

Social Projectionism: A Vision For New Ethics In Social Welfare

Stefan Cojocaru

PhD, Lecturer, Department of Sociology and Social Work, "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University, Iasi
Author of the books: Metode apreciative în asistenta socialã. Ancheta, supervizarea si managementul de caz (2005), Designul propunerilor de finantare. Metodologie, modele de proiecte, comentarii (2004), Elaborarea proiectelor (2003).

This article approaches *social projectionism* as an orientation within the new post-modern epistemologies, starting from its principles. At the same time, the author presents some phenomena generated by the post-modern perspectives opened by the new ideologies that produce new ethical orientations in social practice. These visions have made profound changes in the way the social services user is seen, the contextualisation of social practice, the volatility of social programmes and the development of the public-private partnership from the point of view of social constructionism. The marketisation of social services has conditioned the development of equality relations between the public service providers and the private providers, the adaptation of programmes to the local needs and resources and a permanent change, giving up the illusion of progress, recognising and using to their full potential the multilinear evolutions of the existing situations.

Introduction

Together with the increasingly powerful manifestation of post-modern discourses, increasingly visible modifications of ethics appear in society, as a reflection of existing ideologies. Thus, *social projectionism*, an orientation that combines the theoretical elements of several present orientations and practices from various domains, asserts itself as a conglomerate of ideas, aiming to permanently introduce social change. Social projectionism, inspired by constructionism, asserts the creation of multiple realities through their very projection, recognising the existence of these multiple realities with permanent modifications in a multilinear evolution. Social practice has shown innumerable times that change can be made in the desired directions only if there exists a crystallised definition of the future situations and a collective agreement generated by the influence had by authority. Maybe this is the reason why a social issue becomes a problem only when it is placed on the public agenda, when it is defined as such, and its resolution presupposes the mobilisation of resources. In the domain of social welfare, we see significant change in terms of the evolution lines of the various phenomena that depend on planning short-term change. The flexibility and the volatility of social programmes are generated by the requirements of adaptation to the condi-

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tions of permanent change, which can be controlled precisely by manipulating the conditions that generate change. In other words, *social projectionism* manages to create realities precisely by defining them, and the modifications are designed from the angle of the objectives proposed. The advent of the funding system for the nongovernmental system by using intervention projects and the development of the public-private partnership makes social welfare, and not only, become an environment of quick and controlled change, a source of inspiration for the rest of the domains.

The principles of social projectionism

Social projectionism is a new orientation both in science and in the social practice, focusing on the way realities are created through their projection. Social projectionism is underpinned by a few principles:

1. The utilitarianist principle. According to this principle, the social projection of an intervention at micro or macro/social level depends on the interests of the initiators. We cannot design the intervention without seeing beyond it the specific interests of those who are concerned with a certain social issue. In project practice, the aim is to dissolve the interests of the initiator in favour of the interests of the target population; maybe that is the reason why all the objectives formulated within the project make a reference directly to changing the beneficiaries' situation and not to the initiator's intentions.

2. The teleological principle. This principle refers to the purposes set and to the means necessary for reaching them. From the point of view of social projectionism, we see a reversed determinism, in that the objectives set, their definition, creates realities, because in this vision change presupposes the projection of desired situations and actions meant to create these realities. Clearly defining the desired future orientates the entire activity designed to change the situation of the target groups. Social projectionism manages to put in order the way objectives are developed and promotes the idea that things are a means for reaching objectives linked to the social context in which they are developed. "To the extent to which the modern obsession with purposes and utility disappears, as well as the equally obsessive idea that all things are autotelic (that is they claim to be their own purpose and not a means for getting to something other than them), morality has the chance to finally get its own rights." (Bauman, 1995/2000: 42)

3. The principle of multiplicity. According to this principle, carrying out an intervention through projects depends on the way the issue it addresses is seen. Silverman (2001/2004: 19-20) warns about diagnosis and the noticing of a problem, making a clear distinction between the social problem and the research problem. Projects respond to social problems, those that are noticed and find their place on the public agenda, and it is obvious that there are multiple perspectives for approaching the situation noticed. According to the principle of multiplicity, the problem is always seen from different perspectives, and, what is more, it requires different interventions. Multiplicity refers to the multiple realities existing in the intervention environment, as well as to the multiple realities that the intervention generates in a certain environment. These realities generate multiple post-modern discourses. "These 'post' discourses are exploring a more multi-faced approach to understanding, where meaning, including the meaning of identity, can only be understood and established through the identification and recognition of competing discourses. Accepting that there are no universal truths (if there ever were any) reality is reduced (or elevated?) to a number of conceptual frameworks, a kind of literary textual realm, which can be interpreted in quite different, even contradictory, ways" (Noble, 2004: 291).

