Complexity, Diversity, Transdisciplinarity – Taking a next Step in Social Work Science

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The article explores how Social Work Science could be conceived in a way adequate to its complex subject matter. The leading question is how the structure of Social Work Science has to change so that knowledge production could become possible in a cumulative instead of an additive way. Transdisciplinarity might deliver answers for how to approach the complexity of real life problems as well as for the problem of integration of knowledge necessarily to be solved if a cumulative and consolidated knowledge base is aimed for. The result is the formulation of a 'disciplinary matrix' conceived as a dynamic structure able to give enough paradigmatic orientation to structure the activities inside Social Work Science in order to boost its epistemological power. In this model, professional Social Work Practice is thought to take an active role in knowledge production as known from many short term transdisciplinary projects but in an institutionalised way on the long run.

Keywords: Social Work Science; Transdisciplinarity; Professionalism, Community of Science and Practice

Introduction

This article is about Social Work Science, its state and possible further development in relation to Social Work Practice and consequently in relation to professionalism in Social Work. It is about taking a next step, which seems to be – at least in my view – both necessary and timely. This step is a big and a difficult step because it implies a qualitative change. In order to make change possible, this exploratory article can be understood in the sense of German philosopher Ernst Bloch as the formulation of a kind of 'concrete utopia' (Bloch, 1986). His concept was conceived in the context of and for societal change but can be used here as a leading idea. A concrete utopia results from (ideology) critical self-reflexion from where it derives potential to intend something qualitatively new, but also from the formulation of something actually possible. The last

point implies a mediation with the historic conditions and tendencies. I will not proceed in a methodologically strict way but use the "concrete utopia" as general orientation for my argumentation heading to a conception of future Social Work Science.

The first part consists of a (self-critical) assessment of how we deal with the complexity Social Work is confronted with, of some consequences for the knowledge base and of an ambivalent appraisal of diversity. The second part still serves the critical self-reflection using Thomas Kuhn's notion of 'proto-science' (Kuhn, 2012) to describe the actual state of Social Work Science. In the third part of the article the conditions for a change from 'proto-science' to 'normal science' are explored with reference to the work of Jörn Rüsen who transferred Kuhn's notion of a 'disciplinary matrix' to History (Rüsen, 2013). In the fourth part the concept of transdisciplinarity is introduced as a contemporary approach to deal with complexity together with the intention to solve real-life problems (Hirsch Hadorn et al., 2008b). Hence, transdisciplinarity will serve as a reference concept to model Social Work Science. In part five the findings of Rüsen are transferred to Social Work by developing a draft of a 'disciplinary matrix'. Finally, in part six, an example will be presented of how the 'disciplinary matrix' could be designed with reference to the concept of transdisciplinarity.

Problematic

Many challenges in Social Work derive from or are associated with the complexity of the subject matter social work has to deal with. The conference of the European Social Work Research Association 2017 in Aalborg for example[1] was conceived around that

[1] This contribution is based on a keynote speech held on that occasion.

complexity – namely the complexity deriving from the fact that Social Work is interested in human beings living in societal and social systems.

As a consequence all the knowledge that has been accumulated in different disciplines on human beings, as well as on their societal and cultural organisations ranging from parts of biology, neuro-science, anthropology, ethnology, psychology, sociology, educational science, history, law, politics, economics, philosophy and so forth is relevant for Social Work (Schuhmacher, 2011). In other words: the knowledge relevant for Social Work is very broad and to complicate this further, this knowledge is highly fragmented even within these reference sciences. The knowledge relevant for Social Work literally forms an ocean of knowledge where orientation can be easily lost.

'Melting pot' as a term used in the call for papers for the conference mentioned above is a good metaphor because there are so many different influences, actors, interests, values, knowledge keepers, approaches and so forth coming from a plethora of backgrounds into Social Work. This constitutes a treasure. There cannot be a doubt of that. But how do we make use of that wealth and are there possibilities to go further? I think Social Work has arrived at a stage of its development where this question has to be seriously considered.

Of course, we can go on claiming that this diversity is our treasure and the one and only way for Social Work and let it grow in all directions. We can even push this kind of thinking further postulating that the characteristic of Social Work is that Social Work has no characteristics at all like Heiko Kleve did in his postmodern theoretical approach to Social Work (Kleve, 2000). But is the outcome of such an approach where everything has place a good fundament for Social Work Science and above all for professional Social Work?

