Determining *the Global* from a Social Work Perspective

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Introduction

The present chapter envisions perceptions of the global in Social Work debates.[1] It answers the question as to which understandings of the global prevail in discussions of the practice and theory of social work. It also addresses significant lacunae in globalization research, where the unique views of social workers as world political actors from below receive almost no attention. Furthermore, it responds to the lack of systematic endeavours in Social Work debates to classify existing literature and propose conceptual work on positions adopted in Social Work with regard to globalization. How do authors in the field observe the global? How do actors in the field make sense of such a framework and what conclusions can be drawn to determine imaginaries of the global within the discipline?

Our questions align with the other contributions to the present volume, all of which engage with the inquiry into how different groups of people such as lawyers, travellers or revolutionaries make sense of the world. The perspectives of Social Work are particularly valuable in this regard, because they occupy a unique position in the global arena – at the margins of societal exclusion, which connect the global and the local. Professional social workers exist in almost every country of the world, where they deal with the negative consequences of globalization. They advocate for its 'losers' and use the global arena to (re)negotiate their sphere of influence and pursue social transformations. However, social workers cope with different conditions (and constraints) than the other groups mentioned at the beginning of the paragraph. They not only defend the interests of their clients; they also have to respond to the objectives of their employers. This is not without conflict and makes it highly interesting

to analyse how perceptions of the global relate to the in-between position of social work and the purpose of its mediating this professional double role.

This chapter shares the overall objective of the volume: to look at practices of observation. We pay attention not only to what Social Work scholars observe, but also to *how* they observe, including the subtle meanings that underlie their observations. This systematic focus on practices of observing the global challenges a debate that too often presupposes a clear and commonly held understanding of the subject matter and therefore underestimates the conceptual variety characterizing the field. For example, discussions on the effects of globalization are often framed in terms of 'international social work'. Sometimes texts juxtapose or interchange ideas on the 'international', 'transnational', 'intercultural' or 'global' elements in social work, failing to differentiate the nuances and to determine more precisely the epistemological starting point(s) for carrying out 'global social work'. Like doctors who first study human anatomy in order to define the treatment, we conceptualize the latent understandings of the global first in order to substantiate the strategic planning, coordination and execution of social actions in response to global phenomena. This gives a more differentiated view of global social work. Against this background, the chapter encourages its diverse readership to engage further with the basic characteristics of the profession and discipline of Social Work, the challenges that are faced in this field and the underpinnings of the global that prevail in the contemporary debate.

To address the conceptual frames of the global in Social Work literature, we distinguish four subtle functions: (a) positing globalization as the root of social inequalities grants legitimacy to the profession; (b) the global methodological paradigm responds to the heterogeneity and multidimensionality of social reality from global to local in social work research and practice; (c) the global frame of reference enables social workers to defend common interests as a community, and (d) the global arena as a working field demands particular skills of them and poses new challenges for social work. The remainder of the chapter is divided into three parts. In the first, we give an introductory overview of the main literature and lines of argumentation in current debates in the field of Social Work. We then review contemporary literature to scrutinize the four above-mentioned dimensions. Whereas the first two have to do with ways in which social workers observe the world, the last two indicate the ways in which social workers react to the world based on their perceptions and organize themselves within it. We conclude that the position of social

work at the margins of exclusion makes its view on the global unavoidably critical and plural.

The nexus of global and local in the emergence of social work

Social work can be described as a profession that develops interventions on a scientific basis serving to support and assist people, groups and communities in different life contexts in various areas. These include psychiatry, education, impairment, the penal system, social counselling and families. The professionalization of social work and social pedagogy in different nations evolved as a consequence of crisis-ridden eruptions of social conditions in which humanitarian aid or domestic – usually female – obligations to provide support were no longer sufficient. These eruptions were, in particular, the wars in Europe in the 19th and early 20th centuries, but also dramatic economic events such as the abolition of nitrate extraction in northern Chile, which caused the rapid impoverishment of thousands of working families. Historically, social work evolved constantly as a result of the mutually dependent interface between welfare state developments and social upheavals embodied by the emergence or rise of mass poverty and infirmity as well as the neglect of children and young people (the classic target group of social education).

