

# WHAT CAN SOCIAL WORK SEEK AND FIND IN THE AREA OF CIVIL SOCIETY?

## INTRODUCTION

From the changes which have occurred in society roughly over the last four decades, and the associated problems of development (Dahrendorf 1991; Esping-Andersen 2002; Giddens 2004; Keller 2009; Keller 2011) we can select the following phenomena in regard to the topic of this text – (1) people are constrained in their possibilities to ensure their own existence, (2) the globalised market increasingly meets the needs of communities less. We can identify various reactions and recommendations as to this state of society and the related crisis of the welfare state. One of the solution strategies may oscillate between proposals by Rosanvallon (Keller 2009) and Giddens (2004). It means solutions developed in a parallel way in the civil society space, in a space which should be close to social work. In the first part of this text we will try to discuss what in this area seems to be important for social work as an agent of social change. Of main importance is the second part which suggests the possible inter-disciplinary collaboration of social work and social entrepreneurship, which could support the potential of civil society. All this aims at answering the question of whether social work could use ideas of social entrepreneurship, resting exactly on this potential, to achieve its goals. And if so, what form its intervention might take.

## CIVIL SOCIETY POTENTIAL – OPPORTUNITY FOR SOCIAL WORK

From projects or forecasts of further development of the welfare state (Dahrendorf 1991; Esping-Andersen 2002; Giddens 2004; Keller 2009; Keller 2011), we can trace certain hopes for the ability of civil society to actively participate in the processes of solving social problems.

Actions of civil society are usually in opposition to instrumental actions by the state, generally being oriented towards non-materialistic values, to achieve autonomy and self-determination of the participants, in contrast to actions

with a view to gaining influence and power. (Habermas 2000; Müller 2002) Civil society is characterised as a historically formed layer of social life, characterised by the spontaneous self-expression of individuals and their voluntary associations created to implement their interests (Večeřa 1996) which, however, may not always be of positive content. This area of each society acquires importance exactly in the context of the activities of state and market entities (Rakušanová, Stašková 2007). A strict separation of society and the state was included in ideas by Adam Smith (Večeřa 1996; Habermas 2000), forming a basis for theories of political and economic liberalism. Liberalism advocated emancipation of economically enhanced citizenship excluded from political influence against the absolutist and bureaucratic state power. With this orientation, liberalism became one of the fundamental intellectual resources of the theory of a constitutional state and the father of the civil society concept.

In efforts to define the notion of civil society, it is therefore possible to focus primarily on the polarity between it and the state. The concept of civil society is usually associated with active citizenship and participatory democracy (Giddens 2004) According to Giddens (2004), the topic of community is vitally essential for current politics.

Can social work contribute to development of the potential of civil society? Social work is bound to contribute to the sustainable development of society and to promote the participation of its members in this effort. With overall social changes, changes in the relationships among the state, market and life space of people occurred simultaneously, which had an impact on social work, too (Bourdieu 1998; Habermas 1998; Marshall 2009). Although social work is a part of the state control (especially in the field of social policy), thus by implication it depends on the sources of its funding, it increasingly anchors its activities exactly in the area defined by civil society. Elsen (2000) regards it as a completely natural reaction to the stable expectations of society (including the state) when promoting sustainable development, whereas the state progressively limits its responsibility in these activities, moreover allowing the globalised market to restrict social work in its local form. As a result, social work is confronted daily with products of the existing cooperation between the state and the market – with rising unemployment, a new form of spatial/social segregation, a growing level and extension of poverty. In connection herewith, there is a stronger interest in the concept of social capital which is considered a tool to bridge these inequalities (Coleman 1988; Putnam 2000).

Actions of social work related to tackling the social problems of its clients seem to be no longer sufficient to fulfil its goals and expectations in this context. At a time when it is difficult to presuppose the development and degree of influence of the globalised market, as well as the rate of progression of the

government trend of weakening its control and redistribution function, it is more than crystal clear that social work has to change and/or expand its field of activity (Rodger 2000). Elsen (2000) sees only one possibility for social work on how to protect socially defeated people and groups from the fate of unpredictability. It is through the support of their independent economic production with regard to the production of social benefits, i.e. support of their current and potential social capital. The first and most important step according to the author is the interconnection of social work activities with civil society tied to a specific locality and an effort to support the self-organisation of relevant local or interest groups through their empowerment. (Payne 2005; Schuringa 2007; Henderson, Thomas 2007) If we try to summarise the above-stated facts – as for achieving its goals in contemporary society, social work would apparently benefit from deepening its activities on the macro-level. Specifically, by joining forces with organised and unorganised civil society towards greater emancipation of both of them in relation to the state and the market. The conviction of feasibility of this direction is supported by the cognizance that the form of reformatory and empowering social work is by no means new and unsuccessful (see the beginnings of community work as a method of social work (Popple 1995; Hartl 1997, Gojová 2006)).

