

Katherine Kendall Award 2010
Prof. Silvia M. Staub-Bernasconi, Ph.D.

*Interviewed by: Prof. Darja Zaviršek, Ph.D., Faculty of Social Work, University of Ljubljana
for the 100th anniversary-celebration of Katherine Kendall on September 25th, 2010*

Short biography

Date of birth: May, 12th, 1936; Nationality: Swiss.

1952-1956	Diploma „Handelsschule der Stadt Zürich“
1952-1958:	Secretary at the Federal Technical University of Zurich
1958-1960:	Diploma from the Zurich School of Social Work – First Streetworker in Zurich
1960-1963:	Social Work in an industrial community with 35 % of „migrants“ in a Social Agency with multiple services
1963-1967	United Nations-Fellowship – studies at the University of Minnesota/Minneapolis, the University of Michigan (Summer School); Columbia University – Social Work Practice in Minnesota and Lower East Side in New York
1967-1997	Professor at the Zurich School of Social Work, first for Social Work with Groups, then for Social Work with and in Communities, and parallel to it for theories of social problems, social work theory and action theories
1968-1979	Studies in Sociology, educational psychology, social ethics at the University of Zurich – Ph.D. with the topic: „Social Problems – Dimensions of their Articulation“
1996	Habilitation at the Technical University of Berlin
1997-2003	Professor for Social Work and Human Rights at the Technical University of Berlin
2002-2010	Director and Professor of the Master of Social Work „Social Work as Human Rights Profession“ in Berlin
Since 2007	Member of the Academic Board and teaching staff of INDOSOW – International Doctoral Studies in Social Work involving several European Universities (Director: Prof. Dr. Daria Zaviršek, University of Ljubljana)

Interview

1. When did you receive the award?

I received my award in June 11th, 2010 during the Joint World Conference on Social Work and Social Development from June 10th to 14th 2010 in Hong Kong, China.

2. What was the basis on which you were given the award?

The plate has the following text: „For a Lifetime of Distinguished International Service to Social Work Education“.

Statement of Letnie Rock, Chair of the Kendall Award Committee:

„This is to inform you that Prof. Silvia Staub-Bernasconi was among the five distinguished candidates who were carefully considered for the IASSW Katherine A. Kendall Award. We are pleased to inform you that her nomination was successful. The committee after careful consideration of the selection criteria for the award felt that Prof. Staub-Bernasconi 's profile was the most suitable match at this time. We acknowledge the sterling contribution that Prof. Staub-Bernasconi has made and continues to make internationally to the discipline of social work, and would like to thank you for your nomination of this most outstanding, international scholar. We are very pleased with the caliber of the nominee for the award and acknowledge that IASSW has benefitted both directly and indirectly from her contributions both past and present. We look forward to her continued support to the Association.“ (Letnie Rock, Chair of the Kendall Award Committee, Head of the Department of Sociology and Social Work, University of the West Indies, Bridgetown, Barbados)

Statement of Professor Jim Ife, University of Perth, Australia:

„Silvia is well-known as one of the leading writers within social work in the field of human rights, and her work has influenced and inspired students and social workers for many years. Although I have not worked closely with Silvia, I am very aware of the quality and influence of the work she has done, and the very high esteem in which she is held by colleagues around the world. Her influence has been considerable, and I know that if she were to receive the award the decision would be welcomed by many, and would be seen as just recognition of her very significant contribution to social work, internationally, over a long period of time.“

Statement of Prof. Annamaria Campanini, University of Milano, vice-president of IASSW and president of the EASSW:

“As Vice President of IASSW and President of European Association of Schools of Social Work, together with the executive board, we support the candidature of prof. Silvia Staub-Bernasconi for the 2010 Katherine Kendall Award. Professor Staub-Bernasconi during her long career has contributed to the development of social work around the world, focusing both on theoretical and ethical contents. She actively participates in the life of IASSW as the representative of the Human Rights Group.”

