Setting the Scene

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INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly interdependent world, the domains of social work, social development and the social professions, more generally, are not immune from the global processes affecting whole societies and, more specifically, national welfare systems – or the lack of them – and the living standards and life chances of individuals, families, groups and communities. It is increasingly acknowledged that 'social work' is influenced by global trends and that many social problems are either common to different societies, or have an international dimension or even involve social professionals in transnational activities and international mobility. It is therefore timely to produce a Handbook which addresses the social issues which have an international aetiology or dimension; which analyses the international organisations, conventions and policies which impact on regional, transnational and national/local (social) developments; and which interrogates and illustrates a term which has a long genesis but unclear definition, 'international social work'.

The purpose of this chapter is to orientate readers to the broad field of 'international social work', partly through offering a brief introduction to its origins and exponents, and centrally through exploring the various meanings that can be ascribed to the term, and some of the related concepts, e.g. 'international perspectives'; 'comparative social welfare'; and 'social professionals'. We also present a preliminary analysis of some of the concerns and constructs which have particular significance in this context (e.g. globalisation and 'glocalisation'; indigenisation; the global North and global South) and suggest that ideas of 'space' and 'time' are salient concepts in social work (i.e. geographical and historical factors in macro terms but also the micro space and time elements of individual and community lives). The role of constructs such as race, ethnicity, culture and religion in the context of globalisation and their relevance for international social work are discussed as are the relationship between values, diversity and power relations. Also, as a precursor to more detailed discussions later, we sketch out some of the important trends and comparative data about global

issues which provide a backdrop to social interventions at global, regional and local levels. Finally, we describe the organisation of the book and give a brief preview of its contents.

Overall, this Handbook provides a 'state of the art' analysis of 'international social work' as a specialist form of professional practice. However, in a global context, the practices of all social professionals are increasingly influenced by macro-economic and political forces and informed by international conventions and the inter-relationships between nations and transnational communities. The Handbook also uses an international lens to view social work as a local activity and sometimes takes a comparative perspective to illustrate the diversity of social work theories and practices across the world. We should clarify now that 'social work' is used in this Handbook as a generic term for a diverse occupational group which takes many forms across the globe. The emphasis of work varies between countries and regions as do the challenges; social professionals have different training opportunities and traditions and are known by different titles; and they are employed in a varied range of settings and agencies with different conditions regarding public expectations, esteem and regulation. Even apparently shared values may be contested in the context of particular (national) cultures and agreement about a shared/international value base which does not simply perpetuate 'Western' ideologies and power (relative to the interests and claims of indigenous and/or minority populations) is an on-going challenge.[1]

The Handbook is 'international' both in terms of the wide range of countries from which the authors are drawn and also through the use of examples in the chapters which help elaborate both national differences and also shared concerns and practices. The latter identify social work as a recognisable activity in many countries of the world. For example, 92 national associations of social workers have chosen to join the International Federation of Social Workers

(IFSW) while schools of social work from up to 100 countries are members of the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW). A third international body, the International Council of Social Welfare (ICSW), comprising, predominantly, national umbrella or lead organisations representing third sector or non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and international organisations in more than 70 countries, reflects a similarly wide geographical spread of social work and development initiatives. These three bodies are important in giving a voice, internationally, to social workers and those involved in social development and are (at the time of writing) engaged in developing a 'global agenda' for social work (see websites of the three organisations and later).

The aims of the Handbook can therefore be summarised as follows:

- to critically review and advance our understanding of the term 'international social work' as both a specialist form of practice and as a way of better appreciating local conditions and developing local practice
- to analyse and draw on related concepts, such as international perspectives; comparative social welfare; and transnational social work to illustrate both commonalities and diversity globally
- to present key social issues relevant to social work in international, historical and contemporary perspectives and identify particular practices in social work and social development which have international dimensions
- to indicate potential directions for research, education and practice in the fields of international, comparative and transnational social work.

KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS USED IN THIS HANDBOOK

We start by analysing and defining some terms and concepts which will be used in this chapter and in the handbook overall. The key concept at the heart of this handbook, naturally, is 'international social work' itself but, before considering this term, it is useful to look at some of the related concepts which

form the basis for considering international social work.

What do we understand by 'international'?

A central term which needs to be defined in the context of this Handbook is '*international*' – and particularly the question of how this relates to similar terms (sometimes used interchangeably) such as '*transnational*', '*cross-national*' or '*global*'. An obvious commonality among the first three terms is that they all make reference to the concept of the nation-state, a link which is significant for social work both historically and currently, as we will discuss later. Healy (2001: 5) has provided a helpful distinction between the terms 'global' and 'international', stating that the former indicates a concern for the world as a whole, while 'international' involves issues and relationships between two or more nations (or their citizens), or which transcend national boundaries and viewpoints. The transcendence of national boundaries is emphasised even more strongly by the term 'transnational', which departs from the view of the nation-state as a 'container' for political, economic, social and cultural activities and relationships and instead focuses on practices, organisations, networks and flows, which create on-going interconnections across borders, particularly on the micro-level of human relationships (e.g. through transnational migration networks) (Glick Schiller and Levitt, 2006). Cross-national, on the other hand, often refers to comparisons or transactions between a (limited) number of nation-states (Healy, 2001).

Along with various terms that indicate some form of border crossing (whether actual or more 'virtual'), this introduction also needs to consider the various 'spatial' units 'below' and 'beyond' the nation-state which are of relevance to (international) social work. The growth of literature in the international social work field in recent years has sparked (or perhaps rekindled) debates about what might be appropriate 'locations' of social work, and whether suggesting a 'global' frame of reference for the profession is – in polarised forms – a necessity of our time (Ife, 2001) or a project of (at best) unrealistic vanity or (at worst) imperialism by a selected elite of academics from economically privileged countries (Webb, 2003; Haug, 2005; Gray and Webb, 2007) The tensions brought out by these debates reflect both the many contentions inherent in the practice and theory of social work as such (from the micro- through to the macro-level), as well as the contradictions and complexities, which characterise various spatial units. Few people would probably dispute the statement that social work has been and is a 'locality-bound' (as well as time-specific) activity (Lyons, 1999), but quite what constitutes a '*locality*' is a less well-defined and even contested notion. We can imagine various meanings ranging from fairly small human settlements (e.g. a village or, an urban neighbourhood); the 'local' level of a whole city or urban or rural conglomerations of several hundred thousand or even a few million inhabitants which have been grouped together as administrative units; through to the level of a society delimited by national borders. More often than not 'local' seems to be defined mainly in relation to other spatial contexts, for example, as an opposite to 'global' (Dominelli, 2010).[2]

Distinguishing 'regions'

Another example of a term which can be ambiguous is '*region*' – which in some contexts denotes different areas within a country, but which we mainly use in this Handbook to refer to different continental regions of the world. Grouping countries into regions or even finding appropriate names to describe regions is far from straight-forward, and the difficulties brought about by such attempts (which we have nevertheless made) are highlighted in most of the 'regional perspectives' chapters in Section 5 of this Handbook.

On the point of language, we also need to acknowledge that any discussion which seeks to compare or contrast different parts of the world in terms of economic and political power relations involves word choices which are contentious. In this chapter, and elsewhere, we tend to use the terms 'global North' and 'global South' to distinguish between countries which (usually based on historically developed power dynamics, e.g. through colonialism) are relatively rich and powerful in the international arena, and those that have tended to be economically and politically marginalised – often because their resources were (or continue to be) exploited by other nations. While this distinction reflects, to some extent, actual geographical locations of the countries and regions in either the northern or southern hemisphere of the world, like any dichotomy, this categorisation has exceptions (e.g. Australia or New Zealand as relatively wealthy nations in the geographical South) and blurred boundaries (e.g. the status of poor nations in rich regions, such as some states in Eastern Europe). The notion of 'rich' and 'poor' nations itself is relativised through the fact that there are privileged 'elites' in the South (for instance, the relatively small number of billionaires in India continues to grow, while the vast majority still live on less than $US2 per day (e.g. Agrawal, 2011) and excluded populations in the North. Other 'typologies' used in this Handbook include that of 'Western' nations (or concepts and ideas which originated there) which usually denotes a similar 'area' to that described by the term global North. 'Western' is sometimes contrasted with 'Eastern', but more often with 'non-Western', which already alludes to some of the difficulties associated with this particular term. A further common distinction used by the UN is that of 'developed' relative to 'developing' regions or countries. This suggests a certain progressional path in which countries with access to more resources are considered to have moved 'further along' than those with less resources. While many may view this as unproblematic when comparing the economic 'output' and technological 'advances' of certain countries, the difficulty with this terminology is that it can suggest inferiority or 'backwardness' in the context of social or cultural issues, with negative implications for attitudes and behaviours towards populations in countries so described. Perhaps the terms, 'industrialised' (or post-industrial) and 'industrialising' convey a more neutral description. Distinctions can also be made more overtly on the basis of economic wealth as in the terms 'minority world' and 'majority world', sometimes referred to as the 'one-thirds' and 'two-thirds' world (Sewpaul and Jones, 2004). These terms reflect the considerable inequality of resource distribution across the globe as well as the fact that a minority of the world's population sustains luxurious life styles on the very basis that these are unattainable for the remaining majority. Each of these dichotomies seems to have its particular problems and the various notions can be contested. Therefore, in editing this Handbook, we have refrained from seeking to establish a standardised vocabulary but suggest that linguistic diversity within even the Anglophone literature (not to mention the literature in other languages) is a reality and a testimony to the richness of ideas and concepts in social work, as well as providing its own challenges.

Globalisation – what does it mean and is it relevant?