The emergence of the profession can be explained, on the one hand, as a reaction to the atrocities resulting from capitalist modes of production. On the other hand, its evolution was based on an increasing understanding of the social rights of all individuals to a barrier-free life with all its consequences. Striving for equality, for practices of recognition, for the abolition of oppression, exclusion and incapacitation and – at the same time – for competent help with the implementation of needs, support of all kinds is at the heart of the profession. Nevertheless, implementation differs in different national contexts, significantly depending on the legal situation. In consequence, fields of intervention vary depending on national decisions, but the aims, theoretical approaches and methods adopted in the teaching of social work are widely similar. Thus, the profession is characterized by a holistic approach to supporting people in a globalized range of fields, only embedded in the national conditions of welfare states and in international organizations.

One of the internationally recognized ethical premises is that social work is fundamentally rooted in its so-called triple mandate. Firstly, professionals must act on behalf of their public or private employers. Secondly, they

represent their addressees and defend their interests. Thirdly, they commit themselves to unique, internationally shared agreements on what constitutes professional working competence. Even if the legal context varies nationally, certain professional principles remain internationally binding – for example, the orientation towards human rights principles, which the international organizations of social work have erected as central pillars. At the same time, the profession reacts sensitively to global developments such as the consequences of the financial crisis in 2008, migration flows in Europe in 2015 or in Mexico since 2006 and the Coronavirus crisis in 2020. It responds to natural disasters resulting from climate change and to demographic changes such as the disintegration of intergenerational family care systems and the associated emergence of poverty and disability in elderly people. It is also reacting to the release of labour through the relocation of production, to the flexibilization of the world of work and to women's movements all over the world promulgating female care-work as the basis of society.

Against this background, three approaches to social work come to the fore in relation to its emergence within the global. Social work first emerged in response to the international processes of war, migration, the release of wage labour and the associated injuries to individuals, groups and communities. Then, the internationalization of human rights became a matter of fundamental agreement between peoples after the Second World War, associated with the conviction that cultural, social and economic human rights must be implemented. Finally, the local practice of social work encountered ever new challenges from destructive international markets, a diverging social gap between wealth and poverty, and an unresolved colonial history. The victims of this colonial history on one hand aim for recognition and reparations and on the other are part of migration processes into the former colonizing regions provoking decolonizing processes and asking for social work support as refugees or migrants.

Reliant on these historical roots, Social Work is inextricably linked to the global. But scholars and professionals in Germany, in contrast to those in other countries, have lagged behind in incorporating this link into their discussions. Until the end of the 20th century, scholars considered social work as predominantly a locally acting profession. This perception has only recently been questioned (Wagner and Lutz 2018; Giebeler 2003) and contested by a more transverse understanding of how social workers act in concrete local settings, use the possibilities and limits of national law and respond to global

problems, adapting to the broader context of publications in other countries (Friesenhahn and Thimmel 2012; Bähr et al. 2014).

Beyond the German setting, links to global research are a particularly salient feature in current debates covering professional practice and education in Social Work to a similar extent. Scholars emphasize the need to take indigenous knowledges into account (Mafile´o and Vakalahi 2016), point to linguistic imperialism and further power differentials (Midgley 2016; Dominelli and Lorenz 2017), highlight regionalization, provincialization and decolonization efforts (Sałustowicz 2009; Gómez-Hernández 2018), or discuss the Sustainable Development Goals, and the Global Agenda 2030 as professional frameworks. Given the increasing number of articles, journals, book series, handbooks and conferences with an explicit international focus (Bunk et al. 2019), concepts in the discourse such as the transcultural, international, postcolonial etc. diversify and get blurred. Despite their manifold meanings, these terms for describing the global in Social Work are sometimes used interchangeably by scholars without further differentiation or concretization of the underlying understandings of the world that they embody.