3. What has the award meant to you?

The very first reaction when I got to know that I was selected as awardee was a very warm feeling. I remembered the dinner with Katherine Kendall and some other colleagues at the EASSW-Conference in 2001, in Montp elier. We talked about lots of things, but I was especially impressed about her historical and actual knowledge about the profession she was bringing into the conversation. As I remember, it was the first time, that I was invited to one of the many small, informal meetings taking place besides of conferences. Till then, I was just wondering how effective conference members, especially men, were in networking and making plans. But this was a meeting of women and a most pleasant one without any other goal than to share experiences and and, last but not least, a good dinner!

Asking for further meanings of the award, I would say that for me it is a recognition of my lifelong endeavours to develop a sound theory of social problems and social work as discipline

and profession which - due to a broad philosophical and systemic framework - can integrate many fragmented theoretical approaches and methods of social work taught in an atomized way on different social levels, so the individual, family, group, organisational and community, adding the world-society level.

And, I'm sure, it will also be a support for my engagement in educational and curriculum policy in the German part of Europe which, as I see it, isn't very well linked to the international scientific and professional community. Since the strong German fraction of the founded IASSW in 1928 left the IASSW after their request, to dismiss Alice Salomon as secretary general wasn't accepted, Germany with its about 80 schools of social work and several universities with departments of social pedagogy hasn't manifested an interest for the international association. An exception is the Alice Salomon university of applied sciences.

4. What were your activities/projects/publications which you think were of major importance for your professional development/career - and its impact on social work/educational development?

Thinking back, I remember three important „points of my development and impact on social work education“. The first is the extra supervision given to me by a teacher at the Zurich School of Social Work as I started – parallel to my studies and field work in social work 1958-1960 - with street work with a gang in an industrial area of Zurich. This gang had destroyed parts of a leisure centre, beaten up former educators, were in many troubles with the police etc. The analyses of the the gang processes and my interventions were the content of my diploma-thesis in 1960. I'm sure, that without these two starting points I would have ended at the very narrow borders of Switzerland. In my thesis I could show, how knowledge about group structures and processes, combined with democratic methodological principles in working with a street gang were successful in gaining their respect, confidence and more and more their cooperation in developing their own activities which didn't bring them straight away to the police station. Only many years later I realised, why this "report" – published in three editions by Haus Schwalbach/Germany – was so successful in Germany: After years of „black pedagogy“ in state agencies and homes managed mostly by Christian denominations, which lasted - one can hardly believe it - till 1970 and later: This „practical, living example“ with rebellious youngsters convinced apparently social workers and their teachers which were taught to spell the democratic alphabet by the „Democratic Education Programs“ of the Allies.

A second „point“ is the decision to study sociology as a major after returnign from the United States and to use my Ph.D.-thesis to answer the question, what could be the object and scientific base of social work? The whole took me – having a family, a job, but no financial support – a dozen years. The sociology-professor was at the beginning very sceptical about my Ph.D-project, but when I presented the result, he changed his mind. As a „clandestine“ anarchist who studied worldpowers his whole life, he was especially interested in my differentiation between destructive and constructive power rules. But on the other side, many of my colleagues stayed more than sceptical about what I had written: too complex, ambitious, unpractical, critical and radical etc. Yet, the students got more and more enthusiastic about it, because it gave them a professional identity and orientation. And, parallel to my lectures and seminars in Zurich, I was invited to many conferences, seminars , workshops, lectures and universities in different European countries, confirming the proverb that nobody is prophet in its own country.