Turning to another key concept for this Handbook, the term 'globalisation' (see Chapter 2), continues to generate debate about its meaning, range and even its existence or novelty status, as well as its relation to social reform and social work (Teeple, 2000; Payne and Askeland, 2008). Among the many different views and perspectives are those which view globalisation predominantly as an economic process spreading capitalist ideas and modes of production as well as integrating local markets into a wider global market, and those which consider it to

be a more multidimensional process which has social, political, cultural and environmental (or spatial) aspects and consequences that are as important as the economic ones. There are also different views on the role of nation-states within globalisation – ranging from the notion that states are losing power and influence to transnational corporations, which are free to set their own conditions, through to the argument that globalisation has done relatively little to influence the existing international power dynamics among nation-states, with Western states remaining privileged in profiting from capitalist structures and retaining their hegemony in organisations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and even the United Nations (UN). However, in relation to this last point, the increasing economic power of the BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India and China) is set to challenge established power positions in the world order. Midgley (2008) argues that some of the literature on globalisation (including that from within the social work field) has tended to provide an oversimplified presentation of the processes involved, ignoring the complexities and often paradoxical nature of the phenomenon. He contrasts different positions, particularly in the context of globalisation's impact on culture: the first perspective highlights the destructive nature of globalisation (particularly through the worldwide and unbridled spread of capitalism) leading to global disorder, cultural fragmentation, the erosion of social ties and the end of certainty and continuity. The second perspective argues that globalisation leads to increasing convergence and homogenisation of values and practices, perpetuating cultural imperialism and a dominance of Western values such as individualism, rationalisation and standardisation in many domains of human life, while at the same time producing international likeminded 'elites'. A third perspective focuses on the 'backlash' against the dominance of Western values leading to polarisation and conflict, fuelled by growing economic disparities and uncertainties. Finally, the fourth perspective emphasises the emergence of new, hybridised cultural patterns resulting from the fusion of indigenous and exogenous values and practices – particularly through migration and the media.

Midgley (2008) considers the inconclusiveness of these various positions and the lack of a single perspective as problematic, including social work. On the other hand, one could argue that such differences reflect the dialectical nature of globalisation. For example, seemingly opposite trends of *'localisation'* (such as the growing identification with and return to traditional values and practices in some communities, and the search for locally based solutions by social and environmental movements) can be considered, in a 'both/and'-perspective, as an inherent part of the same set of processes (or the other side of the coin). An expression of this is the term '*glocalisation*' (Robertson, 1995) – representing the impact of the global on the local and vice versa (e.g. Lawrence et al., 2009; Hugman et al., 2010).

As much as mirroring the tensions between modern and postmodern world-views, the different positions described above also reflect some of the continuing debates and issues relevant to international social work, including on-going concerns about professional imperialism; the advantages or disadvantages of seeking 'global' frameworks; the role of international perspectives in local social work; as well as indigenisation and authentisation of social work practice (referring, respectively, to the adaptation of concepts to make them more relevant to local circumstances, and to the creation of local professional models (Hugman, 2010). These are themes which run through this Handbook, and we return to them in later sections of this chapter.

Social work and social professions

We have already indicated that there are varied understandings of social work, which are, to some extent, reflected in how the

term is used in different chapters of this Handbook. In the UK and some other Anglophone countries, a fairly narrow understanding of social work, usually related to work with a techno-bureaucratic and individualistic focus, has evolved which can be contrasted with other countries where social development or community work are given more prominence. These different understandings have given rise to debates about whether there is an international common 'core' of social work, including its value base, or whether it is too contextually different to be considered 'an international profession' (Webb, 2003) and also to attempts to provide alternative terms which are inclusive of a wider range of titles and do not privilege one over another, including the notion of 'social professions'.

Considering the root or core notion,

> the word 'social' is generic, broad and all encompassing. The root of the word is found in Latin, where socius (noun) means 'ally, confederate', but also, by extension, 'sharer, partner and companion'. Its adjective socialis means 'of or belonging to, companionship, sociable, social'. The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary lists four meanings for the word 'social' that emphasize, respectively: 'belonging; mutuality; group living; and activities to improve conditions of a society by addressing problems and issues (Pawar and Cox, 2010: 14).

All of these meanings, not least the last, are relevant to the practices of social professionals across the world and are important in distinguishing our activities from those of professionals whose primary concern is with the health or education of individuals and populations.

Considering the term 'social professions', more specifically, this originated from European exchange and network programmes (Seibel and Lorenz, 1998) and has been helpful in facilitating more inclusive discussions in Europe about the various professional titles and qualifications of those working in the social welfare field. These include, for example, social pedagogues (e.g. Germany and Denmark), community development

workers (e.g. UK) and animators (e.g. Netherlands and France). On the other hand, some authors (e.g. Lorenz, 2006) have also noted and critiqued a trend in some countries towards an ever increasing diversity of titles, which specify the exact group of people with whom social professionals will be working (e.g. degrees specifically in work with children and families, or older people), leading to concerns about the fragmentation and even deprofessionalisation of the generic field of social work (Staub-Bernasconi, 2006; see also Chapter 27), related to the marketisation and managerialism evident in social work organisation and practices in many countries since the late twentieth century (Dominelli, 1996).

These latter trends are also reflected in the growth of relatively new occupational titles and groupings which in some countries both subsume and extend beyond the 'boundaries' of 'professional' social work, such as care management (with its origins in the US) and the social care sector, the latter term now used in the UK to include but extend beyond social work (Higham, 2005). To some extent these terms also reflect the views of society and even social workers themselves as to the nature of social work and whether (and in what form) professional education is a prerequisite in the 'organisation and delivery of services' or whether more inclusive and 'less elitist' forms are preferred. For instance, professionally qualified social workers may find themselves employed in international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) delivering welfare and humanitarian assistance to specific populations and working alongside others who make no claim to this title; and similar issues arise in relation to the notion of social development. Lavelette and Ioakimidis (2011: 139–42) have suggested use of the terms, 'official social work' (carried out by qualified and possibly licenced staff) and 'popular social work', the latter term being used to describe the campaigning and human rights work recognisable in both the origins of social work and currently in the international arena, for instance, in Palestine.

Social development – is it social work?

Since the 1960s, the UN has played a major role in popularising the social development approach through its various bodies (e.g. the Commission for Social Development; International Labour Organisation (ILO); United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); Research Institute for Social Development; the World Bank; the World Summit on Social Development). In 2010, at the joint world conference of IFSW, IASSW and ICSW, social development sat alongside social work in the title and content as well as in the emerging agenda. However, social development has remained a contested concept and it has had a mixed reception, for instance, among social work educators, and thus it is important to establish a common understanding of the term, notwithstanding the challenges to developing its practice. As with some other concepts, it is sometimes easier to say (and important to clarify) what it is not, so social development does not mean development of just one individual, one family, one neighbourhood, one community, one corporation, one nation, one nation-state or one region; nor does it mean development of just one aspect of any entity, such as the economic or political, to the neglect of other aspects. It is rather the collective and inclusive (Miah, 2008) development of the whole entity, whatever that entity might be: the use of the term 'development' raises questions as to whether biological notions of growth, advancement and maturity can be 'transferred' to the social context – to communities, societies and institutions. It may be that there are value connotations and power relationships implied in the term and we shall be returning to these when considering some overarching constructs.

Meanwhile, there are varied definitions of social development in existence which Pawar and Cox (2010) have flexibly grouped under three categories. The first of these emphasises, among other things, systematic planning and the link between social and economic development (e.g. Midgley, 1995; Patel, 2005). A second group of definitions emphasises that bringing about structural change is the core element of social development (e.g. Todaro, 1997). A third focus is on realizing human potential, meeting needs and achieving a satisfactory quality of life (e.g. Mohan and Sharma, 1985; Davis 2004). One of the critical issues in defining social development is its relationship with economic development. Is economic development embedded in social development, or is social development complementary to economic development? The 1995 World Summit on Social Development distinguishes the two and sees social development (without defining it) as necessary to complement economic development: the UNDP *Human Development Reports* reflect a similar view. Some definitions seem to capture this issue by suggesting that social and economic development are different but at the same time juxtaposed, but, as some authors have noted, the social has become subordinated to the economic in some countries (e.g. the UK; see Walker, 1996).

An analysis of different definitions suggests that some authors focus on processes, some on outcomes, and some on both. Some definitions include the meaning and purpose of social development, and what needs to be done to achieve it, whereas others cover only one aspect of it. Overall, we suggest that social development is about systematically introducing a planned (sometimes radical) change process, releasing human potential, transforming people's determination, reorganizing and reorienting structures and strengthening the capacity of people and their institutions to meet human needs. Additional goals include reducing inequalities and problems, creating opportunities and empowering people, achieving human welfare and well-being, improving relationships between people and their institutions, and, finally, ensuring economic development. Midgley's (1995) categorisation of social development into eight key characteristics is useful here. Four of these characteristics

address the issue of process – positive change, progressive development, intervention through organized efforts and economic development. The other four characteristics refer to interdisciplinary theoretical bases, ideologically oriented strategies, an inclusive or universal scope, and the welfare goals of social development.

There seems to be little disagreement with the goals of social development but there is less clarity about how these goals, values, strategies and processes can be implemented and achieved in the field. Also, the demonstration that social development can be practised and achieved in the 'one-thirds' world and is not only relevant to 'developing countries' is a significant challenge. Pawar and Cox (2010: 27–34) suggest that social development practice involves understanding and changing current conditions by setting and following clear goals (well-being or quality of life and freedom to realise the potential); values (human dignity, human rights and obligations, diversity and human link with nature); and processes (participatory and empowering); and by developing and implementing plans and strategies that are multilevel (international to local) and multidimensional (including cultural, political, economic, ecological, education, health, housing, equity groups and citizens and their institutions). We suggest that these goals, values, processes and practices surely resonate with 'social work'.

PERSPECTIVES ON INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL WORK

In this section, we consider understandings and manifestations of the central concept of this Handbook, international social work; and also look at a related concept, comparative social welfare. However, we start with a brief overview of international social work from a historical perspective, as a precursor to the historical dimensions alluded to more specifically by authors in some of the following chapters.

International social work in historical perspective

It can be argued that social work has a long history as 'an international profession' and the recounting of this history, including of the first individual exchanges and then of congresses leading to the formation of international associations, reflects a strong European and American bias in its origins (Kendall, 2000; Healy, 2001) with implications for subsequent developments in other parts of the world. However, the beginnings of international social work as a form of practice were also evident in the establishment of the International Social Services organisation in 1924 (Lyons, 1999).

Many authors in this text and elsewhere refer to the origins of welfare provisions and 'social work interventions' in religious institutions and philanthropic activities, and the roots of social work in charitable organisations were indeed strongly represented in many countries (Lorenz, 1994). But in some countries, there were also early indications of the 'care/control' dichotomy, that is, the direct intervention of the state through national legislation and/or delegation of responsibilities to 'local authorities' (whether as big as states or provinces or as small as counties and parishes) for provision of 'relief' (of those most afflicted by poverty) and restraint (e.g. of 'wayward' or 'immoral' youth). One such example was the 1834 (New) Poor Law and provision of workhouses in the UK, providing both care and control in relation to the very poor, and which subsequently gave rise to separate forms of (state) care, e.g. for elders, or people with mental illness or physical disabilities (Young and Ashton, 1963).