Against this background ‘melting pot’ would be a misleading metaphor because in a successful melting process the outcome should be something of higher quality than the ingredients which have been melted. May be then the German word ‘Mischmasch’ (hodgepodge) would be a more appropriate metaphor for the diversity Social Work embraces? There is so much in that pot that everybody can find something that suits him or her and therefore everybody is happy. In doing so, however, there is a multitude of possibilities to reduce or avoid complexity by reducing the task to that particular corner one feels comfortable with and ignoring relevant knowledge from just around that corner.

To illustrate this: A study done in Switzerland recently in four probation services revealed four quite different types of Social Work with completely different references to a theoretical ‘potpourri’ coming from various disciplinary sources (Zobrist, 2015). None of these services has an articulated connection to a General Social Work Theory. All of them only referred to genuine Social Work concepts on probation services in a very rough and limited way. Is that professional Social Work? Can the users expect to get professional services there? Is it legitimate to intervene in people’s lives on that basis?

It is not the intention here to point to the deficits of professional Social Work and, in any case, systematic research is lacking so that we have to rely on single studies as the one cited above, but at least one point seems to be clear. If professionalism still means among other things to make use of scientific knowledge, and if the relevant knowledge is as broad and fragmented as described above, the single professionals and the single organisations are overburdened to find orientation in that ocean of relevant knowledge. In this respect diversity as a reaction to complexity is at some point problematic. It finally turns into arbitrariness and a loss of orientation and consequently

into a superficial and casual use of scientific knowledge as in the example of the probation services above. Conversely, a Science of Social Work has to face the challenges of complexity and find fruitful ways to work with them. And this requires a structure that enables the development of the body of knowledge of this scientific discipline and its joint profession *in a cumulative not in an additive way*.

Social Work as a proto-science

Thinking about describing and shaping Social Work Science cannot be done without making use of some general theory of science. The three following parts will examine different approaches to science, starting here with Thomas Kuhn's concept and his notion of 'proto-science' to understand the actual state of Social Work Science in these terms.

Kuhn's basic model probably is well known: he describes the evolution of science not as continuous growth but as a process of paradigmatic revolutions (Kuhn 2012). A 'normal science', as he calls it, finds an answer to the question of organising the knowledge production process by orienting people's activities inside a discipline through a paradigm. The point is that a paradigm delivers a common framework, which enables co-working on the same questions and consequently cumulative knowledge production.

There has to be at least one phase before the first paradigm emerges. Kuhn calls this phase 'pre-paradigmatic' and a science in this phase would be a 'proto-science'. Kuhn provides some indicators to characterise such a proto-science, for example (Kuhn, 2012: p. 27f):

- No generally accepted description of its subject matter.

- Research (‘experiments’) on a broad variety of aspects of the thematic field that results in
- a quantity of diverse theoretical approaches, with no explanatory power in respect to research (‘experiments’) done by others,
- deducing their power from their relation to some kind of metaphysics (values among other).

As far as I can see these indicators are good descriptors of what can be observed in Social Work. Diversity as problematized above can be understood in these terms as can its consequences for example in respect to explanatory power and orientation for people’s activities and identity building processes, both for Social Work scientists and Social Work professionals.

In Kuhn’s model, the state of a ‘proto-science’ would be overcome by the victory of one paradigm defining the subject matter and the methodology of this science. Unfortunately, or fortunately and probably necessarily, there is no Newton in sight in Social Work. Does this mean that in social sciences, and especially in Social Work Science, there cannot be nor paradigmatic orientation nor systematic knowledge building?

Jörn Rüsen’s analysis of History and the ‘disciplinary matrix’

Jörn Rüsen, a German historian, adapted Kuhn’s model of a ‘disciplinary matrix’ to the Humanities (Rüsen, 2013). One of his interesting findings is that History had to be established first as a discipline before it could develop into a science. The same can be said of Social Work. Social Work was established as a discipline, meaning an institution where the theme Social Work is treated through scientific means, in different countries about 100 years ago. Out of the practical need to have a place where Social Workers

could be educated, schools of Social Work were founded. Together with that institutionalisation of Social Work education the question arose and the debate began on what the subject matter could be, what knowledge would be required and whether Social Work could be or should be a science (see for example Hunold, 2010, pp. 33–55; Staub-Bernasconi, 1989). Alternatively and more recently, the foundation of the Universities of Applied Sciences in Switzerland 1996 may be seen as an example as well as the subsequent and successful venture of the Swiss Society for Social Work to gain recognition as a scientific discipline by the Swiss Academy of Social Sciences and Humanities in 2013.