This was also the time (from 1985 on), where the big debate about social work as discipline and profession started in the German speaking countries. This project was heavily criticized – not from social workers, but from professors from basic disciplines as psychology, sociology, ethics, law etc. who hadn't studied social work and knew mostly nothing about its knowledge base and practice. But: they felt dethroned and wanted to regain definitional power over what social is or has to be. The greatest attacks came from the universities, the educational sciences and social pedagogy. They spoke of a „theory riot“ (Putsch) against them. Yet, this was never my intention! What I wanted to promote, is the idea of a social work profession which deals in a complex, scientific way – based on human and social sciences - with social problems without the problematic heritage of the dualism between body and mind, individual and society, natural sciences and „Geisteswissenschaften“ (sciences of the mind!) etc.; furthermore without having to accept an „educational science“ (Erziehungswissenschaft) as central scientific base (Leitwissenschaft) for the „field“ of social work. Poors, discriminated, dispossessed, oppressed, victims of violence – couldn't just be the objects of resocialisation according to mainstream values and norms. And finally, I wanted to oppose the theoretical top-down-approach who starts with the macrolevel of socioeconomic, sociopolitical and juridical conditions of social work in order to get to the meso level of organisations of social welfare and – perhaps – ends at the individual level of clients and users of social work, mostly with a very simple, reductionistic image of the individual person. It was the moment, where I realised what I had learned implicitly in my social work studies in the States, namely to start with the individual, his needs, his suffering, discrimination, powerlessness, but also his resources and entitlements and then to follow a bottom-up-approach of transforming privatised issues into public, (socio)political issues, including the actual societal power structures. For this approach I think that my book „Social Work as Action Science“ was and is a text which serves as a central frame of reference for this development.

During this wild, highly politicized debate, the German Society of Social Work was founded and I, as its vice-president, headed the „Theory Development Section“ what I do till now. So, I had the opportunity to give a platform to all these discussions, which succeeded in many respects. Today, one can say that social work is relatively acknowledged as a discipline and profession, although the huge heterogeneity of approaches – some speak of a knowledge-bazaar - is still a real problem. But we have the beginning of a collaboration between universities and universities of applied sciences, although it is still difficult to engage universities in doctoral projects in „social work“. This is the reason why I'm so thankful to Darja Zavirsek, that she set up the project „INDOSOW-International Doctoral Studies in Social Work“, which will be hopefully a further push for educational development in the German speaking countries.

A third „point of development and impact“ is surely the audacity to set up a master of social work called „Social Work as Human Rights Profession“ which started in 2002 in Berlin and has survived all prognoses of opponents that there is no „market“ for such a curious, crazy, abstract, luxurious idea. It looked to them as a naive fantasy to make a better world, in short: "displacing clouds in the sky" - which doesn't fit at all into the neoliberal „Zeitgeist“ and the actual fiscal poverty of the social state. But, interesting enough, the notion of human rights seems to find its way, although slowly and not without resistance into the seminars, lectures, conferences, curricula and practice projects of more and more departments of social work.

5. In which field do you think you made the biggest contribution?

About my biggest contribution to social work you would have to ask this question my colleagues, supporters as well as opponents. If I have to give a personal statement, I would mention the following:

- The explication of the complex, transdisciplinary, not well-known „system-philosophy and -theory“ of Mario Bunge – its ontology, epistemology, ethics- and action-theory as well as his political philosophy for the development of a theoretical framework for social work as discipline/profession which offers the possibility to those who think that this would be good idea, of transdisciplinary integration of the atomized knowledge under the main idea of „integrated pluralism“.
- The development of a genuine „social work diagnosis“ which asks for individual as well societal and cultural problem-dimensions.
- The insight, that social work doesn't have only a double-mandate, but has to justify its intervention referring to a triple-mandate, coming from the clients or users, the employers and the profession itself. It is the base for a relative professional autonomy of judgement and self-mandation of the profession if the societal and political power structures impede it.
- The development of a relatively complex theory of power processes, destructive and constructive powerstructures, power-sources and empowerment as one of the central action theories of social work which really means „power“.
- A contribution to the theory-practice-relation – called the „transformatory three-step“ („Transformativer Dreischritt“).
- The development and institutionalisation of a Master of Social Work which integrates systematically the Human Rights issues in all aspects of theoretical, action theoretical, project- and research-oriented practice.