The practices of observation of the global in the field of Social Work, meaning the way that the profession uses the global to define its standards, visions, objectives, mandate and frame of actions, can take different forms. Social workers, as a rule, act as agents of the state (or its subsidiary agencies) or on behalf of private organizations with specific support objectives, for example in development cooperation, international migration or globally networked anti-racist, feminist or ecologically based endeavours. In contrast to the other mentioned professional groups and political actors, social workers contribute to the regulation and execution of politics. To understand the political function of social work, it is important to recognize that it arose as a response to the context of the social question. The group became an important force of political control for states that was originally intended for the regulation and cleaning up of the massive, devastating social transformations that accompanied the installation of the capitalist social system. Thus, social work is highly politicized as a practice for implementing political decisions.

In all fields of social work, the global is visible and invisible at the same time. Global trends in film, theatre or music such as hip hop, treated as an expression of youth culture, may become the basis for concepts of youth work. New Zealand, for example, constructs and runs differentiated services for different ethnic groups, the separate refuges for battered Maori women being a case in point (cf. Watson 2019). Social workers elsewhere, for example in

Germany, assume concepts based on difference theory to be a form of gendered culturalization. Here scholars consider that practices of differentiation promote racism and so they criticize separate women's refuges for migrants. Thus, these concepts can be applied globally, but must always be viewed critically in light of local conditions. Sometimes, the global in social work is not directly visible, but can be approached through concepts of the unknown and of frightening strangeness (*Konzeptualisierung beängstigender Fremdheit*, cf. Giebeler 2019). Both can latently underlie the phenotypical perception of individuals, groups, communities and polities, favelas and barrios. Thus, the global is invisible, but accessible through experiences of strangeness in the unknown lifeworlds of clients.[2] The same applies to institutional assistance given to victims of violence, as well as work with children and youth, psychiatry and penitentiary work. Such insecurity and fear of strangeness brings professional social workers to the limits of their capabilities and forces them to learn about the appearance of the global in all cases of social work (Giebeler 1998). Finally, what do these examples from professional practice tell us about the global?

Four perceptions of the global in Social Work

Globalization's effects: focusing on inequalities as a professional rationale

The first way to address the global is as a way of *explaining the need for social work*. Thus, the world appears as the root cause of problems. In academic debates, the main concern remains the ways in which social workers deal with the negative consequences of economic, political, and cultural interactions worldwide. On the one hand, social workers discuss the effects which globalization has on the lives of their clients with the intention of developing appropriate ways of dealing with individuals, groups or local communities and mitigating the negative impacts of globalization. On the other hand, they look at the consequences of globalization for the system of professional aid itself. As a result of this development, social workers increasingly take on a double role: they find themselves acting not only as representatives of their clients but also as members of a professional group which itself is affected by the transnationalization of the care and social service sector.

Through the lens of inequalities, the first perspective emphasizes how globalization (re)produces or aggravates social problems at the levels below. Staub-Bernasconi (2003: 2) shows by means of the emblematic case of a disabled woman from Kosovo, how social workers address social problems resulting from chains of exclusion across borders, which start as globalization phenomena (in this case migration) and end up affecting the lifeworlds of their target groups. Excluded from the job market, security and an appropriate level of public safety (being subject to repeated rapes), without the right to public healthcare and hidden from society because her family was ashamed of her disability, the woman fled alone to Switzerland. She was told that the country was 'rich' with promising job prospects, the opportunity for financial security for her and her family back home, with access to health assistance and insurance, and where she could live 'safely' without discrimination due to her disability. But in Switzerland she was also excluded, although for different reasons, namely, her residence status. Apart from international migration, other factors such as the uncontrollability of global risks, climate change and its consequences, the supremacy of neoliberal ideologies, social spaces and contested identities, refugee movements, urbanization and rural poverty, the systematic violation of human rights and political violence, animals being used as objects of mass production and global water scarcity produce similar dynamics and effects and are challenges that social workers have to cope with (Spitzer 2019).