Rüsen describes this process of becoming an institutionalised discipline as a first phase of the genesis of a science. The second phase, in the case of History, is characterised by an inflow of philosophical theories (Rüsen, 1976, p. 198f). In the case of Social Work those "philosophical theories" can be understood as theories coming from all sorts of reference sciences without being integrated inside Social Work, theoretically and practically. Here again it seems obvious to me that this is characteristic for contemporary Social Work Science.

Only the third phase is or would be the formation of a science. From his observations on History he concludes, in contrast to Kuhn, that it is not necessary that the one and only theory (and the one great name) constitutes the paradigm of a science. Alternatively, a 'disciplinary matrix' can be developed taking account of the specificities of a discipline. These specificities in History are among others the diversity of possible standpoints for the interpretation of the past and consequently the necessary temporal dynamic of historic thinking.

Therefore, Rüsen developed the disciplinary matrix as a dynamic structure that transforms History into a 'normal' science. This disciplinary matrix is conceived as a

circle of five factors, each of them necessary for constituting History as a dynamic venture but still structured by paradigmatic orientation. Rüsen states an *interest in the lifeworld* as the starting point of the development of a science. He calls this first factor 'pre-conditions in the lifeworld'. This is the starting and the endpoint of the circle because the scientific knowledge production in this model is meant to satisfy these cognitive interests coming from the life world. The second factor is what he calls the 'theory factor'. This is the element that constitutes the inner centre of the science together with the third factor (methods of empirical research) and the fourth (forms of representation of the findings). The theory factor is about transforming those leading cognitive interests into general assumptions on the subject matter in the form of theories. The fifth factor describes the transfer back into the life world by delivering orientation.

Without going into the details of Rüsen's work, I just highlight some thoughts, which I consider important for Social Work Science. In this model science and life world ('Lebenspraxis') are systematically interrelated. More than one global theory is not only possible but necessary, as well as diverse methodological approaches and forms, even strategies of representation. Paradigmatic orientation stems from the process. The whole circle as introduced by Rüsen forms the disciplinary matrix. The knowledge base of a science is thought of as a dynamic entity of interrelated processes structured by the disciplinary matrix. As it is conceived as a circle, there cannot be an endless number of global theories. These global theories have conditions to fulfil. Above all they need to be able to serve as a framework for the whole circle that is to structure the scientific activities (internal orientation), and satisfy the need for orientation coming from outside the science itself (external orientation). From an evolutionary perspective, the theories that serve this purpose best should be found in

order to stabilise the social and the cognitive system that is a science. The measure for the global theories therefore is, whether and to what extent these theories are able to deliver paradigmatic orientation. And, to fulfil this function, these global theories need to be able to integrate as much internal and external knowledge as possible.

On Transdisciplinarity

The third aspect of the theory of science, especially necessary for the formulation of the 'concrete utopia' of a 'normal' Social Work Science, is a mega-trend that has been observed over at least the last four decades. 'The new production of knowledge' (Gibbons et al., 1994) was a milestone of research on science that shed a light on the fact that besides the classical scientific mode of knowledge production another type of activity and inter-relation among actors could be described. This different mode of knowledge production was found in transdisciplinary problem solving processes in different societal areas and was called 'mode 2'.

Transdisciplinarity, at least in Switzerland, experienced a real hype at the end of the last and the beginning of this century in respect to almost all societal problem zones, above all ecological problems. Numerous ideas, concepts and projects emerged (Hirsch Hadorn et al., 2008a). There is not one clear definition of transdisciplinarity, but there are some common elements on which I can build my argument. Stefanie Büchner calls transdisciplinarity a 'working principle' containing the following characteristics: Transdisciplinarity aims on complex real life problems. Not only scientific actors influence the definition of what is the problem. It is about transgressing disciplinary boundaries. Non-scientific knowledge can be called in. Frequently, it is not only about explaining the problem but also about altering it. Hence, even if not necessarily, an interest in problem solving is implied (Büchner, 2012, p. 23). So, if the intention is to make use of the range of existing knowledge, the 'simple' solution transdisciplinarity

proposes, as for instance described in mode 2, is to bring representatives of different relevant disciplines together, as well as other relevant stakeholders, and make them collaborate on the development of a solution for the real life problem of interest. The hope related to that endeavour is that in this way, you can get closer to real life complexity and this might lead to the development of better solutions for the real life problems in question.