6. What did social work/education mean to you professionally?

The social work discipline and my work as educator gave me a much broader perspective about the multitude of local, national and worldwide social problems, but also the security to have expertise in a very complex field of social reality. This perspective became even broader during my studies in the States which were a mix between the methods of social groupwork, community work, international social work with professors like Gisela Konopka, Mirjam Cohen, Etta Saloshin, Ruby Pernel; Walter Friedländer and Robin Hughs Jones as guest professors, all at the University of Minnesota; then William Schwartz from Columbia University and many others. Two floors of the social science building below I visited lectures of Arnold Rose, Don Martindale, George Homans in social psychology and sociology. Especially Arnold Rose opened me the eyes for "The American Dilemma", racism, its causes and consequences. And the (black) students taught me in practice, what racism, poverty and living in slums means. Although I was since the beginning of my social work studies interested in "theory", I always practiced social work in different settings in Switzerland, Minnesota and in the Lower Eastside in New York. I would even say that I got the questions, I had for my theoretical explorations mostly from this practice.

As a *topic of studies and theory* human rights came in explicitly during my studies in sociology which were mainly studies in the structure and dynamics of world society. About a quarter of my dissertation dealt with problems of power distribution, producing social injustice, introducing the complex theoretical concepts of negative/illegitimate and positive/legitimate power structures. I

never separated or even opposed „professional“ to „radical“ or „structural social work“ as it is done in many texts of the professional literature. Power became an integral part of social assessment, explanation, value setting (social justice) and action strategies, working with individual clients, groups and communities (during field work supervision) such as advocacy, empowerment for the changing of illegitimate social rules producing injustice in families, groups, organisations and society. The fantasy of 1968 to change, or even „revolutionise“ the „whole capitalistic system“ with the help of social work or – even more strange: with social work clients - seemed to me, after my experiences in the US quite illusionary. So I showed students and practitioners in dozens of seminars, project coaching, supervision how to get things they are entitled to against the will of the power holders (Alinsky as one of the interesting approach) or then to change the power structure *in the social settings which were/are accessible to them. This was already extremely hard work, f.e. in patriarchal Swiss and migrant families.*

Yet, my „theory of power-sources and power-structure“ was also heavily discussed and applied by the feminist movement just when they reached many goals, but then realised, that the „power-issue“ between men and women wasn't solved at all. The reception of my notions of power in the activist feminist movement outside parliamentary structures as well as by feminist politicians was so successful, that it cost me the job at the Zurich University, for which I was asked to apply. Informal rumor: One was afraid of social unrest at the university! In this time I was a member of the Swiss „Women's Council for Foreign Policy“ and founding member of the Journal „OLYMPE“ - a journal for feminist politics. Besides of the confrontation with so many violations in Human Rights (see also my sabbaticals in Brasilia, Birmingham/UK, California, there especially the issue of Mexican immigrants, then Gays and Lesbians at the University of Santa Cruz), there were two decisive sources for my concrete engagement about human rights:

- The admission of many political refugees at the Zurich School of Social Work: When the „death of socialism“ was declared, many refugees had serious personal crisis (for what „better world“ did they fight for in vain?). The experience that a first seminar in Human Rights gave them new hope and orientation lead to the institutionalisation of these seminars into the curriculum. In these seminars they detected – used to holistic thinking and fight in strong authoritative organisations - also the dignity of the individual human being and the aid to individuals.
- The request of the IASSW/IFSW (in the person of Ellen Mourajev-Apostol, IFSW/IASSW-representative at the UN in Geneva) to be an expert reviewer of the UN-Manual „Social Work and Human Rights“ conceived of members of these associations, supported by representatives of the UN in relation to the Vienna World-Conference about Human Rights of 1993.