4. The axiological principle refers to the values that direct all the interventions, through which the realities of the intervention project are deconstructed and reconstructed. Nothing of the actions taken is isolated from the values promoted; therefore, projectionism presupposes the projection of values at institutional level and their realisation through beneficiary-oriented actions. Therefore, beyond rationality, itself constructed from the perspective of the values promoted at a certain moment, new paradigms appear. "New

epistemological paradigms such as post industrialization, post structuralism and postmodernism are assuming an importance in theoretical debate. All are, in one way or other, engaging in a general celebration of the neutralization of meaning and the possibilities of ontological redefinitions emerging from demise of rational thought as new paradigms of understanding the world" (Noble, 2004: 291).

5. The principle of dialogue and consensus recognises the role of discourse and negotiation in achieving change. Therefore, according to projectionism, any modification of a situation presupposes, in the first place, the redefinition of situations and the construction of a common definition; the future situation, desired by the initiators, is achieved in a first stage in the realm of the interpretations people have about that situation. According to social projectionism, changing a situation is achieved by changing the interpretations people have about that situation, and public debates aim to create a consensus on definitions that are as close as possible. The mental map of the project can only be drafted to the extent to which it is permanently reconstructed through confrontation with the other mental maps, those of the individuals involved. "The post-modern condition calls for a break with the concepts and metaphors of the models of modernity, demanding an ontological move out of the mental frame in which there were conceived." (Bauman, apud., Noble, 2004: 292).

6. The principle of anticipation says that the destiny of a collectivity is *the future positive picture* constructed through the individual creations influencing present events (Cojocaru, 2005). It can be said that *the best way to predict the future is to build it*, starting from the desired images, through the present interpretations, because *the map precedes the reality*: "It is not the territory preceding the map now, and it does not survive it, but the map preceding the territory also generating it..." (Wachowski, apud. Felluga, 2003: 84). Thomas formulates this principle, also known as "the creation self-fulfilling prophecy": "if people define a situation as real, then this situation *is real* [author's note] through the consequences of defining it as real" (apud. Ungureanu, 1990: 124). In order to argument this principle, Cooperider uses the placebo effect used in medicine and the Pygmalion effect, which prove that the image of the teachers about pupils is a strong predictor of the performances of these pupils. From this perspective, the project is a mental map that becomes reality only when there is a consensus concerning its details.

The transformation of client into service beneficiary

Some authors, (Healy, 2000; Noble, 2004; Cojocaru, 2005) consider that the focus on dysfunctions or limitations of the service beneficiary leads to a persistence of problems and to their transformation into passive subjects. Maybe it is not by accident, at least until now, that the term *client* has been used for social services. *Social projectionism* proposes replacing this definition, which shows in addition the passive role of the user of the proposed service, with the term *beneficiary*. From this point of view, the argument for replacing the terminology is carried out in the realm of the impact the intervention has on the person using such services. By using the term *beneficiary*, a redefinition is reached of the gain or benefit the vulnerable and/or disadvantaged person acquires by lessening the degree of social dependence, due to the involvement and participation in developing the intervention design and, implicitly, in the design of the service. Approaching the persons using social services from the perspective of the benefit leads to a focus of the intervention on increasing awareness, on mobilisation and on using existing resources through participation and empowerment. Thus, the service provider, by way of the specialists involved, helps to provide an institutional framework in which the beneficiary can find solutions to the problems he/she faces. The activism of beneficiaries is also supported by the transformation of the relationship of power and influence established in the traditional specialist-client interaction into a partnership relation between them, each of them being o equal footing with the other. The post-modern discourse replaces the system of recommendations to the client, used by the social worker

with the one of dialogue and of negotiation aiming to redefine the situation, as well as of empowerment: "one of the key issues for empowering people is sharing knowledge and information: this requires those involved in the consultation to be provided with the results of the consultation process. To develop consultation as an empowering process requires that those who were the subjects of the consultation process requires that those who the subjects of the consultation process should become the monitors of any change, providing critique and comment on the impact of any change, both intended and unintended" (McLaughlin et al., 2004: 162); the beneficiary takes thus part, through consultation and empowerment, in the development of the service according to his/her expectations.