Additionally, also important were the campaigning activists (individuals and groups) who sought to change not individuals but the conditions in which whole minorities existed, whose heirs can be seen in the community activists who challenge or even enter politics today (Lavalette and Ioakimidis, 2011). An expanded view of social work's European

origins around the turn of the twentieth century is provided by Lorenz (1994), who identified four strands in these initiatives – the Judeo–Christian heritage; early protagonists of opportunities for women; the trade union movement; and philanthropy. Of course, the particular histories of social work in individual countries vary, both in length and in the degree to which each of these three or four strands was evident or dominant, but internationally, the role of European countries in colonisation – and later of the US through its economic and political power – have been important in influencing the shape of welfare systems and the development of social work, including through professional education and preferred research paradigms. (See later chapters including those in Section 5.)

Given the origins of social work in the context of industrialisation, urbanisation and then mass migration, it is not surprising that the earliest examples of 'international activities' were the visits of individuals to other countries within Europe or across the Atlantic to learn about social work elsewhere and share experiences. The establishment of professional relationships between leading figures of the time sometimes resulted from meetings at international conferences; for instance, Jane Addams (US) and Alice Solomon (Germany) apparently met at an International Congress of Women held in Germany in 1904 (Healy, 2001). International conferences also became the basis in the 1920s for the establishment of the three professional bodies referred to in the introduction. Their more precise origins can be located in the 'Paris Conference', or more accurately, an International Social Welfare Fortnight, which included an International Conference of Social Work and a section on social work education. As a result of this, the International Conference of Social Work developed into ICSW, while the International Committee of Schools of Social Work developed into IASSW (Healy, 2001). The IFSW was to have a more chequered path and later establishment, the work of the International Permanent Secretariat of Social Workers having been disrupted by the Second World War (1939–45) and IFSW not taking its current form and title until 1956 (Lawrence et al., 2009). The relative strengths of each and the relationships between the three associations have varied over time but, at the time of writing, the organisations which had a common origin nearly a century ago are again working collaboratively on establishing a common agenda and providing all aspects of social work with a stronger voice.

For the best part of the twentieth century, then, the history and development of 'international social work' was associated with individual and group exchange programmes; establishment of cross-national professional networks; and specialist or regional organisations also concerned with 'exchange' (e.g. through conferences or research programmes). Some of this development took place within the context of, or associated, with social work education and research. For instance, a project was carried out in the mid-twentieth century by eminent figures such as Katherine Kendall (US) and Eileen Younghusband (UK), on behalf of the IASSW and under the auspices of the UN: this resulted in four major reports about developments in social work education worldwide (Kendall, 1998; Lyons, 2008). However, the establishment of social work (education) in many countries of the global South resulted from the efforts of missionaries and other 'western' influences rather than developing from indigenous roots (see Chapter 8), leaving a legacy of concerns about the relevance of curricula and practices and the need to develop more authentic ones. International social work was also frequently perceived as something that individuals who 'worked abroad' did – often for INGOs – which again, until recently, tended to be seen as an opportunity open mainly to relatively affluent social workers from the Global North going to less-developed countries. However, more recent studies suggest some changes in the patterns of labour migration in social work in the twenty-first century resulting in concerns

about the 'brain drain' (from sending countries) and exploitation of 'overseas workers' rather than the potential for 'professional imperialism' in North–South movements (Lyons and Littlechild, 2006; Welbourne et al., 2007).

It is perhaps only in the last 20–30 years that social work has paid more attention to power imbalances inherent in international relations between states and the implications for the personal/professional relationships between those 'on the ground', as we discuss later. Meanwhile, it is useful to identify some resources available to investigate historical aspects of international social work. These are relatively few and tend to be found in the documents and texts relating to the history of social work in particular countries (that is providing a comparative rather than an international perspective). However, there are also the (largely unexplored) records of the international associations themselves (but see, for instance, Kniephoff-Knebel and Seibel, 2008). In addition, an increasing number of journals, articles and books have accumulated over (mainly) the past 30 years.

The earliest journal devoted to international social work (though not specifically its history) was *International Social Work,* established in 1957 by the three international associations, initially mainly as a service to members (Lyons, 2007). However, as Healy and Thomas (2007) noted in their retrospective analysis of contributions, only a relatively small proportion of articles have been directly concerned with developing our understanding of the notion of international social work and, latterly, with the implications of globalisation. (More generally, the journal has provided a significant number of national case examples from which to learn about comparative aspects of social work, welfare and development trends and initiatives). There has also been some growth in regional journals (for instance, in Africa, the Caribbean and the Asia Pacific), although the first such English language, one relating to Europe, was not established until 1992 (*Social Work in Europe*) and subsequently merged with a slightly later publication (*European Journal of Social Work*) in 2002. The latter journal provided an important source of information about key figures in the history of social work in several European countries through its 'Historical Portraits' series. These served a useful purpose in enabling readers in many Central and East European (CEE) countries to 'reclaim' their social work history and revealed to West Europeans the important roles played by, for instance, Polish and Czech national figures in developing social work in Europe, as did some of the material in the book about IASSW presidents (Seibel, 2008).

The concept of international social work

The concept of international social work is contested and still evolving but requires analysis and development for educational and research purposes as well as practice. The ambiguous or different meanings of international social work are partly due to the way 'social work' itself is variously defined and understood in different countries and regions, notwithstanding the 'international definition of social work' agreed by the IFSW and IASSW (see Appendix 1). Here, it is important to distinguish between this definition and the definition of 'international social work', which is the focus of this discussion.

Although the term 'international social work' was first used in 1943 by George Warren (Xu, 2006), the preceding section illustrates the ways in which an international dimension, in the form of exchange or transfer of knowledge and practices, was present in social work from its earliest days. Until the 1920s or so, emerging social work knowledge was mainly shared within the North but subsequently (1920s to 1940s), social work knowledge and models were also being transferred from the North to the South and the internationalisation of social work was also strengthened by representatives from Latin America and Asia at the 1928 Paris meeting.

During the 1940s to 1960s, and particularly following the Second World War, a particular kind of international social work peaked, in terms of transfer of education, practice and welfare administration models and skills, mostly from the North to the South. This occurred with support from UN organisations and INGOs, and receptive governments of new nation-states: it was not until over a decade later that the direction of this linear flow was criticised as professional imperialism (Midgley, 1981). Additionally, a recent analysis of documents relating to the postwar establishment of social work in Greece also highlights the strong connection between the political interests of wealthy and powerful nations and developments in welfare elsewhere (Lavalette and Ioakimidis, 2011).

Since the 1990s and with the advent of globalisation, the term 'international social work' has been applied to different forms of practice, with more attention paid to power differentials and ethical dimensions, and some efforts to correct the unidirectional flow, at least theoretically (Cox and Pawar, 2006; Xu, 2006; Healy, 2008; Hugman, 2010). Core issues (e.g. poverty, unemployment, health concerns, ecological issues, migration and globalisation) are recognised as impacting both in the North and the South (though in different degrees and forms), and there has been an increasing realisation that interdependence, mutual learning and sharing are essential. A review of relevant literature shows various understandings and definitions of international social work (Hokenstad et al., 1992; Johnson, 1996; Pawar, 1998; Lyons, 1999; Healy, 2001; Ahmadi, 2003; Cox and Pawar, 2006; Lyons et al., 2006; Xu, 2006; Payne and Askeland, 2008; Hugman, 2010) largely reflecting developments in different periods as summarised above. In the mid-1990s, a survey across 400 schools of social work in 20 countries by Nagy and Falk gave rise to a wide range of ideas about the 'meaning' of international social work (summarised in 12 categories in Lyons, 1999). Rather than repeating the whole range of definitions, we have chosen to focus on two

relatively recent ones provided in international social work texts (Cox and Pawar, 2006; Healy, 2008) as most relevant to both the North and the South contexts and also to contemporary developments. In addition, we consider the related notion of 'international perspectives' and look at the five elements of international social work identified by Hugman (2010). The latter appear to synthesise various concepts and certain basic principles that are crucial for international social work.

Healy (2001: 7) defined international social work as 'international professional pratice and the capacity for international action by the social work profession and its members. International action has four dimensions: internationally related domestic practice and advocacy, professional exchange, international practice, and international policy development and advocacy'. Cox and Pawar (2006: 20) defined it as

> …the promotion of social work education and practice globally and locally, with the purpose of building a truly integrated international profession that reflects social work's capacity to respond appropriately and effectively, in education and practice terms, to the various global challenges that are having a significant impact on the well-being of large sections of the world's population.

Although the two definitions are complementary, Healy's definition emphasises professional practice in the international context and the social work profession's and social workers' capacity for international action in four specific areas, although these might be seen as somewhat restrictive. However, one of the interesting aspects of Healy's definition is the idea that practising international social work does not necessarily involve working abroad or in an INGO as some aspects of international social work practice, e.g. refugee resettlement, international adoption and responses to human trafficking, are likely to be undertaken as 'domestic activities'.

Cox and Pawar's international social work concept focuses on social work education and practice both at global and local levels so as to build the social work profession

and its capacity internationally in such a way that it is able to address both global and local challenges concerning the well-being of the whole population. Although these definitions seem to cover both the North and the South, a critical examination of them may raise the question of their applicability in the South as they appear to have been defined in Northern contexts reflecting Northern concerns (Pawar, 2010). There are also those within the North who question the appropriateness of the term 'international social work' and argue for more work to develop a theory and practice that examine processes and the diverse ways in which the global and the local interact (e.g. Dominelli, 2010) or who advocate the notion of social work internationalism, rather than international social work (Lavalette and Ioakimidis, 2011).

Perhaps it is also appropriate to mention here the related notion of 'international perspectives' on social work as discussed by Lyons et al. (2006) and Lawrence et al. (2009). These authors suggest that local practices can – and should – be viewed through an international lens or that knowledge about international events and different cultures should inform local practices, e.g. with newly arrived and even established minority ethnic populations. Thus, while not all social workers will choose to engage in 'international social work' as a specialist activity – or be drawn into transnational social work by chance – the internationalisation of social problems will require increasing numbers of social professionals to have knowledge about international conditions and current affairs in order to understand the concerns of the service users and respond appropriately. In addition, increasing numbers will find it necessary to develop their comparative knowledge of welfare systems and social work services if they are to engage in transnational activities in specialist areas of work which might previously have been seen as restricted to the national scene e.g. transnational fostering (Lyons, 2006).