Starting with the conception of a master in "social work as human rights profession" it was very difficult to transmit to colleagues that social work hasn't any ambition to capture human rights for its own prestige. The UN had addressed many professions in relation to the Vienna Conference to start an educational program in human rights within their own organisations (so educators, policemen, nurses, peace activists, politicians etc.). So, I just took this seriously. This Master is in addition oriented to international social work and thus integrates my studies in sociology of world society. Insofar I see myself and the master as „structural link“ between the German and Swiss context and international developments in social work, represented mainly by IASSW/IFSW - and supported by the Recommendations of the Ministerial Committee of the Council of Europa to integrate Human Rights as „obligatory“ in the curricula and social practice of social

Work{Rec(2001)1 and Rec(2003)19}.

7. What did social work education mean to you personally? Why did you choose it?

For me personally, social work has opened a completely new vision of the world after my four years of „commercial school“. I found a voice and explanation for a question I had since my childhood: Why is there so much misery, poverty, hate, war and terror and millions of refugees in the world, if God is the one who loves us? Why Switzerland in the middle of an Europe surrounded by two wars (to speak of world wars is quite ethnocentric!) has been protected from all their horror? Nobody, not even clergymen could give me a satisfying answer, so I decided to find out by myself. The disciplines I could have studied after having made an upgrade for the admission at the university – such as law, medicine, economy, psychology (there was no sociology at that time) - didn't interest me, so I chose as only interesting alternative the School of Social Work and hoped to find answers to all my pertinent questions. Some answers I got in my social work education, further ones during my studies in sociology, philosophy and the intensive endeavours to grasp what had happened in Nazi Germany and the Holocaust, which is a never-ending process.

8. What were the challenges of social work/education when you received your award?

In the present time there are so many challenges for social work that I have to concentrate on the following issues which I would summarise as globalisation or transnationalisation of social work education, theory and practice:

- *Challenges for the object base and scope of social work:* Neoliberalism was very successful in extinguishing the language of suffering, discrimination, exploitation and powerlessness in social work. A large section of education and practice implemented the „new methods“ of managerialism which promised more societal recognition. These new „fastfood-methods and techniques“ in intervention and evaluation discredited and dismissed diagnosis as problem- and deficit-oriented, explanations as unnecessary, time-consuming luxury and recommended a market oriented approach as fit between the wishes (mistakenly defined as needs) and resources of clients and the supply of the agency – defined as a contractual market transaction in care-giving. It was the cheapest way to cut social policy costs and at the same time accumulate huge incomes and capital in the economy and financial industry. So, what we need, is an empirical and theoretical identification of social problems on all societal levels and their interdependence between social levels.
- *Challenges for theory-building:* Then, we will have to develop a more complex, rigorous notion of social work theory. First, this is one, which surpasses the notion of theoretically based interventions or methods. A colleague came to me very baffled about a discussion with somebody from an anglosaxon country who said: „What, you have only about a dozen theories of social work, we have dozens, if not hundreds of them!“ What he meant, is a misunderstanding about the difference between a „general, transdisciplinary theory as contribution to a „discipline and profession of social work“ and „theory-based methods“. As to-day almost no social problem can't be explained without reference to the structure and dynamics of world-society. Theory-building in the future will have to take this into account. Second, in the face of the growing gap between rich and poor, locally, nationally

and worldwide, the critique of capitalism is not enough. What we have, are processes of refeudalisation of society, sustained by the WTO-rules, which means: that the aspirations about social mobility of the growing precariat and partially the middle class are delusions; that millions of wages don't secure the fulfillment of the most basic, existential needs; that the poor get criminalised and that welfare recipients have to be disciplined for jobs, which don't exist; that the economic and financial plutocratic elite instrumentalises this „mass of labor“ as flexible „social base“ according to their interests; that they preach social justice, social rights depending on merits for welfare recipients, while they have completely abandoned this idea for themselves. Thus, we have standards of blatant double moral drawing a thick barrier between the self-defined "elite" and the "leftovers", a main characteristic of a feudal society which hurts any notion of democracy as equality. To make sound judgements about the blockages as well as the chances for social change on a local, national and international level, we need sound knowledge about the socioeconomic as well as political, judicial and cultural conditions of social work and social work intervention.