What, one may ask, is the problem with that? And why do I call this 'simple transdisciplinary thinking'? The popular and simple version of transdisciplinarity and mode 2 is simply an approach to tackle complexity by using different forms of knowledge for *immediate* problem solving processes by bringing people together who are the knowledge keepers. It is simple on the conceptual level because it tackles complexity by social activism. Intrinsically, this is not a bad idea. But by applying the simple transdisciplinary approach (which basically means transgressing borders by creating a futile social system structured as a project) you do not automatically gain a solution for complexity. If different actors (users, practitioners, politicians, scientists of different disciplines) are brought together, the complexity of the project automatically increases instead. Eventually a good solution for a specific problem can be developed. But, if the understanding of a solution in scientific terms is aimed at, or in other words, if the creation of knowledge in a cumulative way is the goal, nothing is gained in this manner and an increase of complexity as well as an increase of diversity may even be the result. To escape such an outcome, a framework is needed in which the knowledge that has been combined in the new solution can be integrated.

There is another part in the literature on transdisciplinarity, a more difficult one, that seems to be neglected in the euphoria about practising the 'simple transdisciplinary approach': this is the integration of knowledge in a scientific way (fundamental

Obrecht, 2003; Mittelstraß, 2001; posing that question for example Somerville & Rapport, 2000). Actually, even before the beginning of transdisciplinary thought, the problem of integration of knowledge from different disciplines had been a concern. Von Bertallanffy, for example, developed a General System Theory to address the unity of science (Bertalanffy, 1968).

In the German debate on Social Work Science, the concept of transdisciplinarity actually drew its attractiveness largely from this perspective on integration. A few attempts were made to conceive Social Work as a transdisciplinary science, most of which did not venture beyond a programmatic delineation (Büchner, 2012; Mühlum, 2004). In this context, Werner Obrecht is the most relevant source. For a long time he has insisted on the necessity for Social Work to tackle the problem of integrating knowledge if the additive way should be left, which Brekke by the way called the 'piggyback approach' characterizing the US situation of Social Work Science (Brekke, 2012). Deeply grounded in philosophy of science Obrecht assembled all questions and challenges concerning the integration of knowledge and developed a multi-level matrix for a transdisciplinary systemic Social Work paradigm able to tackle these challenges (Obrecht, 2003). Very briefly, his matrix consists of five levels: 1) Meta-sciences, in his case the systemic ontology of Mario Bunge. 2) Object theories to be integrated by recombination in the light of the meta-science along the thematic issue (Social Work). 3) A general, 'normative' theory of action. 4) Special theories of action (methods). 5) Reality. Without being able to go into the details here, the central point is obvious: To attain integration some kind of systematic is indispensable. I will return to this and largely draw on Obrecht in the last part when the model of a transdisciplinary Social Work Science will be explored further.

To summarise, at this point, it can be stated that:

- Traditionally Social Work has dealt with complex real life problems and therefore has been uniting knowledge and knowledge keepers from different disciplines inside the schools of Social Work without really caring about integration.
- Additionally, the transdisciplinary debate or movement has had significant influence on Social Work over the last 20 years. User involvement (for example Beresford, 2007), practice research (for example Helsinki Forum Group, 2014; Pain, 2011) or concepts of cooperation between science and practice (Gredig & Sommerfeld, 2008) and so forth have emerged which are an important element of today's Social Work. All these aspects are features deriving from simple transdisciplinary thinking.
- The 'inflow of theories' as characteristic for a discipline on its way to a 'normal science', following Rüsen, is significant in Social Work.
- The real life problems obviously have immense epistemological potential. However, the integration of knowledge beyond a single development or research project is a challenge for Transdisciplinarity as well as for Social Work Science.