By analysing a range of definitions, Hugman (2010: 18–20) has delineated five core elements in international social work. These are: (1) the practice of social work in a country other than the home country of the social worker; (2) working with individuals, families and communities whose origins are in a country other than that where the social worker is practising; (3) working in international organisations; (4) collaborations between countries in which social workers exchange ideas or work together on projects that cross national borders; and (5) practices that address locally issues that originate in globalised social systems. Although the five elements may be implicit in the above definitions, the delineation in this way helps facilitate the understanding of international social work, not least as being addressed in this Handbook.

Comparative perspectives

Finally, in this section, we should consider a closely related notion that has already been mentioned or implied and has particular significance to international social work when applied to welfare systems, social policies and research, as well as the national organisation and practice of social work, that is, the term 'comparative'. Comparative social welfare is a concept closely connected to, but distinct from, international social work which can be an important source of knowledge (Hokenstad et al., 1992; Hoefer, 1996).

Social welfare is a broad and comprehensive concept that connotes how (ways and means) individuals, families, communities, organisations and the nation-state meet needs and address social issues, particularly of marginalised and disadvantaged groups in a society. In the global North, relatively more literature and research are available on the state's contribution to social welfare through a range of (social) policies and provisions relating to education, health, housing, poverty and income support, and to vulnerable groups such as children, older people or people with disabilities (Esping-Anderson,

1990; Hill, 1996; Castles, 1998; Goodin et al., 2000; Cochrane et al., 2001). Such (social) policies and provisions vary from one nation-state to another depending upon their socioeconomic and political contexts, and, although the wealth of the country is a major determinant of the role of the state in providing a range of welfare services, political ideology has also assumed greater significance in patterns of welfare provision in the North, with greater emphasis being placed on individual responsibility, private markets and the role of the voluntary/not for profit sector, including a growing number of social enterprises (see Chapter 7).

Comparative social welfare is the term generally applied to comparative analysis of the welfare policies and provisions of two or more nation-states to identify common trends and differences; and to develop insights to further improve policy or to replicate it elsewhere. It often has an interdisciplinary research orientation, and insights gained from such comparative analysis can be used in international social work in terms of developing social work education; designing welfare policies and programmes; and preparing personnel for delivering services, particularly in countries where welfare systems are less established.

The appropriate focus of comparative social welfare research (sometimes also referred to as cross-national research) is a matter of debate since comparing welfare systems can be the basis for generalisations and development of theories; for understanding the causes of global miseries; and for devising intervention strategies and programmes (Rodgers, 1977; Mohan, 1986). However, most of the comparative social welfare analysis is undertaken where national comparative data sets are (easily) available, ignoring welfare trends and issues in countries without such readily available data sets. This kind of comparative social welfare has resulted in partial understanding of welfare systems around the world. Beyond comparing national aggregate data sets, micro or local level analysis is also needed to understand the contribution of welfare programmes to reducing inequality and alleviating poverty, and to demonstrate how people and communities live without well-developed welfare systems and provisions. Social welfare outcomes are as important as welfare expenditure. Hill (1996: 56) also concludes that micro-policy analysis is needed to explore how different nation-states and their welfare systems deal with the same issues, e.g. the needs of single-parent families, the encouragement of labour market participation or the control of professional power.

The subject matter of international social work as related to the comparative concept generally focuses on building capacity in the social work profession and extending an understanding of the roles and activities of social workers in national contexts (e.g. Weiss-Gal and Welbourne, 2008), sometimes with a view to developing policies and practices in different parts of the world. However, there have also been longer standing examples of comparative research into social work education and also practices, for instance, in Europe (Brauns and Kramer, 1991; Cooper et al., 1995).

Given the comparative social welfare approach or methodology and the substance of comparison, we suggest that international social work and comparative social welfare can be distinguished, but are linked and often mutually useful. However, it may be noted that international social work can be done without being comparative in a methodological sense (although comparisons do occur at a cognitive level among international social workers), and comparative analysis can be undertaken without including international aspects.

SOME OVERARCHING THEMES FOR INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL WORK

Previous sections have highlighted that international social work is not a clearly defined or unambiguous concept. The literature

shows multiple definitions, identifying different 'strands' and issues. For an action-orientated profession, it is not surprising that the focus has often been on what international social workers 'do'. Another way of approaching the subject is to identify some of the underlying themes which frame professional action in an interconnected world. This is particularly important given concerns about discourses which have neglected to analyse the power relations inherent in ideas of international social work (e.g. Haug, 2005). In this section, we discuss three overarching themes (theoretical frameworks) that we think are important.

There have been previous attempts to identify theoretical frameworks which underpin the (still contested) concept of international social work. For example, Cox and Pawar (2006) suggest a conceptual framework based on four different inter-related perspectives. Globalisation provides the overall context within which international social work is set, with both unifying and divisive elements and globalising and localising tendencies; the authors suggest that the concept of '*world citizenship*' can reconcile these different aspects. *Human rights* provide the second perspective, setting out a fundamental value base for social work; while an *ecological perspective* (and within it the principle of sustainability) represents the link between humanity and nature. Finally, the authors argue that a *social development* perspective (meaning the enhancement of the well-being of people in a society), utilising various levels of intervention, should be the 'sense of direction' for international social work.

We acknowledge the existing diversity of theoretical frameworks and definitions of international social work and do not seek to provide a unitary 'frame' for the concept. Rather, based on existing debates and our own understandings, we identify three dimensions or overarching themes which seem relevant.

- First, we consider *'space'* as a key theme for social work, particularly for any discussion about international dimensions of the discipline and profession. This is reflected in the IFSW/IASSW 'international definition' of social work, which refers to the interaction of people and their environments as a key 'location' of social work. Important conceptual issues in this context include, for example, the changing characters of some spatial units in the context of globalisation and localisation, as well as issues of mobility or 'migrations' and their relevance for social work.

- A second key theme is '*time*' – which we consider both on the macro-level of historical global developments relevant to contemporary international social work (and possibly for future directions), as well as on the micro-level of human experience – in particular, the impact of transnational practices on life courses.

- As a third overarching theme, it is vital for any analysis of international social work to engage with issues of '*human diversity*' and the '*power relations*' which manifest themselves through inequality and the exclusion and oppression of some groups by others. In this context, key issues include debates about the privileging of ideas and knowledge from the global North over that of the global South, coined in the term 'professional imperialism' (Midgley, 1981), as well as questions about the 'universality' of social work and the concept of the indigenisation of approaches.

Finally, rather than being an additional theme, we suggest that spatial, time-related and diversity-related constructs interact and interconnect, and that the notion of 'intersectionality' is a useful lens for analysing issues related to international social work. References to intersectionality in the social work field are increasing – particularly in relation to gender issues (see, for example, the IIFSW's (2010) policy paper on women) – and a new international journal (*Intersectionalities*, http://journals.library.mun.ca/ojs/index.php/IJ) is calling for papers for its first edition, at the time of writing. Given the complexity of international social work, intersectionality provides a useful framework for considering how the three selected themes interact and interlink. This means applying spatial, historical, life course, diversity and power relations lenses to practice, education, research, and policy regarding international social work, and based on

these, considering dilemmas on macro- and micro-levels in ways which are contextually relevant.

'Space' as a relevant concept for social work

'Space' (or locality) has played a part in social work since its very beginnings. In its origins, the living conditions of those in poverty in the urban slums of European cities (formed in the wake of the 'industrial revolution') provided a key focus for the interventions of 'social work pioneers'. The issue of professional 'location' was evident from early on, reflected in different paradigms of 'professional distance' (the Charity Organisation Society's approach of avoiding 'too much' empathy with welfare recipients) and relative physical 'closeness' (the Settlement movement's emphasis on living among 'the poor').

It is relevant here to distinguish between different dimensions of space. For example, Bourdieu (1999) described 'physical space' (the site where people are physically present) and 'social space' (people's relationships or symbolic 'locations' in relation to other actors and objects). The two notions are connected in that a person's social position is often reflected in the type of physical space (e.g. living space) they occupy. The question of the contexts in which people are 'located' (or not), in physical, social or symbolic terms, has been recognised as a significant issue for social work – not least through ecological approaches which consider the interaction of people and their environments. Spatscheck and Wolf-Ostermann (2009) argue that in Germany, for example, a social space orientation in social work has become common in recent decades. An example is the concept of 'life world' (*Lebenswelt*)-oriented social work (e.g. Grunwald and Thiersch, 2009), which is located in those 'places' where individuals (or communities) experience and try to make sense of the impact of 'the wider world' on their day-to-day lives.

A relevant issue for (international) social work is the on-going danger of the life world becoming 'colonised' by the state and its systems – including by social work professionals (Hayes and Houston, 2007).

Globalisation leads both to compressions and extensions of social spaces. For example, membership in 'virtual communities', using media such as the internet, may lead to people thousands of miles apart feeling more connected to each other than to next-door neighbours. On the other hand, changed livelihood strategies, not least migration, have influenced social relationships and the make-up of social spaces in many different ways. For example, migration has made family-based care more complicated, in relation to care of young children or relatives who are elderly or otherwise vulnerable. Such situations can lead to the creation of transnational social spaces characterised by on-going interactions (whether virtually or physically) across borders (Köngeter, 2010); these movements and networks are relevant for social workers both from local and international perspectives.

A spatial perspective involves considering different units of reference, ranging from the 'macro' to the 'micro' level. At the macro level, the spatial unit of the nation state is particularly significant as, from this, we define 'international' (see above). Additionally, states were the bases for the establishment of different welfare regimes when social work itself was emerging as a 'modern profession' in Europe and North America (Hugman, 2010). Anderson (1991) has described nation states as 'imagined communities' and they have had a relatively short existence (in the overall course of history) but this does not diminish the contemporary powerfulness of this concept. Despite the influences of globalisation, a world not 'ordered' by nation-states is hard to imagine (see Chapter 6).