- *Challenges for the ethical base and the mandate of social work:* There seems to be an international consensus, that social work is a profession which has to promote social justice; a little less consensus exists about the question, if the same holds for human rights. Because the Western countries haven't been their glorious promoters during the last centuries, there is much scepticism about the idea of human rights by Eastern and Southern dialogue partners. This means that we will have to invest much historical, ethical, intercultural and empirical reasoning to clarify the accusations and (mis)understandings about the Western hegemony of human rights. In face of the history of colonialism this will be a very long and difficult process. Taking seriously the reliance to science-based interventions and to human rights and social justice in the Code of Ethics, one would have to enlarge the double-mandate to a triple-mandate, i.e. from the client, the agency and the profession itself. Although the UN-Manual speaks very clearly, that in a dilemma situation between organisational and client demands, the clients' entitlements have priority, the triple-mandate would give to this notion even a more sound base. According to this line of thinking, social work would have to be conscious that it can change or refuse a mandate which is illegitimate according to its professional mandate. Or it even can be self-mandatory in situations where society never would give a mandate (f.e. in relation to discriminatory immigration politics).
- *Challenges for intervention and their methodological – action theoretical approach:* Social work has always been very strong in relation to action or intervention theories, especially on the individual, family and group level, lesser on the community, organisational and international level. To change this imbalance would be a next urgent step. Parallel to it, I see the need, to free „empowerment“ from its „placebo-function“, meaning really power and not just the training of capability for participation; and thus to re-integrate the relatively marginal tradition of „critical“ or "radical social work“ into the mainstream tradition, which it was 100 years ago.
- *Challenges for social work research:* Social work research should first base on psychological, sociological/economical and cultural research and its methods, but in addition it has developed many action-oriented research designs such as participatory,

action, critical social research as well as case study, social enquete, evaluation research which should be tested and improved.

9. What was the importance of international work in your career?

My sensibilisation, first for multicultural and international issues, then for international social work has three roots: The experience of ethnic, religious and class diversity in my family – my mother came from the French, my father from the Italian part of Switzerland and we had to live in the German part because my father couldn't make a living in his home region during the economic crises of 1930ff. They were „migrants“ who tried to keep their cultural lifestyle and social relationships and longed lifelong for returning to their home region. Of great importance was the UN-Fellowship; the UN represented for me breath-taking internationality and multiculturality. And then, third, studies in world-sociology in the institute of Professor Peter Heintz – holding till to the putsch an UNESCO Chair also in Chile - at the University of Zurich, who was one of the very first to initiate such studies.

As professor of the Zurich School of Social Work I was responsible for the then called „foreigner problem“ (Ausländerproblem“!). In order to know more about international social work I planned my sabbaticals in Latin America, especially Brasilia, then in a black community in Birmingham/UK, in California at the University of California/Santa Cruz, which was very famous for its intercultural, international orientation (they engaged Angela Davis after having being fired at the University of Los Angeles because of her political activities). But the most decisive eye-opener and engagement for international social work was the opening of the Zurich School to political refugees from many countries – first from Turkey after the big Devjol process of 1980, then from Ex-Yugoslavia, Chile, Eritrea, Irak etc. I realised that I couldn't teach social work without integrating the biography of these refugees having experienced persecution, repression, jail in the most terrible prison of Turkey, but also my experiences about the extreme poverty in the so-called Third World.

Thus, I realised more and more, that one hasn't necessarily to go into a foreign country to practice international social work. With 25 % immigrants in Switzerland you could practice it before your door. Following this path, I set up and supervised for over 15 years a taskforce for intercultural conflicts (racism) and violence operating in the German part of Switzerland. It keeps me in close contact to all the problems of intercultural living.