A second perspective surveys the influence of globalization on the social support system. Here, the focus shifts from target groups/recipients to the organization of aid itself. It is noticeable that discussions are less diverse, primarily criticizing neoliberal changes. Authors describe not only how global competition produces scarcity of resources for social programmes and the erosion of welfare state structures, but also the way in which structural changes influence working dynamics in social organizations such as increased work pressure in reaction to global economization (Bartley and Beddoe 2018; Lyons 2016; Lutz 2007). The latter especially has a significant impact on legal conflicts between national and supranational social policies regulating social work and care work. Contributions from these authors further focus on the question of how social services structures transnationalize through programmes of civic engagement in, for example, au-pair schemes, voluntary services abroad, the recruitment of foreign staff, and transnational service concepts, which diversify the landscape of social support services and challenge the understanding of professionalism in the field. These studies

critically discuss the quality of professional services under pressure to economize or the social effects of an increasingly transnationalized care system on the wellbeing of clients (Lyons 2016; Schröer and Schweppe 2013; Winker 2018).

Analyses of the effects of globalization on both people's living conditions and the aid system have a common basis: the global appears as a threatening space and a motor of multiple inequalities which take on different shapes and are fraught with numerous challenges. Destructive effects must at the same time be decisively countered (Bartley and Beddoe 2018; Schirilla 2018) – a perception that equips social work to advocate for the 'losers of globalization, the excluded of modernity, the new precarious proletariat' (see Spitzer 2019). During the World Social Work Conference in 2012, Friesenhahn and Thimmel (2012) shed light on the consequences of this recognition. They highlight an ambivalence between normatively charged idealism and hopeless overburdening that leads to resignation. Globalization as a challenge exacerbates social work's task of engaging in damage control, but at the same time underlines the need for action.

Global perspectives: addressing heterogeneous living realities in research

The recognition of the need to counteract the effects of globalization goes along with the need to *develop appropriate tools for research and intervention* in globalized social realities. Scholars do not take an active but an indirect position vis-à-vis the global, which acknowledges that national and even international frames of observation are insufficient for research and intervention. Thus, this section does not address a direct way of envisioning the global, but a way to see it through the abstract idea of delimitation of spaces of intervention. By delimitation we mean that the spaces in which social workers are active are less and less defined by clear boundaries. Instead, they take on more and more dynamic forms (e.g. through transnational family structures).

Following an overall trend in the social sciences since the 2000s, scholars are seeking to reframe social problems and overcome methodological nationalism. In this sense, shedding light on the global through an analytical view of inter- and transnationality and inter- and transculturality appears a safe strategy for scholars in Social Work. They widely agree that national frameworks are limiting in light of constant cross-border flows of goods, informa-

tion and people. At the same time, they hesitate to apply a holistic, global perspective in the sense of a 'global social work' to design and try to implement approaches with the goal of a theory-driven homogenization and a 'global profession'. Rather it [social work] should perceive and make differences among diverse groups' ethnicities, interests and forms of social support in its local, regional and (trans)local contexts. (Gray and Coates 2010: 23 cit. from Bähr et al. 2014: 19f.; authors' translation)

At the same time, the popularity of cross-national and cultural comparisons remains large (see Bartley and Beddoe 2018; Feize and Gonzalez 2018). These studies have contributed to the global understanding of social work since its beginnings. But both strategies are contested by critical scepticism. Critics argue that terms such as inter- or transnationality re-emphasize the category of the nation-state instead of overcoming it. Furthermore, those critical voices point to the centrality of legal frameworks which underline the importance of constitutional and national social laws, a line of argumentation which aims to foreground the limitations of transnational analysis. There are also scholars who have explored border identities and border spaces before debates on transnationalism in Social Work even gained prominence. Concrete alternative approaches to Social Work research are often marginalized in current debates, whereas the nation-state remains a crucial axis in research perspectives on the global.