Citizenship (i.e. 'belonging' to the defined territory of a nation) remains an important factor for access to welfare. 'Deviation' from defined norms (e.g. being economically

active and productive in capitalist nations) is likely to lead to exclusion as an 'undeserving' member of society, while others, such as migrants (who challenge the notion of national citizenship), may be denied access to citizenship – or even to the very territory of the state (Hugman et al., 2010). While capital flows and activities of transnational corporations are relatively unrestricted by national borders, the movement of people is subject to policing and restrictive controls (Glick Schiller and Levitt, 2006). Bauman (1998) has suggested that globalisation increases the differences between the 'globalised rich' who are able to buy into the technological advances of travel and communication to overcome restrictions of time and space and the 'localised poor' who lack such resources and are thus condemned to remain in undesirable spaces such as urban ghettos (slums or favelas). Such limitations on physical and social mobility are not new, and are indeed connected with the history of social work in some countries, where the movement of the poor between localities was restricted by welfare systems designed to keep them in their 'place' (e.g. Garrett, 2006).

Today's limitations on human mobility disproportionately affect movements from the global South to the North. Another concept by Bauman (1998) – that of 'tourists' and 'vagabonds' – is applied by Hugman et al. (2010) to international professional mobility within social work. The movement of social workers from the global North to the South is most likely to take place in a context where professionals are seen as experts, or at least as contributors to local social development, who share their knowledge before returning to their own countries; as such, these international social workers travel largely as 'tourists'. This contrasts with the treatment of migrants from the South in the global North who are most often placed in the roles of 'vagabonds' (witness the detention of asylum seekers in many Western countries). However, even for

professional social workers from the global South, their role may be undervalued and the sharing of knowledge they bring may not be expected (Lyons and Littlechild, 2006) so that, when conditions (in the local labour market) change, recruitment schemes decline and the movements of those seeking to migrate are restricted. Such differential values placed on the contributions of social workers from different regions of the world risks perpetuating notions of professional imperialism. Hugman et al. (2010: 634) argue that international social work can involve various forms of border crossings: those which are *transcending* (they emphasise ideas about the commonalities of the human condition – but in doing so risk succumbing to idealistic notions); those which focus on *transmitting* ideas and concepts from one locality to another (a process which currently tends to privilege positions originating from the global North); border crossings which aim at *transforming* power relationships; and those which are considered as *transgressions* – as out of place and therefore inferior or undesirable.

Finally, the increase in international initiatives by nation-states operating under the umbrella of the UN and the growth of international networks and movements (including, for instance, people concerned with disability rights or protection of the environment) have led some to identify a global civil society. Additionally, they argue that citizenship should not be tied to individual states, but that citizenship obligations (of the state) should be shared internationally (e.g. Lister, 1998). Such thinking led Oxfam to devise a curriculum for 'global citizenship' (including an understanding of how the world works) on the basis of which global citizens would act on a range of levels (local to global) to promote, for example, human rights and eco-justice (Oxfam, 1997). Notions of social space are thus extended to the global level with obvious relevance for international social work, notwithstanding the cautions identified by Hugman et al. (2010).

'Time'– human development in macro- and micro-dimensions

Social work has been acknowledged as an activity set in a specific time context (Lyons, 1999) and, as suggested, time-related perspectives, on the macro-level of historical developments and on the micro-level of the human life course, are useful concepts for international social work. Historically, forces of colonialism, which privileged 'whiteness' (see Chapter 8) while oppressing indigenous populations, were instrumental in spreading administrative systems and structures linked to the establishment of social work to many countries in the global South (e.g. see Chapter 24). Even in post-colonial times, the origins and continuing dominance of Western ideas influence the status and development of the profession, particularly in the context of debates about internationalisation and indigenisation (e.g. Gray and Coates, 2010).

One critique of some of the discourses concerning international social work has been the lack of a critical analysis of this historical legacy (e.g. Haug, 2005), represented in the gap which exists between the profession's stated value commitments (e.g. to social justice and human rights) and examples of practices which have been (and in some cases still are) oppressive. Tensions between professional values and actual practice are, of course, not just an issue for *inter-national* social work, nor are the tensions which exist between micro- and macro-perspectives (evident in social work's origins and with the former having achieved dominance in the global North), but both are significant in debates concerning the 'export' of social work ideas and practices (Hugman, 2010).

Lorenz (2007) argues that an uncritical relationship with history within social work can lead to an over-emphasis on rationalised order and bureaucratic systematisation at the cost of a concern for understanding the uniqueness of people and communities. Apart from colonial legacies, there are other examples of the relevance of historical consciousness for reflections on social work's potential roles: in relation to conflict and displacement professionals have not only been guilty of coercion and collaboration during the dark times of National Socialism and the Holocaust, but have also been active in resistance taking personal risks to save others (Lorenz, 2007). In contemporary conflict situations, as well as in work with displaced populations, social workers continue to face challenges which may (or may not) result in practice conforming to the values of social justice and human rights (Briskman and Cemlyn, 2005; see also Chapter 19).

Turning from the 'macro-level' of historical awareness to the micro-level of human experience, the impact of transnationalisation and globalisation on communities and individuals becomes clear when considered from a life course perspective (see Section 4). Beck (2000: 74) refers to 'biographical glocalisation' when describing processes where 'global' developments enter the 'local' level of people's everyday lives. Heinz and Krüger (2001) define the life course as stages and transitions from birth to death, which are influenced by culture, structural and institutional factors, as well as subjective meaning making. Some early studies in the life course field have been criticised as Eurocentric (Robinson, 2002) and gender-biased (Heinz and Krüger, 2001), but more recent research has aimed to make this concept more contextually relevant, including by focusing on transnational practices. These may occur when families live apart (in different countries) not just on a short-term basis, but maintain roles and relationships across distances, including as parents or as carers for sick or elderly relatives (Köngeter, 2010). On the other hand, globalisation processes have also been blamed for the progressive commodification of care relationships in the global North, with evidence of an increase in extra-familial care for the very young, sick or elderly. Such developments are connected with a transnationalisation of life courses. For example, family members in

some Western countries and the Middle East are looked after by carers from the global South who often leave behind their own family members, including dependent children (Midgley, 2008; and e.g. Chapters 6 and 27).

Diversity and power relationships in an international context

The diversity of human experience is a major concern for international social work, especially since, throughout history, difference has been used to create divisions and oppression based on the unequal distribution of power. Social work has relied on different constructs, mainly from the social sciences, to analyse how difference affects people's access to resources and overall wellbeing. A (non-exhaustive) acronym currently used in some contexts refers to a variety of constructs as the 'Social GRRAACCEESS' (gender, race, religion, age, ability, class, culture, ethnicity, education, sexuality and spirituality) (Burnham, 1993). We can only consider the implications for international social work of some of these constructs in this chapter, although all receive attention at other points in the Handbook.

The focus has tended to shift between constructs in different countries and at different times, with criticism that certain forms of oppression have received attention to the exclusion of others. For example, in British and North American social work, a focus on anti-racist social work in the 1980s was later subsumed under broader 'anti-discriminatory practice' and 'equality-of-oppressions' frameworks. Some argue that this has weakened the acknowledgement of racial oppression and of the related collective histories of the struggle for racial equality (Graham and Schiele, 2010). 'Class', an issue which was clearly very relevant to the earliest (nineteenth century) contexts of social work, has been noted as a now (unjustifiably) more marginalised concept, with the focus instead turning to issues of poverty and social exclusion (Strier, 2009; Ferguson, 2011).

In respect of gender-specific social work, some of the early 'pioneers' of social work in Europe (e.g. Alice Salomon in Germany) were influential in highlighting the role of women in the profession (Kuhlmann, 2001), and this was advanced through the feminist movements of the 1960s and 1970s. In more recent years, explorations of masculinity and the role of men in societies and in social work have also become more widespread (e.g. Pease and Pringle, 2001). However, gender is a good example of how constructs can have different meanings in different cultural contexts. There is a risk that contested practices rooted in some communities of the global South are oversimplified by those in the global North. The Beijing Platform for Action after the 1995 World Conference for Women was a milestone in devising common agendas supported by women from both the South and the North (e.g. in relation to domestic violence). However, problems persist. For instance, the practice of female genital cutting (FGC) takes place in the context of local complex realities: it can be endorsed by powerful members of a community but equally is being opposed by black women's movements in both the South and the North (Khaja et al., 2009). It has been made illegal by many western countries but its continuing practice among some immigrant communities presents dilemmas for social workers who have responsibility for safeguarding children's welfare but also need to consider the consequences for girls 'rescued' from situations where FGC could happen (Dustin and Davies, 2007).

The concern that some bases for discrimination were being privileged over others has led to increasing acknowledgement that different forms of inequality and oppression (based on the range of human diversity) are interconnected, as expressed in the concept of 'intersectionality'. This emerged from black women's rights movements and critiqued the lack of acknowledgement of other forms of oppression (e.g. based on race or class) in mainstream feminism (Verloo, 2006). The concept fits well with postmodern

perspectives on inequality, since it is concerned with how various aspects of a person's identity inter-relate to lead to particular experiences of oppression. Intersectionality can prevent homogenising interpretations; hierarchies among forms of oppression; and approaches that address specific inequalities in isolation – or make mistaken assumptions of similarity about the ways they are experienced. Intersectionality also involves considering spatial and historical contexts of oppression, including the location of inequalities in public and private spheres and the various levels at which they are reproduced (e.g. interpersonal, identity, symbolic, organisational and structural levels) (Verloo, 2006).

Concerns about issues raised by respectful acknowledgement of diversity have also led (particularly in the global North) to an increased emphasis being placed on the need for social workers to be 'culturally competent' or 'culturally sensitive' (e.g. when working with minority ethnic groups) although the concept of anti-oppressive practice (Dominelli, 2002) better acknowledges both the varied bases for discrimination and the power differentials inherent in professional relationships with minority groups. However, considerations of culture, in particular, are important in various forms of international social work, where concerns about overriding or ignoring local cultures can occur, for example, in the transfer of knowledge for social work education or when practising in an INGO outside one's home country.