10. What were the major obstacles that you have faced in your career?

Well, being born between the first and second feminist movement, the first obstacle was that my father decided that the school of commerce was enough for a daughter who would marry anyway while he supported my brother in his studies of natural science and was very proud to have a son which was the youngest professor with full tenure at the University of California. Needless to say that I wasn't very happy with my first job as secretary in an Institute for Animal Nutrition at the Federal Technical University in Zurich. Needless to say that my career till to the habilitation at the University of Berlin was a typical feminine zick-zack-career, almost exclusively supported by women.

Besides of this, I can't say that I had big obstacles. It was rather the problem, which isn't solved for women till to-day, to have to choose between children and a career. To detect that I couldn't give to my daughter the care and attention she needed and wanted was hurting. But after many,

many talks about this, we have now a very good relationship.

Another aspect of this question is, that I had to learn to do „my thing“ with no support and at the beginning always with much critique. I wasn't part of an academic (quotation- and career-planning) network. Each project I tackled was something outside of the mainstream. My surrounding was often sceptical, discouragend me and ever and ever told me, that „this has no chance, forget it!“ This began with my streetwork, where I was discouraged because „this is not for a woman!“, then I saw full of „shaking and laughing heads“ around me when I dared to say that I was working on a general theory of social work. „Forget it, social work is just a field of practice, that's all!“ Or in relation to the mentioned project about racism and power: „Chosing this focus you will stigmatise swiss as well as migrants“; the project has now 15 years of very sucessful work and is an address for migrants as well as indigenou people. Or: trying to get the Swiss parliament to sign the European Social Charter: „You have not the smallest chance with the actual powerconstellation between parties!“ Yet, the governmental department leaders (Bundesrat) have after the intevention of the parliament to present a „message“ for the parliament till the end of the year. Or: „Social Work as a Human Rights Profession“ ? Are you the victim a nostalgia about the student revolt of the 68ties? This is anyway the job of lawyers; thus it is irresponsible to compete with lawyers in this field.“ The critics hadn't even realised that social rights, for which social work should be responsible, weren't justiciable at that time and that there were no lawyers who would engage in any procedure to claim social rights; and, in additon, that if the population should be able to claim human rights, they should first be informed about them. A theologian was upset, that the international community had the audacity to define social justice and to claim human rights for their profession etc. etc. According to him, social workers would have to acceptt the mandate of society defined – of course – by theologians! Looking back, I never let me discourage by such statements, on the contrary, it mobilised all my creativity, energy and also lots of patience to work continually at what I thought is the right thing to do.

11. In your opinion, how has social work/education changed?

One has to distinguish between the German speaking part of Europe (Germany, Austria, Switzerland) and the „rest“ of Europe and of course world-society. As Idith White and Penelope Welbourne could show, there is a common development base of social work as profession and thus scientific discipline, compared with the article written by Nina Toren in the sixties in the book of Amitai Etzioni about „semi-professions“ - besides: a term for professions exercised by women. In this contribution she shows, how divergent the opinions about professionalisation or anti-professionalisation were. I could show in an actual article, that the educational debates in the German part of Europe are still stuck in the middle of this pro- and anti-discussion of the 60ies.

But let's not forget a most significant change in many curricula about social work, integrating implicitly or explicitly neoliberalism and social work language and its „fast-food-instruments“ (the abolition of diagnoses and explanations, the priority of efficiency over effectiveness), techniques (checklists instead of science-based action guidelines) and research tools (evidence-based practice instead of evidence-based-knowledge) etc. I know that many faculties, teachers and supervisors resist to this colonisation, but till now they seem to be quite marginal. I'm sure, this will change, because the damages become more and more obvious, the world-problems more and more pressing which can't be solved with neoliberal managerial tools in the actual narrow sense. A good start has been made by the Council on Social Work Education which requires the integration of theories of world-society, globalisation, human rights and international social work

into the curricula.