Developing the disciplinary matrix of Social Work Science

Now the parts developed above can be assembled. The first step of formulating the concept of a 'normal' Social Work Science consists in transferring Rüsen's matrix and filling it with content related to Social Work. The starting point is to find the need for orientation or the cognitive interests in the life world Social Work Science would have to satisfy and from there to define the subject matter. Hannes Kastner, a German philosopher who teaches in the field of Social Work, and actually inspired me to use Rüsen's model, provides an example (Kastner, 2013): the example of medical science as a 'normal science' in the sense of Kuhn. He states that the subject matter of medicine

would not be therapy, but the functioning of the human body. What he posits is that it is not sufficient to base a science on a practice but that there has to be a positive definition of the subject matter that constitutes the object of investigation.

One could contest his definition of the subject matter of medicine, because the functioning of the human body constitutes definitely a sub discipline of biology, and I doubt that medical science would accept that status. Following Rüsen we have to ask what constitutes the cognitive interests in the life world. Do we need orientation on behalf of the functioning of the human body or is the driving cognitive interest in our need for healing when our body becomes ill? Kastner is right in emphasizing that there has to be a positive object for investigation before the intervention comes in, but he is wrong when he thinks that this suffices for the constitution of medical sciences. The positive object (the functioning of the human body) *together* with the interest in *what can be done* when this functioning becomes impaired, constitutes the medical science. I call this type of scientific disciplines "Handlungswissenschaft" (translated with reference to Argyris, Putnam, & McLain Smith, 1990; as 'action science', see also Sommerfeld, 2014). In general, this type of science is gathered around real life problems *togethe*r with a positive description of the subject matter.

For Social Work it is the same. As in my preliminary definition of the subject matter at the beginning of this article, the positive object for investigation could be the individual life conducted in societal structures. As in the case of medicine in relation to biology, one could object here that this defines a part of sociology. Therefore, here again: The driving cognitive interest in the life world is not just the functioning of humans in society but the question, what can be done when this functioning is impaired. Walter Hornstein formulated an excellent definition almost 20 years ago. In the German debate of that time Social Work and Social Pedagogy were often used synonymously.

Hornstein definitely comes from the tradition of educational sciences but I think that I can use his definition in the sense of the broader term ‘Social Work’ here. Without going into the details of that debate, I propose to read social pedagogy as social work.

> After all, if one tries to bring it to a single formula, the historically changing relations between individual and society under a specific, precisely pedagogic interest, constitute “the problem” treated by social pedagogy. (…) To stress this is important because through this specific interest the studies of general social sciences are transformed into a pedagogic project. Thus, it is a matter of the forms of socialization (*Vergesellschaftung*), of the inherent conflicts in this process, of the interest in the acts and life possibilities of individuals, and finally of the forms of treatment of these crisis and conflicts by the institutions of social pedagogy. (Hornstein, 1998, p. 69 transl. author)

The definition of the subject matter as proposed here cannot just be stated by a single person like myself or Hornstein. A consensus has to be sought and established. However, if we take this model just for experimental purposes the other factors of the matrix can be described as in the graph below.