The constructionist theory of social vulnerability (Cojocaru, 2005: xxx) describes these transformations of the subject-object relation centred through the change, within the dialogue, of the individual interpretations concerning certain particular situations. Moreover, the appreciative perspective of intervention develops a model of social change, amplifying positive individual experiences especially through collective negotiation (Cooperrider et al., apud Cojocaru, 2005). In the post-modern perspective, the ambivalence of control roles and social change the social workers plays tends to sway towards the latter. Thus, social control loses ground in favour of change and even of a transformation of social control in a process of change through involvement, participation and consensus in the relationship with the beneficiary. Therefore, social practice can no longer make a reference to an ideal, due to the requirements of continued adaptation in relation to the beneficiaries, through the consensual establishment of short-term objectives. The ideal is abandoned in favour of practice principles expressed through standards, in the light of the new ideology, built through the multiplicity of particular visions. According to "the postmodernists, 'life' is to be embraced without 'truth', universal standards or generalizable ideals. Liberated from the metaphor of progress, the post-modern condition is a site of constant mobility and change with no clear direction of development. Any notion of order that can be experienced or found is local, emergent and transitory phenomenon retaining its shape for only relatively brief of period of time..." (Noble, 2004: 292). Transforming the client into beneficiary means the deconstruction and the relativism of the social practice, forced to be flexible through its very essence. This orientation reflected in the post-modern ideologies direct the social practice towards a realm in which the idea of progress is abandoned in favour of that of multi-linear evolution. This fact leads inevitably to the marketisation of social services.

The marketisation of social services

In the domain of social services, profound general changes are caused by the erosion of the values and the legitimacy of the Welfare State, processes identified an analysed by Powell (2001) and Noble (2004). This deconstruction of the Welfare State creates the conditions for the marketisation of the services in the public domain (Noble, 2004: 294), with repercussions on the new managerialism, characterised by a reduction of the hired staff and a redefinition of the way the budget allotted to public services is structured, by using resources from the state national and local budgets. This type of management, developed in the social services is considered a practice of applying business-type management to the social domain: "Managerialism has been a term used to describe the adoption of business-like methodologies by management teams that employ strategies including tight fiscal controls, strategic planning, targeted responses to emerging opportunities, and sophisticated information systems that closely monitor organizational processes and outcomes" (Lonne et. al, 2004: 347). The study made in Australia, by Lonne, Mc Donald and Fox (2004) sought to identify precisely the effects the marketisation, contractualism and managerialism processes had on the ethics of the service providers, especially the negative ones, to identify the ethical dilemmas generated by these new visions of social service provision. From the point of view of the changes that take place in the domain of social services, we an consider that the ma-

nifestation of *social projectionism*, otherwise present in all the domains of social, economic, political life, has generated the practice of organising activities on the basis of short-term-objective focused projects, of organising the budgets of service-providing institutions in the shape of budgets directed at existing services; these services are presented as projects nested within organisational strategies. Thus, for example a certain service, such as that of monitoring and evaluating foster care placements, has a minimal budget built by the public provider, so that it can operate in order to reach objectives established annually and according to the expected results. This marks in fact the assumptions for being contracted by other service providers, especially private ones that would meet the minimum compulsory standard requirements. The performance of this exercise by the public social services providers in terms of building the budget in segments for each service separately leads to the disposal of the global intervention vision for social change. Thus, "national and state governments are no longer defining themselves as major service providers for individuals' well-being through organized intervention" (Midgley, apud. Noble, 2004: 293). This orientation of the way the services are provided places the public, state sector in competition with the private one, in a process of promoting a social services market. A relevant indicator for this process is the one given by the procedures for *the certification of the service providers and the licensing of social services*. The procedures imposed through changes in legislation, generated by changes in ideology, place the two categories of providers, the private and the public one, on equal footing. Thus, through the development of the *social services contracting process* (seen as a process through which social services can be provided by private providers working with funds from the local or national budget) great changes will happen in the employment market in the domain of social services: a decrease of personnel in the governmental sector and an increase in the private sector, an orientation of the specialists towards strengthening their profession, which will become a liberal one, and a weakening of the attachment towards the employer, a transformation of the governmental sector in an institution with coordination, evaluation, monitoring and local policy development roles, a dynamic development of the workforce and an increase in its mobility, the decrease in value of the traditional role of the social worker in the public sector (Noble, 2004: 294), the multilinear evolution of the social services, generated by the volatility of the social programmes etc. Some authors (Healy, 1998; Rees and Rodley, 1995) underline the fact that the marketisation of services generated by post-modern ideologies orient the social services towards the realm of commercial services, casting a shadow on the notion of citizen rights, even if in the rhetoric of discourse some boundaries are maintained between social and commercial services: "rather than living with tensions and paradoxes as likely points for development of alternative visions, what we have is a practice divorced from notion of citizen rights, and social workers offering a form of social care on a commercial basis with not-for-profit organizations to provide social services within a market context" (Noble, 2004. 301).