12. How do you see social work/education today? What are the differences from when you started in this field?

It seems to me again impossible to speak in general terms about social work education, because there are important differences between nations and regions, again such as between the German speaking region of Europe I know best and the others.

What's for sure, the education I got at the Zurich School of Social Work was a creative, innovative adaptation of what our teachers had made of their studies in the Netherlands and the US. We as students were convinced to be the „spearheads“ of professionalisation, having lectures in sociology, psychology, psychiatry as well as seminars in case-, group- and community work. The employers weren't enthusiastic about this at all, and especially about its outcome: self-confident social workers who wanted to reform social work. They transformed „Casework“ into „Cheesework“ - don't forget, we are in Switzerland! - and assigned to the teachers a ridicule title called „IAG“ which meant „In America Gewesen“ (Was In America). But over the years, social work was reformed, more democratic and more professional and last but not least the salaries were raised after a scientific study about the requirements of the workplace. .

To-day, If one asks about the commonalities inspite of the diversity aspects, I think that the book of Weiss and Melbourne gives a good overview about what is consensual about professionalisation around the world which means, among others: the notion that social work is in charge for the solving of complex social problems on a scientific base; the need for effective methods and the need of a common ethical codex. In the anglosaxon countries I see – inspite of the neoliberal turn - much continuity in education. The scandinavian countries have even surrounded many countries, in offering a Ph.D. in social work of four to five years of study to end the „dead end“ and to solve the problem that (doctoral) social work studies were mainly studies in something else, as Haluk Soydan stated pertinently.

In the 90ies we had a very special situation in Europe, namely: the Eastern countries could start their university education in social work on a tabula rasa. I remember having given the very first lectures in Moscou about social work in an extremeley turbulent phase: Shewardnadse was trying to negotiate with protesting and striking students; professors of marxism, mathematics, physics, philosophy were forced to teach social work while some of them asked me in long night-discussions: What should I do, if I don't like people and have to teach social work? A philosophy professor organisng lectures, decided, that I had to teach students and future professors all together. Others professors, philosophically very sophisticated and highly knowledgeable in dialectics, wanted to know the exact philosophical base of social work – if possible as a logarithmic sequence. A wonderful colleague from the USA who came after me warned the puzzled colleagues about the terrible ills and wrong assumptions of capitalism, while there was considerable objection: But we want capitalism!, one objected, and stopped so the discussion. The colleague from the US was apparently very sceptical about the new regime; he brought survival food with him to be sure to survive in this strange, revolutionary country. In the meantime we see the impact of capitalism in many of these countries and parallel to it, its impact on social work education.

13. What would you like to see happening in social work/education/IASSW in the future?

My wishes and hope for the future! We have now over 30 years of neoliberal colonisation of social work and dozens, if not hundreds of critical analysis of it. I joined this choir, too. But I think that now the time has come to show that social work has a significant vision and contribution to make for the implementation of its ethical and professional premisses for future local, national and worldwide development. The ten years of developing and implementing a master of social work which sets human rights and corresponding projects and social practice at its core has shown me, what can still be done and reached in unfavorable, even dark times. And, looking back into history: Didn't scientific based professional social work on the local, national and even international level develop in much more difficult conditions as to-day - at least in the Northern countries? I think of the women and men of Hull House and Chicago university. But also of contributions at actual IASSW/IFSW and ICSW-Conferences giving hope and guidelines for future curriculum development and social action. So let's be academic activists as Briskman told us in Durban which - in many respects - still benefit from the academic freedom. Let's use this freedom for the implementation of the content of our own international documents . Let's end the endless debate, if social work has to be political or professional. With its triple mandate, referring to science-based action guidelines and methods as well as human rights and social justice as its ethical guidelines, there can't be an either-or, but only a skilfull combination of both.

Zurich, August, 30th, 2010