

Social Work

The Space/Time Economies of Acceptable Work

State (Non-)Interventions into the Everyday Life of Unemployed
and Poor People

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Space/Time - Missing Dimensions in Social Policy (and Social Work)

Social Policy is about the redistribution of (monetary) resources, social status, and social integration.

- Space doesn't seem to matter at all.
- Time matters regarding its biographical dimensions (as well as: vacation, maternity leave, notice period, and the like) vs. everyday life time is a completely missing dimension.

Social Work is (re-)discovering Space («spatial turn») ...

- ... but institutional settings and professional practice are often dominated by a container space concept, largely ignoring space as a construction of everyday life
- «Sozialraumorientierung vs. Sozialraumarbeit» (Reutlinger et al.): space as a given vs. social construction of space/time

Activation - Everybody Move Now!

Critical Analysis of current **Welfare Reform** often looks at Social Policy mainly in terms of Redistribution, Class, Neoliberalism... largely missing its space/time dimension.

vs.

Stephan Lessenich: «**Activation**» is a «Big Movement» aimed at Making Everybody Move Now!

- forms of «durability» created and protected by the Fordist Welfare State are getting destroyed
- legitimate «separate spaces» for women, the old, the disabled, and so on, are challenged or eliminated
- people are urged to move from one job to another, from one place to another, from one project to another etc. (see also: Boltanski & Chiapello «New Spirit of Capitalism»)
- the public health programme (everybody do some sports)

The Class Bias in Space/Time Politics

Work-Life-Balance, and the Problem of «Reconcilability» (or «compatibility»): A New Problem is Born!

- rising female employment, and the plurality of family arrangements
- flexibilization of working hours/days
- digitization and home office
- a new dynamics of everyday mobility (commuting etc.)

This problematization bears traits of universality, but it rests on a class bias, largely reflecting progressive **middle class issues** (see Hochschild: attractive work vs. unattractive family time).

What about **people in poverty**? What about **unemployed people**?
What about people constrained to «**acceptable work**»?

> **People with less Choice and Gratification regarding Work.**

WORKFARE



«**acceptable work**» as a legal category: what kind of work people on welfare benefits are forced to accept

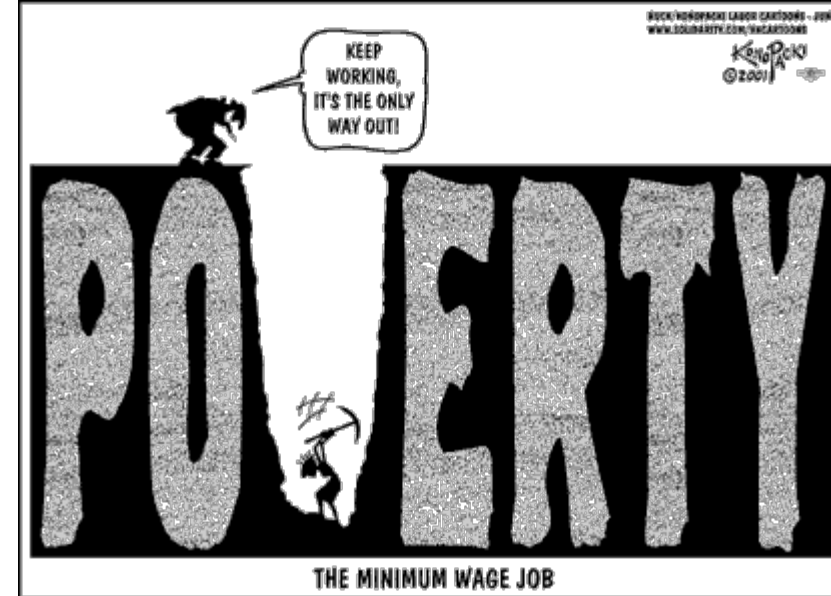
- an obligation to geographical mobility (commuting)
- an obligation to professional (downward) mobility
- an obligation to defamilialization (vs. care work)

structuration of everyday life time by return service requirements

- regular appointments at PES or welfare office
- application work time schedules
- employment programmes et cetera («Tagesstruktur»)

biographical work: the reframing of the unemployed's self often implies «cooling the mark out» (Goffman) and «degradation ceremonies» (Garfinkel), reevaluating his/her whole life from scratch

WORKING POOR



research on **working poor** and **undocumented migrants** has discovered everyday life situations offering hardly any space/time choices, nor social gratification...

- working poor people **combining several small jobs** (or mini-jobs): struggling with working-time and way-to-workplace coordination (especially when they are «on call»); and not getting access to standard social security
- the **24 hours in-house care model**: workers living at the elderly person's house, being paid only part of the time they must be there, with little possibilities to move outside the house

... these are cases of **state non-intervention!**

NEIGHBOURHOOD & COMMUNITY



the non-intended consequences of activation and workfare on neighbourhood life and community building:

- **getting people out of the neighbourhood:** mothers are forced to work and children are supposed to go to day care centers: neighbourhood contacts thanks to children withering away?
- **applying the unemployed** and poor people to community work: is constrained work slowly replacing public sector work and/or voluntary service?

INTEGRATION



state interventions in migrants' everyday life based on **cultural lag theory**: guiding them on their way from the «there-and-then» to the «here-and-now»...

- **integration politics** translates cultural differences into space/time differences in order to justify measures like parenting training, language courses, integration courses, and the like
- certain categories of migrants are supposed to come from another place and another time, **lacking access to modernity**
- «activating those that lag behind» as a form of space/time politics
- «activating into precarity» is part of «our modernity» ...

Conclusions

1. Bringing Space/Time into Social Policy and Social Work (Research; Theory; Practice)
2. Addressing the Class Bias in Space/Time Politics oriented towards solutions to the Work-Life-Balance Problem
3. Building Bridges between separated Research/Practice Fields like Activation, Working Poor, Neighbourhood/Community, and Integration

Thank you for your attention!

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