opportunities to engage with refugees on the structures of oppression, which produce and reproduce social, political and economic exclusion. While writing at different periods of the 20th century, all three of these theorists were highly critical of how the Western intellectual contributed to this oppression, through aligning themselves with the hegemonic capitalist system. Furthermore, all three made substantial contributions to a new understanding of the 'philosophy of praxis' that takes the worldviews of the subaltern as the starting point for transformative action with the various oppressed social groups, which were at the centre of their pedagogical interests.

In particular the work of Freire (1970), the Pedagogy of the Oppressed, serves as a foundation of ideas for strategic political action in Social Work (Mayo 2020). As part of his pedagogy of liberation, people are essentially considered as the experts on, and protagonists of, their own lives; hence, the alienating technical clinical case orientated role of the social worker is seen as redundant. A crucial takeaway from the work of Gramsci is that the exploration and progressive modification of the 'common sense' contributes to peoples' understanding of their own life worlds and opportunities, alongside their historical and geographical conditions.

Latterly, Martín-Baró, working in the field of liberation psychology, which he more or less defined, emphasised the role of the psychologist in assisting people with trauma. Moving away from clinical and individualist approaches, he introduced the concept of 'psychosocial trauma' (Martín-Baró 1989) to underscore the cause of, as well as the solution to, the problems faced by those who have experienced the destructive effects of political and military power. For Martín-Baró, trauma is not an individual dysfunction but a normal response to an absolutely

abnormal situation. The solution does not lie in detached medical diagnoses and prescription of medication that focus on the individual and his suffering. It lies instead in identifying the social cause of the problem (thus destigmatising the individual), in restoring stable and trusting social relations and, above all, in strengthening community's capacity for collective action (Aron and Corne 1994).

Conclusions and way forward

We conclude that in today's dominant model, social workers in praxis, education and research broadly support a function of technical service provision, justifying their interventions with knowledge from disciplines such as psychology, educational science, law and social administration. The admiration of these disciplines and the allocation of research and teaching chairs in Social Work departments facilitated the profession's inclusion into the 'higher' academic world of 'traditional intellectuals'. This positioning has contributed to their co-option to the existing hegemonic systems, in order to implement Western governments' dominant social development and migration policies. This, in turn, has alienated many social workers from the people they are supposed to serve (Yuill 2018). This alienation is particulary stark in the case of refugees and migrants who continue to suffer the consequences of colonialism and global unequal development. This is the situation that has existed in Europe for some time and, more recently, has been extended to countries of the Global South, primarily through Western social work curriculum imports and INGOs interventions into local civil societies and their struggles for postcolonial justice.

Freire's pedagogical views demand a rejection of the colonial and rather technical and instrumental Social Work of the Global North, currently being applied in migration management. He posits the necessary abandoning of the liberal character of a value-free science. In line with his theory, this would require social workers to adopt more radical and liberating positions, in particular in today's global migration regime. In order to do this, they need to first liberate themselves from institutions, migration policies and work regulations, controlled by national and

European politics, which, as our analysis has shown, have contributed to most of the social problems they are supposed to tackle. Social Work must develop its own agency, return to its inherent social function, and engage with migration management as a political actor, with the goal of increased political participation of refugees. Social work, as a liberating practice, requires refocussing beyond its current Western focus on the individual. It needs to broaden that focus to reflect its positionality, hence disrupting exploitation, oppression, racial and religious profiling, victimization and categorization within the migration management system, and its underlying social structures that minimise people's opportunities and capabilities (cf. Lavalette and Ioakimidis 2011). This model of Social Work would challenge the political sphere and would adopt alternative and opposing views about migration politics and the institutional regimes associated with them. The struggle between the poor and the rich, between the powerful and the subaltern, migrants and non-migrants is not a problem to be resolved by state and humanitarian agencies but is politics itself (Rancière 2006).

As the marginalised and voiceless become more aware of their position and stand up for their rights, social structures are revised. For Social Work, this means withdrawing from the societal consensus around the subaltern position of refugees and the political contracts of institutionalised migration politics between the European Union and so called Third States. The work of Fanon, Rancière, Freire and Martin-Baro, may aid critical reflection on social work and lead to a re-ordering of the political within the profession. This approach would draw on theories of resistance, movement building, liberation and utopia to support more radical expressions of Social Work. As evidenced and discussed, Social Work of the Global North is currently bound to providing services in an existing dehumanizing system, such as in migration management at the EU external border and in detention centres. We believe it can develop a new radicalism, inspired by Social Work of the South, particularly in Latin America, which is oriented towards social movements. The ethical substance of a society must be measured in terms of the extent to which all its members enjoy substantial freedoms or, to

quote Hannah Arendt (1951), whose words are more attuned to refugees' trajectories, 'the right to have rights, which provides access to a political community'.

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