## **INTERDISCIPLINARY COOPERATION OF SOCIAL WORK IN THE SPACE OF CIVIL SOCIETY**

Elsen (2010) assumes that the outdated model of economy and social aspects needs to be replaced by a local, sustainable solution to problems while being aware of the global risks. Social work should focus its attention in this direction, with its most important contribution consisting of empowering people to participate in the economic, political, cultural and social life of the community. In response to increasing poverty, social exclusion and unemployment, Elsen presents a concept of the local market. It advances active support to the locally anchored economy while simultaneously promoting the social and economic self-organisation of local resources (Lorenz 2005; Chytil 2007).

## **ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN SOCIAL WORK**

Society expects social work to provide protection to its members against social exclusion, or to offer assistance in their reintegration into society. In a situation when employment is considered to be the basic integration ele-

ment, traditional social work gets into certain troubles due to social work itself is not able to create jobs. (Castel 2003; Blokland-Potter, Savage 2008) In the past, however, other institutions were major players in the field of employment (shielded by the institution of the welfare-state) which, due to the modernisation processes of society, lost their strong position or were divested of the resources necessary to meet the given objectives. Social work should respond to the situation, but it seems that for several years, it has been standing helplessly at a crossroads, hesitating on which way to now go. Succumbing to the dictate of economic thinking and joining the market of services, or insisting on its ethical principles and maintaining the traditional rules of providing its services? The crossroads also offers another way – interconnecting the advantages of both mentioned ways. It means using the elements of (social) economic thinking to achieve its goals, while maintaining the ethical principles of social work. Basically, it is advisable to consider this way because in the field of social economy, business initiatives often appear which declare a social aspect but in fact, they rather use it to conceal their real objectives.

One of the main goals of social economy is to become a legitimate part of the liberalised market as well as the civil society, specifically through mobilising citizens to self-help and mutually beneficial activities (Hunčová 2006). Social economy includes social entrepreneurship defined as an economic activity increasing the chance of disadvantaged persons to find a place in the labour market (Dohnalová in Skovajsa 2010). In the specialised literature of social work, we encounter social entrepreneurship e.g. as one of the objectives of community development. (Payne 2005; Henderson, Thomas 2007; Schuringa 2007; Goldsmith, Burke 2011). It seems that social entrepreneurship is becoming an important concept in the field of social work, but not much attention is given on how to anchor this concept in social work and whether it should be used at all. We might even get the impression that social work (traditionally operating mainly in the field of the public and third sector) is reluctant to enter into a partnership with entities of the market sector.

Entrepreneurship is generally seen as a “process of launching new ideas into practice”, entrepreneurship in social work is regarded as a *building of institutions through entrepreneurial thinking which is accompanied by the ethics of social work and is based on the integration of social services, business and skills in respect of working with the public* (Bent-Goodley 2002: 291). Bent-Goodley (2002) implemented research aimed at defining and understanding entrepreneurship in social work as part of the professional equipment of social workers, and based on its results, she proposes a method and a form of introducing “entrepreneurial training” into the curricula of social work studies. Likewise, the American Council on Social Work Education

(Council on Social Work Education) asks educators in social work to respond to the current state of society and to develop trends which would help social work devise interventions addressing social problems. As an innovative response to this need, precisely entrepreneurship in social work is at hand. According to Young (1991: 62), entrepreneurship in social work may include:... *a new kind of service, a new way of delivering existing services, services provided to new clients, a new financial and organisational arrangement of the service provision, or even revitalisation of a programme in the current organisational framework.* Inclusion of the field of entrepreneurship in education in social work can bring more social aspects into economic thinking and vice versa. From the research of Bent-Goodley (2002) specific skills resulted which a social worker should have – being involved in politics, contributing to community development, understanding communities and a wider society in the historical context (Devore, Schlessinger 1999; Popple 1995).

Yet according to Bent-Goodley, social workers have wasted their business opportunities. Unlike other helping professions which teach students to find their economic goals and to establish their own organisation, social workers are hired to provide case management, clinical and counselling services, and administrative support. While they provide this important service to their clients, other professionals create a structure of the organisation, set the note for professional ethics and profit from creating a service. (Harris 2003, Holasová 2009) If social workers are qualified to provide services to address social problems of clients, they may be equally qualified to create opportunities enabling clients to solve these problems on their own. The training of social workers with a view to seeing themselves as producers of entrepreneurship programmes can help them stop the influence of other professionals in dictating the form of practice of social work services. Kirst-Ashman and Hull wrote about entrepreneurship in social work in this sense, too. (Kirst-Ashman, Hull 2014)

## **METHODS OF SOCIAL WORK APPLICABLE IN THE CONTEXT OF SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP<sup>1</sup>**

If we examine the above text in light of social work, it will in principle clearly direct us towards the field of one of its methods – into the realm of community work.

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<sup>1</sup> A part of this chapter was published as a chapter by Gojová, V. of Role of Community Development in the Context of Social Economy (In: Hunčová 2011).