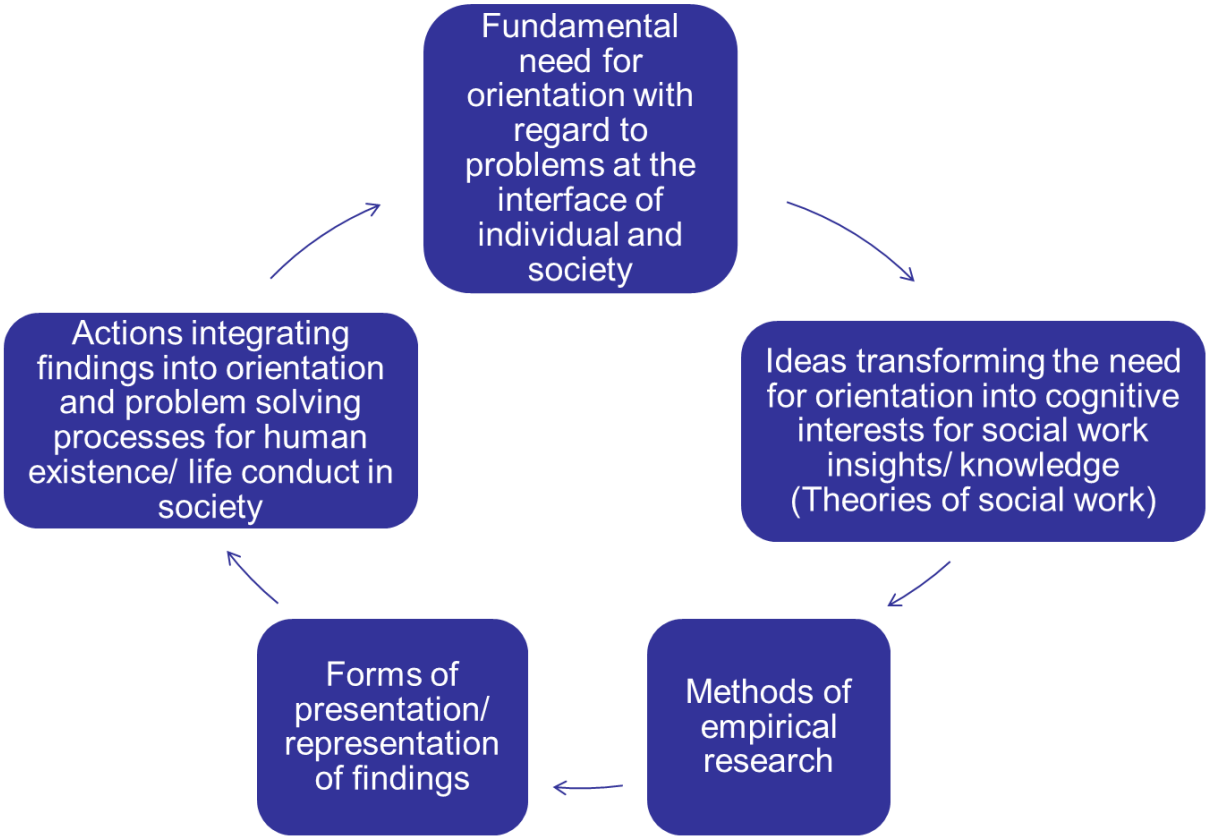

Figure 1: Experimental disciplinary matrix for Social Work Science

Factors two, three and four are the usual business of any science aligned with the subject-matter. The theory factor, of course, is crucial for the integration and accumulation of knowledge in the long run. Here, it is important to indicate the implication of the definition of the subject matter and the cognitive interest in the life world constituting the matrix. The global theories of Social Work Science have to be able to structure the entire circle in such a way that the need for *orientation and problem solving* regarding the real life problems of interest (in short: crises in individual life resulting from problematic forms of socialisation) can be satisfied.

The second point to emphasize here is the fifth factor: Actions integrating findings into orientation and problem solving. Naturally, all the concepts of 'transfer' or 'translation' (for example Palinkas & Soydan, 2012) apply here. Nevertheless, I want to put the emphasis on what can be learned from 'simple' transdisciplinary thinking: the

complexity of real-life problems can be better approached by cooperative forms bringing different stakeholders together than by linear ways of application. But the futile and local character of transdisciplinary projects poses problems in that here again the question of integration of the results into a longer lasting knowledge base remains unsolved. Consequently, the matrix has to be extended in the sense that also the knowledge developed in problem solving processes has to be integrated into the disciplinary knowledge base.

Developing the disciplinary matrix further

If we take the matrix developed so far as a very general framework, adding transdisciplinary thinking may lead to a more sophisticated model. Hence, the 'concrete utopia' of Social Work Science, needs to be concretised in a way that both an answer to the problem of integration of knowledge can be formulated, as well as an answer to how the epistemological potential of real-life problems can be handled productively in order to better satisfy the need for orientation and problem solving in society and the profession.

The following graph shows a model of how the disciplinary matrix could be completed naming necessary parts on different levels and maintaining the fundamental dynamic structure as developed with reference to Rüsen. It is a variation on Obrecht's five level matrix designed for building a paradigm for a transdisciplinary Social Work Science by showing a systematic way to the accumulation and integration of knowledge (Obrecht, 2003). It goes beyond Obrecht by using the knowledge on transdisciplinary processes stemming from developing solutions for complex real life problems (the 'simple transdisciplinary thinking'). Moreover, there is a third source: In clinical psychology, Günter Schiepek developed a model he called 'synergetic process management' (Haken & Schiepek, 2010, p. 442; a first adaptation for Social Work in

Sommerfeld, Calzaferri, Hollenstein, & Schiepek, 2005). Here again we have a similar multi-level matrix but in this case it is designed for application in the professional practice.