The volatility of social programmes

The permanent adaptation of programmes to local needs, the permanent balance between micro-practice and macro-practice in providing social services, the focus on beneficiary and the scheduling of activities depending on short-term objectives, makes social projectionism recognise the manifestation of a *volatility of social programmes,* accepted and promoted as such through the very use of the concept of *pilot projects*; these are experimentations of new social practices and services, for a well-defined category of population, which propose changes in the situation of its members in the short term. Using pilot projects ensures other advantages, as well: adaptability and flexibility in providing innovative services, the identification of population categories subject to social exclusion, the evaluation and maintenance of effective practices, modelling activities depending on the impact they have, redesigning projects depending on the results obtained in the experimental ones, saving and distributing the resources with

the purpose of an increased effectiveness. On the other hand, the volatility of pilot projects leads to some perverse effects, such as: abandoning some interventions at the end of the funding due to lack of subsequent funds, the difficulty of finding other donors for projects already implemented, a reduced number of beneficiaries impacted by the interventions proposed in the projects, a decrease in the providers' chances to strengthen a long-term strategy, an increase in dependence and in the instability of the service providers etc.

The difficulty to plan in the long term, generated by the volatility of the he programmes, is also described by Harvey, who thinks that "volatility makes engaging in long-term planning to become extremely difficult. Indeed, to learn how to use volatility appropriately is, nowadays, as important as accelerating circulation time" (1990/2002: 288). Social projectionism considers that the volatility of programmes can be thought not only in terms loaded with a deficit language, but it can be considered an opportunity for ensuring social change; therefore, the issue is not to fight against the volatility of the programmes, for example through advocacy campaigns for extending funding, but to identify various strategies for controlling it. Harvey admits that there are two strategies in working with volatility. The first is about developing a short-term planning model: "this concerns more short-time planning that long-term planning and the promotion of the art of taking advantage of the possibility of short-term gain, wherever it might appear" (1990/2002: 288). the other proactive strategy for controlling volatility "... presupposes the manipulation of taste and opinion, either by leading a fashion trend, or by saturating the market with images that would model volatility depending on precise purposes" (Harvey, 1990/2002: 288-289).

The contextualisation of social practice

This perspective focus on local level intervention, buy identifying the existing problems within the community, the mobilisation of existing resources and finding solutions within the same logic. Concentration at local level requires a process of micro-deconstruction generated by the post-modern discourse, and social action is seen as a result of participation and involvement of the community members, becoming "a social-action process that promotes participation of people, organisations and communities towards the goal of increased individual and community control, political efficacy, improved quality of community life and social justice" (Wallerstein, apud. McLaughlin et al., 2004: 162). Even if at national level a common policy is established, each county has its own strategy that aims through its elements to contribute to its achievement; at local level, priorities, purposes and actions are adapted to the local situation, and this gives birth in different places to different strategies. Therefore, the national bodies have only coordination and methodology orientation roles, they verify the way local projects meet the needs identified at this level. If at national level the discourse focused on human rights, progress and development is maintained, at local level this provides the context for the realisation of specific intervention tools: "Linked to notions of social development through social betterment and progress, social work has historically been committed to notions of progress, social justice, human rights, equality and self-determination. The certainties of logical argument and discoverable explanations provided social work with the tools of analysis to identify and attempt to address grand and small-scale issues of discrimination, oppression, disadvantage and privilege" (Noble, 2004: 293).

Developing the public-private partnership

Partnership is a relationship established between two or more individuals, institutions, groups, which put *together* certain *resources* in order to reach a *common purpose*. At all times, it is born of the desire to solve a certain social problem by assigning tasks, obligations and rights to each partner. This presupposes the contribution of the factors involved, depending on the real possibilities of each of them. The

development of the public-private partnership has generated an *equality relation* between governmental and nongovernmental institutions, in which no subordination relation are established, because the partners assess *the extent to which the common objectives are achieved* and the way resources are managed. The development of this equality relationship generates a model of permanent communication between the two parties, becoming a process in which responsibilities are taken on by the partners for achieving the objectives of the *common programme*, each partner assuming *the risks and the failures* of the programme. In order to achieve the common project, there is an established policy for *common promotion/ common image* of the programme, in a relationship characterised by *stability*, a low risk of the partnership being dissolved before the programme is over, offering at the same time the security of *a common medium- and long-term strategy* in the moment the programme has reached its objectives. The development of this form of collaboration between the two organisation systems can lead to an increased interest and involvement of the partners in solving the problem, an increase in resources through the participation of the partners, as well as of the chances for achieving the project, an increased flexibility concerning the types of intervention, a regular evaluation required in the conditions of maintaining the partnership, an increase of the degree of social effectiveness, an increase of the chances for accessing funds, and a continued adaptation of the intervention, generated by the volatility of programmes.

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