A different type of research and different methods of intervention are central to the understanding of lifeworlds. In these analyses, which entail a strong focus on interpersonal relations, culturalist, power-critical views, which are sensitive to diversity, prevail. They critically review the construction of otherness. Contributions here cover a broad range of issues. They range from macrolevel conceptions to microlevel concerns and practical implementation. Some review underlying conceptions of being human, room and space and foreignness (Gómez-Hernández 2018) or include discussions on terminology and discriminatory language (Harrison 2006; Dominelli and Lorenz 2017). Others provide case studies of social organizations (Muy 2018; Duscha 2016), conceptualize practical forms of intervention (Midgley 2016), apply them to social problems (Fereidooni 2017), or produce didactic material and templates for social pedagogical workshops. Reflecting on ascriptions of the self, one's own professional role, and the other in heterogeneous working fields is considered a key competence. This implies an understanding of

and self-reflection in unfamiliar contexts (cf. Giebeler 2008 and 2009; Pawar 2017).[3]

Preparing students for these realities appears a particular concern of scholars in Social Work. Many publications on the impacts of globalization already discuss how to prepare future social workers to work in highly complex, multicultural and entangled environments. Discussing the role of internships in the so-called Global South is therefore not new (Midgley 2016; Nagy et al. 2019). The educational aspects of Social Work often address the strangeness experience of aspects of the global that we mentioned in the beginning. By learning a combination of skills that can become important in heterogeneous working environments, students are equipped with the ability to gain increasing confidence by dealing repeatedly with different forms of unknown settings during their training. For example, they discuss topics such as anti-racism, expand their language skills by learning a local/foreign language, develop pedagogical methods for dealing with diversity, practice communication in transcultural settings again and again, and self-reflect on their own experience of foreignness in an unknown environment (Giebeler 2003 and 2019). This should reduce reservations and counteract prejudices through students developing their professional attitude towards intercultural settings.

Nowadays, students often gain experiences abroad as volunteers or interns before starting their studies. This is a more recent trend that has developed over the past decade. But it raises new challenges for lecturers as to how to enhance students' intercultural competencies, how to guide them in reflecting on their experiences in order to develop professional skills out of them, and how to speak with authority on issues of globalization, interculturality and strangeness. Studies range across regional settings, highlight the importance of self-reflexive competences and the capacity to establish contact, and mainly explore formats of internship projects or specialization programmes that increase students' cultural awareness and sensitivity for other people's lifeworlds (Feize and Gonzalez 2018; Pawar 2017; Giebeler 2009; Rehklau and Lutz 2009; Nagy et al. 2019).

The global appears as an abstract space, which is less threatening from a scientific point of view but remains highly complex. It comprises social complexity in its entirety but is hard to grasp due to its elusiveness, which is based on the strong subject-oriented lifeworld orientation of social work. All social interaction, every dynamic, is a part of this global totality, which is also referred to as world society. At the same time, the global becomes accessible

through the particularity of social cases. In this sense, the social workers' view of the global acquired through research and action is comparable with the view through a prism where the light is refracted again and again, depending on the angle of blink, position and time. Each case produces a unique image that may be similar to others in some or even all aspects but is at the same time never the same. Thus, plurality becomes the central principle of social workers' global social reality.

Global frame of reference: building a common ethical base for the profession

So far, we have discussed how the perception of the global as an inequality-producing space gives legitimacy to the profession of social work as such. We have further shown that a desire to find adequate responses to this complex space nurtured the ambition to reframe methods. In contradistinction to both, where observation is the protagonist, the third perspective addresses the global as an arena. Here, social workers *actively position themselves as a professional group through a shared frame of reference* for the benefit of the community – a reference frame that forms part of the debates on colonialism (Salustowicz 2009) and is based upon the latest Global Definition of Social Work, established in 2014[4], which conveys the core mandate, principles, and understanding of knowledge and practice, a code of ethics (IASSW 2018), educational guidelines and a decennial Global Agenda (Jones 2018). Written down in official documents, this shared code and guidelines relies on values that the profession acknowledges as universally valid. In addition, the profession gives voice and life to this normative frame through common position papers on current political decisions, thus further increasing the visibility and recognition of the social work community as a globally operating actor and unit (IFSW 2014).