Additionally, in debates about indigenisation and authentisation (particularly in countries of the global South), 'culture' tends to take centre stage (Gray and Coates, 2010). It is important to remember the definitional diversity of 'culture' and to be mindful of the risk of treating it as an essentialised and fixed aspect of identity. In this context, approaches to indigenisation can become exclusionary themselves depending on who holds the power to define what is 'culturally relevant'. If developed within national contexts, ethnocentric perspectives, which ignore the

increasingly multicultural reality of societies today, can be reinforced (see Chapter 2). Connected are debates about the tension between universalist and relativist approaches to value frameworks: the adoption of a pluralist approach recognises the existence of sometimes competing (and possibly even contradictory) positions, but places emphasis on contextually relevant (or authentic) attempts to resolve dilemma situations that may arise from this diversity (Healy, 2007; and Chapter 9).

One concept which is missing from the above acronym as a separate entity is language. Issues associated with language were identified in social work by feminist authors drawing on the work of Dale Spender in the 1980s. However, Harrison (2006) argues that language has since been neglected in social work generally, despite its significance as a marker of identity and its centrality for practice (both in seemingly 'monolingual' contexts and in the multilingual reality of societies). Similarly, there has been relatively less attention to language in the debate about international social work compared with other constructs, but it raises clear issues of power differentials and the privileging of some languages. This is most evident in the continuing predominance of Anglophone traditions and the dominance of the English language at international conferences or in publications, and in the assumptions made by some (monolingually) Anglophone practitioners and academics about the translatability and transferability of concepts (Harrison, 2006; see also Chapter 2). The journal, *International Social Work*, now has abstracts translated into French, Spanish, Chinese, Arabic and Russian, but English remains the language for manuscript submissions. However, (and in addition to debates about the risks of linguistic professional imperialism) the apparently homogenising character of a 'lingua franca' masks the increasing processes of differentiation (both locally and globally) affecting languages in general, and English in particular, which has given rise to the term 'Globish'.

These issues indicate that international social work must continually consider its potential for the transformation of power relationships (Hugman et al., 2010). How this might be achieved remains an open but increasingly active debate: at its core are questions about the universality (or common core) of social work given its many different manifestations globally. In this context, internationalising social work risks overemphasising notions of universality (e.g. in terms of 'common' standards or ethical frameworks) (Gray and Fook, 2004), particularly when the transfer of ideas and concepts is unidirectional (i.e. from the global North to the South). On the other hand (just as 'globalisation' suggests an oversimplified picture of homogenisation of the whole world in accordance with 'Western' values), the notion of 'Western social work' as a monolithic entity can be critiqued as negating the many different strands that exist. For instance, within a region such as Europe there is no single common theoretical or methodological base; and even where social work is strictly regulated and standardised (such as in England), there is more diversity than might be expected.

As editors of a handbook of international social work, we consider that there are, at least, some commonalities to be found among the issues and themes, which social professionals in different localities around the world address, but that this does not prevent acknowledgment of the vast diversity that exists among the many different contexts of social work. If social work (in whatever form or location) is to be effective at the points where people interact with their environments (or have a 'life-world' orientation), a principle aim has to be for it to be 'culturally' (or contextually) relevant – and thus flexible in trying to understand the particular circumstances and subjective patterns of meaning of each individual, family or community. This sometimes requires engaging in dialogical practice or 'cultural translation work' (Staub-Bernasconi, 1995: 303) across diverse perspectives. It seems that the earlier mentioned micro-level metaphor of working against a 'colonisation' of the life world holds equally true when applied to the macro-context of international social work.

SOME CURRENT CONTEXTUAL TRENDS AND ISSUES

Many of the most significant conditions affecting human existence and social life around the world – and their relevance to social work – are addressed in the chapters that follow. However, in this section, we identify some of the main trends and issues that provide the backdrop to welfare provisions and the activities of social professionals globally. Perhaps most obvious to social professionals internationally are the glaring inequalities in power and the distribution of wealth, as well as access to and use of resources, both between but also within countries (see e.g. Chapters 5 and 12). In addition, the media disseminate news globally about conflicts (notably in the 'Middle East'); disasters (often related to environmental concerns); and the activities of 'terrorists' or freedom fighters (often based on opposing religious ideologies or ethnic identities).

Many social professionals have direct or indirect experience of migration and acknowledge the rise of the internet (a source of the rapid growth and exchange of knowledge) and information and communications technologies (ICT) generally. ICT can be a valuable aid, including for maintaining family and community links across national borders; and for the creation of virtual worlds/communities (including of professionals). However, there are also negative uses, including increased access to (child) pornography and international communications about other criminal activities. For example, some social professionals are specifically involved in addressing the after-effects of the international trades in arms, drugs and people. Many of these factors are inter-related and

the ways in which they are separated and presented aim primarily to provide clarity across complex fields. The contextual factors we shall consider briefly here are the natural environment and disasters; the global economy and international relations; and demographic factors and migration.

The natural environment and disasters

In recent history (late nineteenth and twentieth century), explorers, anthropologists and other 'Westerners' have tended to think of indigenous peoples and traditional communities as having a close connection with their natural habitats to which they have adapted over centuries (e.g. the Inuit in the North of Canada and the Aborigines in Australia). The relationship between communities and their environments in countries which have industrialised (a process which began in the seventeenth century, reaching its peak in the nineteenth century in many European countries and still continuing today, not least in Brazil, India and China) has been far less in tune with – and respectful of – the natural environment. It has been characterised by the sense that 'man' can control the environment and is at liberty to exploit the natural resources of the world for personal, national or corporate gain. Natural resources range from the most fundamental of life-sustaining elements – air and water – to other 'products' – e.g. coal, oil, gas and 'precious metals'. While the last have been mined for centuries and were previously the cause of colonial expansion and conflict, coal, oil and gas have fuelled first the industrial and then the technological revolutions and the accumulation of gross wealth of the few as well as 'living standards', which are expected to show generational 'improvements' for many, while, at the same time, further disadvantaging many more. Sometimes the relationship between extraction of resources and increased wealth is a direct one and sometimes not. For instance, Norway as a country/society

has benefitted from the extraction of North Sea oil and gas; but few Nigerians have benefitted from the considerable oil fields and petroleum refineries of the Niger Delta, which, on the contrary, have been a source of local distress and conflict (Omeje, 2008).

While social work pioneers in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries linked *local* environmental conditions (e.g. foul air and water) to the disease and squalor which characterised the living conditions of 'the urban poor', it is only in the last few decades that there has been increasing awareness of widespread damage to the environment globally; the interconnected nature of responsibilities for exploitation of resources; and the (often differential) impact which misuse of natural resources is having on people across the globe (see also Chapters 3 and 16). The most obvious and concerning, though disputed, factor is climate change in so far as this is related to human activity. 'Global warming' is now a widely accepted phenomenon and its impact has been discussed by economists and political scientists (Stern, 2009; Giddens, 2009). Environmental sustainability is one of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs, see Appendix 6) but relatively little attention has been paid at inter-governmental level to one of its significant causes – widespread deforestation. A recent UN report claimed that, although there has been some recent decrease in deforestation, 'the rate remains alarming' (UN News, 2010).

Large forested areas have traditionally acted like sponges, soaking up and recirculating water and moist air, as well as preventing soil erosion caused by rapid run-off. Not only do large-scale logging enterprises affect the local eco-system and livelihoods of indigenous people but floods and droughts can also occur great distances from the original sites of deforestation (e.g. increased flooding in the monsoon season in Bangladesh and the silting up of the Bay of Bengal has been attributed to tree felling in the foothills of the Himalayas) (Lyons, 1999). Deforestation, as well as the release of increased levels of carbon dioxide and other

pollutants into the atmosphere, are also responsible for damage to the ozone layer (protecting us from the sun's rays) posing serious threat to people everywhere. Thus, the natural environment is being denuded and damaged by forces as diverse as (often multinational) corporations; the policies of national governments (through fiscal and regulatory powers nationally as well as their role in supporting or blocking international policy responses); and the demands of the better-off citizens of the world for consumer goods and luxuries of all kinds, as well as 'endless supplies' of water, oil and other power sources needed for heating/cooling and lighting workplaces and institutions and running communications and transport systems.

Similarly, the damage to a nuclear power station in 2011 in Japan, caused by an earthquake in the Pacific and resultant tsunami, reminded us that contamination of air and water supplies (in this case by radioactive substances) spreads the risk of death and disease to a much wider population over a longer period of time than might initially be apparent. Witness the after effects of the high cancer rates following the nuclear plant disaster in Chernobyl (Ukraine) in 1986. Even higher rates of death and disease were attributed to the release of pesticides from the Union Carbide factory in Bhopal (India) in 1985 but in that case the disaster was attributed to multinational corporate policy and human error rather than 'natural causes' (Lyons, 1999). However, as the Japanese example demonstrates, there is often a link between naturally caused disasters and ones which might be categorised as 'man-made'.

Returning to the issue of climate change, specifically, there is evidence more generally of increased instances of extreme weather conditions (wider temperature ranges and drought or excessive rainfall) in many locations, which cause 'local' disasters sometimes of considerable magnitude. When disasters can be predicted the effects may be different according to people's capacity to buy their way out of trouble – so, for instance,

drought leading to crop failure and the need for overseas aid to avert mass starvation typically affects poor people in poor countries but food insecurity is an issue affecting increasing numbers of people in many more locations. In other cases, natural disasters are not predictable and no respecters of national power or individual wealth.

The global economy and international relations

As previously mentioned, a key feature of the notion of globalisation is the extent to which national economies and the fiscal fortunes of people around the world are dominated by capitalism. The widespread neo-liberal belief in the rights and power of 'the market' have created or sustained a situation in which global corporations have come to dominate not just the extraction of natural resources and production of commodities but also international banking systems and increasingly also provision of services in the welfare sector (particularly health care, partly through the link with pharmaceutical industries, and also making inroads into education and social services).

Through the twentieth century, national governments have sought to establish international (rather than bilateral) forums for achieving agreements and maintaining 'peaceful co-existence', but the powers of 'big business' have continued to grow and the extent to which national governments or international agencies can influence corporate decisions and actions is minimal. This seems to have been demonstrated in the global North when the recent (2008) banking crisis resulted in a massive downturn in the economies (and thus employment opportunities for individuals) of many large and wealthy nations (not least the US) and the virtual bankruptcy and serious recession of several smaller countries (e.g. Iceland and Greece).