The model will now be described very briefly and generally. We have used it experimentally for Social Work in Psychiatry (Sommerfeld, Dällenbach, Rüegger, & Hollenstein, 2016). In this book, a more detailed description can be found, as well as a demonstration of how it can be processed, and how far it reaches even if only a single team of scientists is working with this model. On the other hand, of course, it also demonstrates the limitations when only a single team of scientists tries to do what a whole science would be needed for. The left hand side of the graph shows the five level structure of the matrix. On the right hand side there are explications of the content of the levels together with some examples how a certain level could be filled concretely. But of course the examples are only examples. They are changeable.

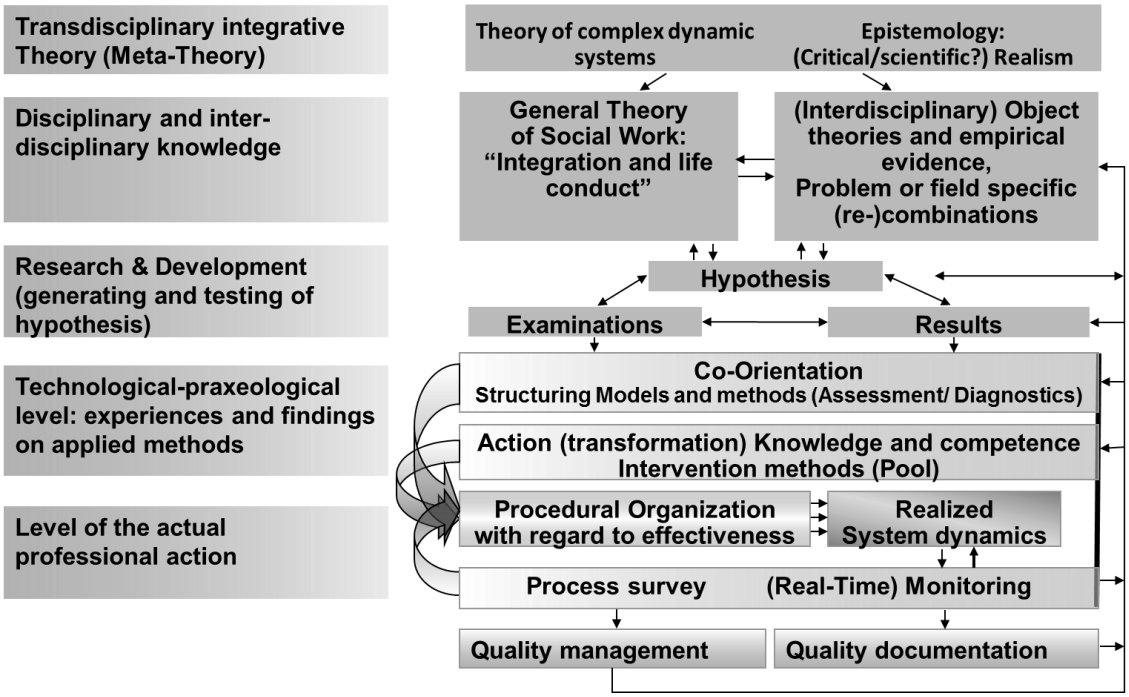

Figure 2: Dynamic structure for processing Social Work Science and consolidating the knowledge base (Sommerfeld et al., 2016, p. 36)

The first level refers to the insight that a meta-theory is needed, which is able to integrate knowledge from different disciplines. In our own theoretical approach we chose the theory of 'synergetics' (Haken, 1990; Haken & Schiepek, 2010) because it is about the genesis, functioning and change of complex dynamic systems at all ontological levels, including those we are interested in (human beings as well as social systems). As mentioned above Werner Obrecht refers to Mario Bunge's systemic ontology (Bunge, 1979). On this level, also some basic epistemological choices have to be made. For me, if Social Work Science is about real life problems, only a realistic epistemology makes sense. Here again two examples are mentioned: Bunge's scientific realism as featured by Obrecht (Obrecht, 2005) and critical realism (Bhaskar & Archer, 1998), an approach gaining a lot of attention in recent Social Work debates.