Scholars agree that the global reference frame is beneficial inasmuch as it represents the social work community and strengthens its standpoint as an external advisor for international aid organizations such as the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organization (WHO), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (Staub-Bernasconi 2008; Lyons 2016; Healy and Hall 2009). Silvia Staub-Bernasconi (2008: 11) highlights the special relevance of the documents for future social work. In her eyes,

above all, they are a response to the fact that the framework conditions for social work are influenced not only by national (socio-political) legislation, but also by the structure and dynamics of world society and its laws as embodied in UN conventions, directives of the WTO, IMF and the World Bank, the Geneva Convention, EU legislation, GATS, TRIPS etc. For this reason, national self-sufficiency and ignorance cannot be good advisors in matters concerning international developments in the future. (authors' translation)

The discussion has significant overlaps with debates on colonialism, where 'the worldwide spread of social work [is considered] a consequence of the colonialization process in two senses of the word' (Sałustowicz 2009: 62). Besides being a direct consequence of the colonization process, it is also an indirect consequence in that European curricula have been transferred to countries outside the region. These – as well as further power-sensitive approaches – regard the diffusion of a global normative set of rules critically. The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) and the International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW) state clear ambitions to play an active role in global social policies.

However, internal opinions on how to carry out the world political mandate are controversial. Numerous regional and national supplementary comments on the global definition and position papers (IFSW 2014) depict the global as a space for negotiations. The power distribution within the professional community and in collaboration with external actors has to be balanced. Members discuss this discrepancy between public perception and power divisions within the associations extensively. They weigh the opportunities for making political impacts against the costs of homogenization. The latter simplifies the plurality of different regions and reproduces hegemonic relations within social work.

Next to institutional frameworks, social workers use theoretical frameworks which rely on shared values and principles. The idea of human rights is the most striking and prevalent example of such a framework (see Staub-Bernasconi 2008; Kandylaki and Kallinikaki 2018).[5] Others argue that these global frameworks help social workers enact their indignation and resistance against global inequalities (Prasad 2019) and strive for more professional autonomy. By relying upon global ethical standards or principles of human rights, professional social workers allow themselves to intervene, where employers or authorities do not (sufficiently) assume their duties or where

intervention would even oppose the interests of these authorities. The significance of self-responsibility in social work increases to the degree that social security systems, principles of the rule of law and separation of powers decrease. This happens when transnational corporations prefer policies of compensation for damage claims to respecting acts or law governing working conditions or preventing forced relocation, or when the state cannot or does not want to guarantee minorities protection against persecution and aggression. But self-responsible intervention applies also to comparably 'trivial offences'. Sebastian Muy exemplifies this point and refers to the situation in collective housing offered to applicants for asylum. A specific case, where the required skills and demands have become 'to "somehow deal" with the contradictory demands and appear as "perfect problem-solving experts" [... whereas] under the general conditions of deprivation of rights acting "justly" has become impossible for employees [...].' (Muy 2018: 157; authors' translation).

The shared institutional and the theoretical frame of reference together determine capacities to practically engage with, negotiate and solve conflicts of power. This double bind is typical of social work. Unlike former approximations to the global, this view emphasizes it as a resource for professional empowerment. Social workers can play it off against institutional and governmental demands and empower themselves in the reconfiguration of injustices. The distinguishing feature of the institutional frame rests in the expansion of the possibilities to experience the global space and the interplay of power in the organizational field. Social workers collectively participate actively and experience their role as world political actors who take part in negotiations on social exclusion. The theoretical frame facilitates a political act of empowerment, where social workers can individually instrumentalize global principles of human rights or global social justice. In settings where the question arises of how to deal with the mandates of clients that oppose the missions of employers, social workers freely use and interpret their mandate to justify resistance, strengthening themselves against external actors who act (grossly) negligently.