The job opportunities and thus financial fortunes of whole communities, if not whole nations, have been influenced by the

whims of multinational corporations which have been free to relocate from wealthy countries to poorer ones where they can take advantage of low wages and minimal state interference (e.g. with regard to health and safety regulations). Individual countries have sometimes offered state inducements (e.g. through the tax system) to firms to relocate, particularly if they wish to attract particular kinds of 'industry'. For example, this was the basis of Ireland's change in fortunes from a country of low employment and high emigration up to the 1980s to one of nearly full employment and immigration into the early twenty-first century. At this stage some of the multinational companies previously attracted were already transferring operations to countries where labour costs were considerably lower (e.g. India) leaving the Irish economy heavily dependent on service industries and an overheated construction industry and vulnerable to the impending banking crisis.[3]

An overriding feature of the current world order is the extent to which economies, political systems, multinational corporations and major international bodies are (still) dominated by the thinking and interests of the global North. The conference held at Bretton Woods (in the US) in 1944, attended by 44 nations, laid the basis not only for the UN but also for the IMF; the World Bank; and the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT) (Hewitt, 1992) and this situation was compounded in 1961 with the establishment of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) with membership then drawn from 25 'advanced industrial economies'. Subsequently, a number of smaller/less powerful nations formed the Group of 77 (within the UN) aiming to reach a common position on a range of issues, including the environment (Vogler, 1997: 230).

For a period of a few decades the influence of 'the West' was counter-balanced to some extent by the competing ideology of communism as espoused by the USSR, China and other states (e.g. Cuba and Vietnam). However, the break-up of the Soviet bloc since 1989 and the gradual adoption by many countries of a more mixed economy (even if still sometimes espousing a communist political system) has seen various shifts in trading relationships and markets. This has been particularly marked in Europe where many CEE countries were 'in transition', both politically and economically, in the 1990s, and had achieved national goals of integration into the European Union by 2007 (allowing for a greater degree of labour mobility than would previously have been the case). While people living in North and West European countries still generally have better employment prospects and more disposable income than those in the CEE states, the difference has decreased and is relatively less marked at the time of writing (2011) for the people of Greece, Ireland and Portugal. These three countries have had to seek loans from the European Central Bank to shore up their banking systems since 2008: they had previously been identified as being 'at risk' in terms of the redistribution of the benefits of EU membership with its expansion eastwards (Lyons et al., 2006: 29).

However, overall, the dominance of countries of the global North (and often of countries where English is the official language) is being challenged by the fast growing power of Brazil, India and China (and to a lesser extent Russia) – all countries with a range of natural resources; considerable manufacturing capacity (partly based on a labour force drawn from rural migration and others who are increasingly well-educated, as well as by the policies of global corporations) and, of course, huge and expanding internal as well as external markets.

One of the significant debates related to the state of national economies, relative stages of 'development' and bilateral or international interventions has been that expressed as 'aid or trade'. While various forms of aid were promoted as a 'responsibility' of wealthier nations to poorer ones, it was also increasingly recognised as a mechanism for ensuring 'loyalty' of recipient countries to donor countries and in many cases also had

direct 'pay-offs' for donor countries in terms of purchase of goods and services by the countries to which aid was being provided. In addition, there have been allegations of corruption among either government officials or personnel in INGOs responsible for the administration of aid schemes. The reputation of 'aid' is indeed tarnished although there are still considerable efforts to encourage donor giving (whether by governments, private enterprise, charities or the general public) and to provide seed corn money for sustainable projects, not least for people in many African countries which tend to have the lowest rates of urbanisation and industrialisation and the highest rates of poverty and disease.

Trade might therefore be a better avenue for the sustainable development of poor nations – but, even if the countries most in need have commodities or manufactured goods to sell, trading conditions do not operate in their favour. The exploitation of natural resources which marked the colonial era has tended to continue and in some cases been increased by the international agreement on Trade Related aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs) and the attempt by global companies (e.g. in the pharmaceutical field) to patent the raw materials used for generations in traditional medicine (Manion, 2005). In addition, trading agreements and processes are also liable to corruption. There has therefore been a shift in the attention of the UNDP and other agencies to the need for governments and INGOs to declare and demonstrate their commitment to 'good governance'.

A major goal of the UN and a major aspect of the field of international relations is the preservation – or restoration – of peace. Peace is a pre-requisite for economic stability within and between countries but has also been associated with the promotion of democratic societies and the reduction of human rights abuses. However, the latter decades of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first have been far from peaceful in many parts of the world, and 'humanitarian aid' has come to be associated as much with the relief of people caught up in conflict as those struggling with the after effects of disasters.

Some global population trends, poverty, conflict and migration

With medical advances and improved living standards for many, the world population continues to grow and now stands at just under 6.9 billion (UN Population Database), notwithstanding scientific and natural forces enabling or causing reductions. Factors affecting population change range from improved birth control techniques and the strategies of individual governments to limit population growth on the one hand to the effects of diseases such as malaria or AIDS on the other, as well as the previously mentioned consequences of disasters – or poverty and conflicts (see later). In addition, the age distribution across the world is changing. While a general tendency towards 'the greying of the planet' may be shifting in particular countries, birth rates, longevity and the size of the adult population available to contribute to the economy, civil society and the care needs of societies vary enormously. In general terms, a decrease in the birth rate and increased longevity in post-industrial societies has led to a need for immigrant labour (although this may be met in the short or longer term by migration within regions) while other factors, not least poverty and conflict, continue to encourage migration, particularly between countries in the global South as well as to the global North.

Although relative poverty is experienced by sometimes rural but more often urban populations in the global North, the majority of the poorest people in the world live in the global South but are impacted by the events and policies of the global North. The UN Millennium Development Goals Report states that

an estimated 1.4 billion people were still living in extreme poverty in 2005. Moreover, the effects of the global financial crisis are likely to persist: poverty rates will be slightly higher in 2015 and

even beyond, to 2020, than they would have been had the world economy grown steadily at its pre-crisis pace (UNDESA, 2010: 4).

The number of people who were undernourished in 2008 may be as high as 915 million and exceed 1 billion in 2009: about 25 per cent of infants and children are under weight due to lack food and quality food (UNDESA, 2010). Over half of the people in Sub-Saharan Africa and about two-fifths of people in Southern Asia live on less than $1.25 per day. An analysis according to the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) shows that about 1.7 billion people from 104 countries – a third of their entire population – live in multidimensional poverty. The analysis further shows that half of the world's poor live in South Asia (51 per cent or 844 million people) and one-quarter in Africa (28 per cent or 458 million). Despite economic growth of the country as a whole, there are more poor people in eight Indian states alone (421 million) than in the 26 poorest African countries combined (410 million). Niger has the greatest intensity and incidence of poverty in any one country, with 93 per cent of the population classified as poor. Nairobi has the same level of poverty as the Dominican Republic, whereas Kenya's rural northeast is poorer than Niger (UNDP, 2010). This suggests that rural poverty remains stubbornly high (sometimes leading to internal migration) but requiring interventions at international, national and local levels. Various strategies already referred to, e.g. aid and trade, improvement of governance, and social development, are required in a concerted form to meet the basic human needs of individuals (sustenance and shelter) and develop the services and infrastructures which can build capacity in societies (e.g. health, education and employment opportunities).

However, natural conditions, colonial history, current neglect or exploitation and corrupt governments are only some of the causes of poverty. Conflict and violence can be seen as both the causes and consequences of poverty; and, as Mahatma Gandhi once said, poverty itself is a form of violence. Conflicts

are broadly classified into inter- and intra-state, which may include civil war, communal clashes, inter-group fighting, political violence (organised armed violence by the state against civilians) and terrorism (Hazen, 2008). Over the decade 2000–2009, only three of the total of 30 major armed conflicts have been interstate, though many armed conflicts to some extent are international due to their engagement in international trade, e.g. in arms, drugs, diamonds (Bray, 2005).

A BBC website reports that every minute two people are killed around the world (BBC, 2011), and in 2010, major armed conflicts were active in 15 locations globally. These included four countries in Africa (Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda), three in America (Colombia, Peru and the USA), five in Asia (Afghanistan, India, Myanmar, Pakistan and the Philippines) and three in Middle East (Iraq, Israel and Turkey) (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2011), and further unrest in the Middle East at the time of writing (2011) has added to this list (e.g. Egypt and Libya). In addition, the BBC list includes Chechnya, DR Congo, Georgia, Laos, Nagorno-Karabakh and Nepal. The historical context and causes of conflict and violence differ from one country to another. However, some of the common grounds for the majority of conflicts are claims and counter-claims over disputed territories (and their resources), political and government control, political rights, extreme suppression by ruling elites, discriminatory policies and practices against minority racial, ethnic and religious groups, corrupt governments (see Hazen, 2008) and unwillingness to share power and see the growth and development of traditionally disadvantaged groups (Pawar, 2010). Whatever the causes of conflict, one consequence is inevitably migration, usually across neighbouring borders, but sometimes through more organised or clandestine routes as 'official' or unofficial refugees to more distant countries in the global North.

According to a Global Trends report (UNHCR, 2010), 43.3 million people were

forcibly displaced in 2009, the highest number of people uprooted by conflict and persecution since the mid-1990s. Of these, 15.2 million were refugees while internally displaced persons grew by 4 per cent to 27.1 million. On-going and unresolved conflicts in Afghanistan, Somalia and DR Congo and stagnated situations in Sudan and Iraq significantly reduced the chances of repatriation (Guterres, 2010). In addition, about 5.5 million refugees were in protracted situations, under the UNHCR care; and approximately 6.6 to 12 million people had become stateless. The report also indicated that the number of individual asylum claims worldwide grew to nearly 1 million, with South Africa receiving more than 222,000 new claims last year, making it the single largest asylum destination in the world. It is also important to note a new trend: increasing numbers of refugees are living in cities of the global South, challenging the notion that refugees are 'inundating' the industrialized developed nations.

The issues of poverty, conflict and migration (in its various forms) are of increasing relevance for social professionals, whether working in international or local contexts, and will all be the subject of more detailed attention in later chapters. Increased levels of people smuggling and trafficking; the growth of transnational (cross-cultural) marriages (arranged through agencies); theft for sale of organs; exploitative practices in inter-country adoptions are all examples of social issues related to these three factors and facilitated by use of information and communication technologies and global networks, posing actual or potential challenges for practitioners, as well as policy makers, legislators and justice systems nationally and internationally.