The second level corresponds to the theory factor in Rüsen's matrix. Here a general (a global) theory of Social Work is needed. A general theory of Social Work has different functions. Among other criteria, of course, it has to describe and explore the subject matter. The example here is our own work on 'Integration and Life-Conduct' (Sommerfeld, Hollenstein, & Calzaferri, 2011). The main function to emphasize here is how to handle the ocean of potentially relevant knowledge. All the available knowledge and relevant empirical evidence can be and has to be systematically employed through the lens of a Social Work theory. For example, from our theoretical perspective and developing a knowledge base in the realm of Social Work in psychiatry understanding how psychic pathology correlates with social dynamics is crucial.

The third level, as in Rüsen's matrix, is research, extended with development. Whatever research is needed from the perspective of that global theory one adheres to and its systematic alignment with interdisciplinary knowledge will contribute to Social Work Science. This reference to the global theory has to be made to avoid an endless

number of single studies without systematic relation to each other. In the graph, the research on Social Work Practice is put in the foreground because of the fundamental pre-condition as developed in the matrix to satisfy the need for orientation in problem solving of real life problems in the life world. But, research deriving from theoretical questions or on the genesis of the problems or the political conditions and so forth are naturally relevant research themes as well.

The fourth level is a special one. On the one side, it is part of the theory factor as described above. Technological questions (for example: what can be done to solve the problem of social isolation of people with severe mental illness?) are a constitutive part of action sciences as outlined above (Sommerfeld, 2014). Two distinct but interrelated parts are shown in the graph: The knowledge on how a case is constructed (Assessment and diagnosis procedures) and the knowledge on how problems are tackled through Social Work treatments (intervention methods). The idea is to build a qualified pool of methods that are the standard methods of Social Work, proven effective, their functioning described and explained in relation to the described and explained problems they are addressing.

The other side of that same fourth level is where transdisciplinarity re-emerges. If Social Work Science is conceived as a transdisciplinary science, the real life problems and any work done on them have to be constitutive. What is practised today, unsystematically, under very different labels, and on a project basis, usually not related to each other is institutionalised in this model and made a continuous part of processing the science in order to get as close as possible to the complexity of the real life problems and the real life professional work.

The fifth level therefore is Social Work Practice, which might be surprising. However, in a transdisciplinary approach, practice obviously has an active part in the

scientific knowledge production. Be it through cooperation in developmental processes (as in transdisciplinary projects), through practice research (if oriented by a global theory), but also through processing the knowledge base of the profession and adapting it, transforming it in little parts or in their own far reaching innovations which might become embedded in the consolidated knowledge base at some time. The methods of intervention and assessment are thought of here as kinds of 'boundary objects' (as described by Wenger, 2000). The joint work on how to solve problems best forms a 'community of science and practice' and in this sense a profession of Social Work (for making use of the concept of 'communities of practice' in Social Work see also Tov, Kunz, & Stämpfli, 2016).

Conceiving professional practice in this way implies a commitment to the disciplinary knowledge base in practice. It is exactly not an anything goes! If a practice claims to be professional Social Work a direct relation to the knowledge base has to be shown, in the procedural organisation of work, the used methods and in the realized system dynamic documented in for example monitoring data or some kind of knowledge related quality documentation. Data of this kind can be used for reflection in action as well as for scientific purposes. The recurrent arrows in the graph signify the interrelation between the levels and the cyclic, dynamic character of processing this system. Of course, user involvement for example is another part that can be built into the model and is another important part of the transdisciplinary approach.

Conclusion

My concluding hypotheses are: Becoming a 'normal' science with a structure as modelled above would channel the energy and the activities in Social Work and boost its epistemological power. In this sense, it would limit diversity in the first place, but for the sake of quality. Anyway, given the complexity of the task, it would stay a dynamic

venture leaving a lot of space for variation. Developing professional standards (please do not confuse this term with standardisation!) would clarify the expectations users but also other professionals in interprofessional cooperation could have and would ease collaboration. Most important and finally, limiting diversity and building a consolidated knowledge base would make the education and identity building of Social Workers much easier and much more effective.

These are quite 'wild' hypotheses. I am aware of that. However, they only can be falsified if Social Work Science is developed in a form like the one outlined here. It is possible. A consensus on a disciplinary matrix can be built. To establish such a process could be a task for ESWRA. A debate on transdisciplinary theory building in Social Work is possible and would help as well as on epistemological choices. Whatever the development may be, a better solution is needed for structuring the ongoing process of tackling complexity, transgressing borders for that purpose, increasing differentiation but also integrating findings into a body of knowledge. It is about making reasonable choices. And it is about working together and building reasonable structures for this purpose.

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