Global arena: potential working fields

Social workers not only establish their own representative associations and organizations, they *form an integral part of the multi-professional teams of international organizations*. For example, they assist and support migrants worldwide,

nowadays especially in the context of initiatives launched by countries of the 'North'. These involvements cover operations in Lampedusa, Lesbos, Israel, Lebanon, Suruc, Dar-es-Salaam, the US border zone, Chile and Peru, to name only a few. In sum, social workers take jobs in the European Union or United Nations and in the realm of transnationally operating welfare organizations such as Caritas International or the Red Cross, but also in foundations and consultancy services. Moreover, they are actively involved in transnational social movement associations. The organizational structure of helping institutions differs. Services may be financed by public or private funds, supported by governmental, non-governmental or private, ecclesiastical or human rights organizations. Institutions of the same social agency operate in worldwide networks, but communication between those agencies may often be complicated. Regional and international conferences take place and fulfil the function of coordination platforms. Depending on the operational field of social work in question, they also foster exchanges on concrete policies and different options for handling border regimes and determining the needs of the addressees and occupational groups involved.

Discussions centred on the participation of social workers in these organizations, or which explicitly examine their role in detail, are few and far between. The involvement of social workers in suborganizations of the United Nations, International Organization of Migration or International Criminal Court is not always present and/or comprehensively reflected in scientific work, despite (or explicitly because of) the long history of involvement by social workers in international organizations (Groterath 2011; Wagner 2009). There are several reasonable explanations for this dearth of information on the role of social workers in international organizations. Firstly, social workers are normally embedded in the organizational structures and operational fields of nation-states even though the national and international departments of the same organization may be involved (in the German case, this is true of most of the large welfare organizations, i.e. Caritas and Caritas International). Secondly, writings on issues of social development and international cooperation rarely address the intersection with social work explicitly. Instead, they describe or name it by using other terms and stick to a more predominant discourse. The same goes for international organizations that devote themselves to humanitarian help or human rights approaches. They all too often do not recognize the special competencies of social workers in these fields.

Social work in international organizations is driven by, or reduced to, two predominant narratives: developmental aid-assistance-cooperation on the

one hand and the field of migration and mobility on the other (Blank et al. 2018; Lutz 2018). Almost no other area in Social Work has received so much attention in recent years. To subsume the work of international organizations to the two paradigms of 'development' and 'migration/mobility' simplifies the diversity of the landscape and, in particular, the skills and knowledge necessary to provide high-quality social services. International adoption processes, for example, are not the only field that receives little attention. Here, social workers offer expert assessments of the

> interdependencies of double parenthood, cultural affiliations of the adopted child and adopting parents on the micro-level, which means the individual or family level of identity and family construction, the macro-level of institutional structures (verification, brokerage, follow-up support), and the level of societal representation, which means stereotyping and discrimination. (Sauer and Wießmeier 2016: 23; authors' translation).

International adoptions are a controversial and highly political issue. A Social Work approach evaluates social mobilities, opportunity structures, complex identity formation under double parenthood as well as the dangers of dubious private adoption organizations, child trafficking and abuse.

The global appears here as a border space in which social workers enact their professional practice. A narrower understanding would refer to intervention near the geographic border, for example in refugee camps, human trafficking, and institutions of first admittance at national borders. A broader conceptualization allows for the incorporation of a variety of institutions – a pathway that leads to the inclusion of Aliens Departments, consultancy services and residential groups for migrants, school social work (i.e. with integrative classes) or street work in the context of sex work and human trafficking. Border spaces cause tensions between transnationality and heterogeneous lifeworlds in a concentrated form, because in them transnationality, transculturality, and transreligiosity are institutionally enforced. Border spaces are different from the political and economic spaces of enterprises or state summits, where the transnational encounters of politicians and entrepreneurs are more interest-driven. The emergence of border spaces like refugee camps or favelas is less politically intended (and maybe not at all), nor is it desired but it has to be managed anyway. These spaces are volatile and persistent in their plurality at the same time, due to the fluctuation of clients. This is how you come to appreciate the particular position of social workers and their power to explain global political dynamics from the per-

spective of their discipline, which provides a perception of the global from below, meaning from the precarious, exclusory, unintended side of globalization.