STRUCTURE AND CONTENTS

As mentioned in the introduction, the Handbook aims to present a comprehensive account of different aspects of the globalised context within which all social workers now operate and to advance ideas about the purposes and forms of international social work. We have therefore taken a thematic approach to the overall structure (five sections) and the 30 chapters, rather than adopting a more comparative approach (presentation and analyses of national situations) – although authors have drawn on examples from a wide variety of countries as relevant. In identifying the focus of chapters, we recognised the inter-related nature of many of the themes discussed but also sought to provide clarity and different perspectives through grouping the chapters into five sections. The sections themselves provide overarching frameworks for chapters addressing, in turn, (1) the more theoretical aspects of concepts and processes; (2) professional contexts and approaches; (3) key issues and settings; (4) the life course; and (5) regional perspectives, respectively, as further elaborated in the preface to each section.

We also recruited authors from a wide range of countries to ensure a range of expertise (based on different national traditions and experiences); and to enhance international dialogue (where two or more colleagues worked together cross-nationally) and access to a greater range of literature. It is likely that readers will find some 'overlaps' between material in the different sections and chapters which, however, can also be read as 'free-standing' units. Finally, we selected themes for six general appendices according to the topics which have most often been referred to in different chapters.

In relation to individual chapters, authors have interpreted the general guidelines provided in various ways and we have employed a relatively light editorial touch so that chapters reflect their distinct contributions. We took an initial decision not to have chapters dedicated to diversity and anti-oppressive practices in relation to particular minorities (e.g. based on gender, sexuality or disability) but asked all authors to address issues of diversity and anti-oppressive

practice in ways most relevant to their topics: we have also introduced material on the cross-cutting themes of diversity and power-relationships in this introductory chapter. Notwithstanding some reference to the historical aspects of their topic, the focus of the chapters is primarily on contemporary aspects of international social work – or international and comparative perspectives on social work; on the social issues which engage social workers at national, regional and international levels; and on the challenges and future directions possible for 'international social work'.

In Section 1 (*Key concepts and processes*), Chapter 2, Dominelli writes on globalisation and the related but often contradictory processes of indigenisation and their relevance for international social work. Alston and Besthorn, in Chapter 3, discuss issues concerning environment and sustainability: given the link between a healthy environment and human well-being (and even survival) they urge greater engagement of social workers with this topic. In Chapter 4, Wronka and Staub-Bernasconi consider human rights in international context. From an initial description of the major international instruments defining human rights, they propose (more overt) integration of this topic into social work education curricula and practices. Chapter 5, authored by Desai and Solas, focuses on poverty, development and social justice: they argue for development policies and practices that are gender aware, sustainable and rights based. In Chapter 6, Segal and Heck discuss issues of migration, minorities and citizenship. As well as historical perspectives on migration, the authors consider notions of citizenship and the nation-state; and conclude with the implications for social work in this inherently international field.

Section 2 (*Professional contexts*) opens with Chapter 7 by Payne who considers the political and organisational contexts of social work internationally. He suggests that different political values give rise to different welfare regimes, which in turn result in different 'social works', which are themselves variously organised in terms of the settings in which they operate. In Chapter 8, Badwall and Razack look at social work theories, particularly critical perspectives and new challenges. They suggest that the development of social work (theories and practices) illustrates the white bias and American/European influence which still dominates thinking and practices in the profession. Hugman and Bowles, in Chapter 9, debate issues of social work values, ethics and professional regulation and describe how these are closely related but distinct. They ask whether a single (global) statement of ethics is plausible, and conclude that shared conversations about values and ethics in social work internationally are important. Chapter 10 by Hokenstad is concerned with social work education in a global context. The chapter includes historical and comparative perspectives as well as discussing the notion of 'international social work' in relation to curriculum changes and opportunities for student exchange and other learning opportunities. Orme and Karvinen-Niinikoski, in Chapter 11, look at the issue of social work research from an international perspective. They include discussion of different traditions and methodological approaches and ethical considerations needed as well as the resources for comparative and international research.

In Section 3 (*Key issues for social work internationally*), Akimoto and Sungkawan (Chapter 12) consider the connections between social work, economic conditions and livelihoods. They describe the significant variations in work opportunities and forms of employment and comment on the scope for greater involvement of social and development workers in this field. In Chapter 13, Bywaters and Davis discuss health issues pertinent to social work internationally. They define health as a human right and therefore a matter of concern for all social workers, with scope for international action. Huxtable, Sottie and Ulziitungalag, in Chapter 14, present material about social work and education, primarily as a specialism supporting the school system of

different countries. The authors give various examples of school social work, particularly in Ghana and Mongolia, and identify some challenges and changes in this field. In Chapter 15, Preston-Shoot and Höjer focus on social work, justice and protection systems and the extent to which issues of discrimination and equality are addressed in national legislation. They describe social work as a moral activity with a widespread role in protecting adults and children at risk of abuse or neglect. In Chapter 16, McKinnon explores social work and changing environments, commenting on the ways in which environmental, social and economic environments are inter-related. Shier and Graham, in Chapter 17, examine religion, culture and spirituality, defining each as distinct though related. They identify religion and/or spirituality as important in the well-being of some individuals and communities and central in some cultures: they are thus significant in anti-oppressive social work. In Chapter 18, Mathbor and Bourassa discuss disaster management and humanitarian action and suggest that social workers have a role in both pre-and post-disaster phases of interventions. The authors stress the importance of participatory techniques and the inclusion of survivors in all phases of the recovery processes. Ramon and Maglajlic, in Chapter 19, focus on social work, conflict and displacement – a neglected but important field for social work engagement. They identify examples of resilience alongside the more damaging effects on individuals and communities and advocate greater attention to this topic in social work education.

Opening Section 4 (*Life-course perspectives*), Desai, in Chapter 20, considers the changing contexts and forms of families. The author identifies key issues and challenges for families in contemporary societies, including the increase in the number of transnational families. Rock, Karabanow and Manion, in Chapter 21, explore childhood and youth in an international context, stressing that childhood is a social construct which varies over time and place. The authors identify three 'groups' of children and young

people who are vulnerable (but also often resilient) – children who are orphaned or affected by HIV/AIDS; those who are affected by disasters; and street children. In Chapter 22, Chau applies a life-course perspective to the stage of adulthood. She looks at the two major institutions that contribute to adult identity and roles, namely, family and work; and identifies significant changes in adults' likely experiences in the labour market. Hokenstad and Roberts, in Chapter 23, consider old age in a global context, noting increases in longevity and in the numbers of people over 60, with particular challenges arising from the increased numbers of 'frail elderly' people. Alongside their special responsibilities in relation to elder abuse and neglect, the authors identify three internationally identified priority directions for social workers.

In Section 5 (*Regional perspectives*) in Chapter 24 on Africa, Mwansa and Kreitzer present a brief summary of the colonial histories prevalent in this continent, which have had enduring consequences for social policy and social work (education). They refer to the considerable levels of poverty and range of social problems in the continent and the challenges to developing appropriate services and indigenous practices. Pawar with Tsui, in Chapter 25 on Southern and Eastern Asia, include a focus on the extent to which social work has developed national associations and whether these are linked to regional and international bodies. They provide examples from many countries of developments and issues in social work and education, with particular reference to India and China. In Chapter 26 on Australasia, Beddoe and Fraser describe the uneven and different developments in social work related to the very different socioeconomic conditions in Australia and New Zealand relative to the island nations of the South West Pacific. They include some reference to professional associations and to social worker mobility within and outside the region. Zaviršek and Lawrence discuss, in Chapter 27, the national, ethnic and linguistic diversity of Europe and

the origins of social work as well as current challenges. Despite EU policies and engagement of social work in exchange programmes there is no common recognition of social work qualifications, but there are shared concerns, including developments in anti-oppressive values and practices. In Chapter 28, on the Middle East, Al-Makhamreh and Libal give examples of social work developments in a number of countries including particularly Egypt, Israel, Jordan and Turkey. They convey the complexities and inequalities of the region and illustrate efforts to develop forms of social work which are more in tune with its needs and cultural traditions. In the chapter on Latin America, Chapter 29, Saracostti, Reininger and Parada describe the effects of political and economic events in different countries on social work. A core issue is the poverty and marginalisation of the majority of the region's population and the need to develop indigenous services and practices free of international neo-liberal interventions. Finally, Watkins and Holder Dolly, in Chapter 30 on North America and the Caribbean, describe well-developed and regulated (but different) forms of social work in the US and Canada. The socioeconomic situation of the Caribbean islands is markedly different (and their histories are varied) resulting in differences in the concerns and developments of social work in this sub-region.

CONCLUDING SUMMARY

We have aimed in this chapter to introduce some material which has general relevance across the Handbook and to orientate the reader to the more detailed discussions that follow. Essential to this task has been a consideration of some terms which are basic to furthering our understanding of the notion of international social work. In relation to the core theme, we suggest that 'international social work' does not have a single meaning, but is rather a concept which has been used over time to describe different forms of practice and which currently has important meanings, in the context of globalisation, for social workers operating at local levels as well as those involved in work which transcends or crosses national boundaries. We have identified the themes of space, time and diversity as having salience to international social work and also identified (and linked) some current trends and issues, which we consider to be particularly relevant to this field of activity, research and education. Finally, we said something about the structure and contents of the Handbook and noted the inclusion of examples of national and regional issues and practices relevant to the main theme. Significant among these is the examination of international bodies, policies and practices, in the political and socioeconomic fields which impact on international social work, and with which social workers can usefully engage, whether working locally or internationally. We conclude that international social work is a value-based activity, which requires social professionals to be knowledgeable about the global context, critically aware of issues of diversity and power and internationalist in their pursuance of human rights and social justice.

NOTES

1   Many examples are given later in the Handbook but these include: social work education models in southern countries that are critiqued as professional imperialism; human rights that are questioned from a cultural relativism point of view; structural adjustment packages of the World Bank that are perceived as the imposition of western fiscal measures on poor countries.

2   We can note here the associated term, 'community', also a highly contested notion. While 'communities' are sometimes assumed to be homogeneous populations (with similar interests and values) sharing a defined space, they are more often collections of individuals and smaller 'groups' holding more or less power in a given context. They are therefore sometimes the site of rivalries and resentments if not outright conflict. In addition, they may be 'communities of interest', not bounded by physical location, and/or be virtual communities.

3   The epithet 'emerald tiger' was both a play on Ireland's traditional title as 'the Emerald Isle', but also an acknowledgement of the considerable speed with which it moved from a low economic base to an expanding one, reminiscent of the 'Asian Tigers' before it.

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