Conclusions

The four areas presented in this contribution cover different perspectives of Social Work on the global. They show the global as: (a) the overall context of globalization dynamics, being the principal source of contemporary social inequalities. This understanding grants legitimacy to contemporary intervention by social workers and deals with the core of analysis in social science; (b) a complex space, which requires corresponding Social Work research and practices to encompass the heterogeneity and multidimensionality of social reality from global to local; (c) a contested politicized space, where social workers not only observe but also experience and actively relate to the global. On the one hand, this space opens opportunities through umbrella organizations like IFSW, IASSW, and ICSW to intervene through international cooperation. However, professionals' influence on the space of global social policy is still only sparse. On the other hand, global theoretical concepts such as human rights, dignity and global social justice facilitate social workers' agency to decide more autonomously and self-responsibly how they enact professional principles against diverging interests; and finally (d) a potential work field for social workers, especially in the shape of international networks, institutions welfare organizations and NGOs. This work requires specific competences and skills such as personal, political and research training in analysing foreign life worlds, developing personal competencies in working with the poor of the Global South and political standing to challenge power structures liable to marginalize subaltern people. The social work profession plays an important role beyond national frameworks and in border spaces.

The perspectives reveal an inclination in Social Work towards the global. Social workers possess broad means to observe, analyse and evaluate the global. But they are confronted by limited organizational capacities and structures that inhibit their capacity to intervene properly. The latter covers the fact that social work has not only reacted, and still reacts, to the global social question but that it has further fomented the former by stabilizing global political dynamics that uphold a centralization of power and global structures of exclusion. In contemporary world society, such an externalization of social

problems has become impossible. Thus, acknowledging the social question as a global social question from the start brings great potential. Social work may conduct explorations in the role of an observer of world politics from the margins, but also as an actor who regulates and stabilizes the dynamics of the global political stage outlined at the margins of exclusion. This text argues for a deeper understanding of this role and recommends actions that strengthen its capacity to act.

The present volume does not seek to describe structural world ordering principles or dynamics. Instead it envisions views of globalization and a global world phenomenologically. It interrogates what different groups perceive as global, how and why they do it and how similar or different these perceptions appear. We took this question literally for the field of Social Work. We have found that, in the emergence of this globally connected world, Social Work takes the position of a counterweight and a response with the aim of mitigating its disastrous effects. We have also elaborated on Social Work´s view of the relationship between the global and the local, arguing that they are closely intertwined through the chains of exclusion.

The four dimensions that compose a Social Work perspective on the global can never be uniform nor generalizable. Although we have provided a conceptual systematization of the nexus between social work and globalization, we do not want this work to be understood as a simplification of the social complexity that social workers confront. We conclude that the global appears as an extremely exclusive space from the point of view of Social Work. Its task of regulating the margins of societal exclusion makes a social work perspective highly sensitive to the limits of the (supposedly) 'global world'. The analysis of global dynamics in social work is conditioned by the diversity of practical experiences in direct contact with people, groups and communities, their daily lives and localities. This position enables Social Work to critically question global world ordering approaches such as the world system, world culture or world society approaches by unravelling the arbitrariness of these approaches when it comes to their empirical micro-foundations.

Notes

1   In the following text, the use of the term 'Social Work' as an academic subject and discipline is marked by capitalization.

2   Hans Thiersch and Klaus Grundwald did several efforts to conceptual-
     ize lifeworlds (*Lebenswelten*) as a central element of Social Work. For an
     introduction, see: Grunwald and Thiersch 2014.

3   At this point we want to refer to the numerous efforts of Cornelia
     Giebeler to conceptualise experiencing strangeness and transcultural
     contacts in establishing professional relationships. The cited works are
     a selection of this work.

4   The first Global Definition of Social Work was established in 2000 by the
     International Federation of Social Workers. Since then, the community
     proves and (re-) ratifies it in regular intervals. Over time the definition
     of Social Work enjoyed growing popularity. Especially since 2014 publi-
     cations of Social Work have often cited it.

5   Although the idea of human rights is the most prevalent approach, other
     concepts such as dignity, global social justice, socio-ecological sustain-
     ability and development determine the horizon of the profession (Neuser
     and Chacon 2003; Rolfes 2003; Giebeler 2003).