Community work is a summary of methods and techniques used for empowering communities so as to make them capable of self-organising and bridging the gap between excluded groups and the majority of society (Gojová 2006).

There are not only different views on the importance of community work in public space in general, but also in the social work profession. One of them points out that the knowledge and possibilities of community work are becoming increasingly important for the current practice of social work because, with the weakened influence of the welfare state, responsibility is transferred to the local level and thus to community initiatives as well, especially in socially excluded localities/communities (Gojová 2006). The reason of increasing networks among community groups in European countries is the special role of community work in supporting the reconstruction of local economies and social systems, as well as helping to maintain social cohesion (Popple 1995).

Specifically, social economy integrates local resources, including the nonmonetary ones (volunteering, self-help), i.e. the social capital of the community, into economy. A common denominator of social economy entities is their regional focus primarily on the development of local activities and possibilities (the provision of local social services or the creation of jobs in the local community). Likewise, community development emphasises the development of self-help (Popple 1995; Henderson, Thomas 2007).

## **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AS A METHOD OF SOCIAL WORK APPLICABLE IN THE CONTEXT OF SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

One of the identified models of community work, whose central feature is the mobilisation of the community for a change, is community development (Popple 1995). The community development approach originally appeared in the context of support to marginalised localities and people from developing countries (Hartl 1997). It can be seen as both a method and a process. The method of community development can be defined as a way of stimulating and influencing changes in a positive direction (Henderson, Thomas, 2007). The process of community development can be perceived as a change which is happening in communities, and aims to create conditions for solving problems (Schuringa, 2007). Community development activities are mainly connected with work in the local community or a community of interests.

The most common models of community development practice consist of support to local organizations, reducing costs/improving quality, increasing revenues, community entrepreneurship, improving skills and abilities, influencing policies (Popple 1995, Henderson, Thomas 2007, Elsen 2007).

### **COMMUNITY CARE AS A METHOD OF SOCIAL WORK APPLICABLE IN THE CONTEXT OF SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

Community work, focusing on the model of community care, seeks to cultivate social networks and voluntary services in order to achieve the well-being of the population, especially the elderly, persons with disabilities, and in many cases, families with children under 5 years of age (Popple 1995). The community care model concentrates on the development of the concept of self-help towards social needs; it uses paid workers (sometimes referred to as “organizers”) who support people in care and voluntary initiatives.

Traditionally, women are the caregivers in families and communities. Work of this nature is taken for granted, as part of the sphere of privacy and therefore is perceived as irrelevant to the public sphere, which also applies to the notion of citizenship (Kremer 2007). At the same time, caring is not considered as valuable work in the sense of employment (Esping – Andersen 1999). Kremer (2007) extends Marshall’s concept of citizenship (1950) which originally did not include the importance of care for society, which is an essential activity in every society at any given time. In a situation when there is only one person fully burdened with providing care, his/her potential activity on the labour market is fundamentally threatened. In this way, the caregiver becomes economically dependent, which is contrary to the basic condition of full citizenship, i.e. with human activity in the labour market.

Kremer (2007) also reflects the risks which would be brought about by introducing care as a full-value, i.e. paid, activity in the labour market (as required e.g. by Esping-Andersen). Families could pay a special workforce for care or somebody from the family who has been performing these activities (i.e. usually a woman) would be paid for the caregiving activities. But at a price that would still allow somebody in the family to at least be responsible for household care management (even though he/she

does not get paid for it), and e.g. in the case of families with children, knowing that the children need more care than is granted to them through a paid service.

## CONCLUSION

The aim of this text is an attempt to find an answer to the question of whether social work could use ideas of social entrepreneurship, resting on the potential of civil society, to achieve its goals. And if so, what form its intervention might take.

On one side of the debate, there is a requirement for the economisation of social work approaching its services as a subject of business. On the other hand, there is a belief that social work must be preserved in its traditional form, i.e. that maintaining its ethics is incompatible with the introduction of elements of economic thinking. A middle way may be application of ideas of the social entrepreneurship concept to support achieving the objectives of social work.

We have tried to outline this situation in community work, or more specifically in its selected models. Initiatives by professionals and/or laymen to promote community care could constitute a field of the economic activities of community members resulting in the establishment of a social enterprise. Such a social enterprise can be thought of as a “product” of community development. However, it is also possible to imagine the stated levels as the business of providing social care. After all, against accusations of marketisation and privatisation, there stands the promotion of a shift in self-help activities towards the business activities of a community for the purpose of ensuring services provided by its members. This argument is supported by the concept of citizenship which cannot be full-valued if it is associated with the economic dependency of citizens.

Community care is concerned with the meeting of needs and the finding of resources for their procurement. In spite of that, it is rather about the work of employees in care services than about the care of the community for itself. An innovative approach of social work can utilise strategies of community development which may lead to the empowerment and involvement of users and to the shared responsibility of small community groups.

The similarity of the current debate on social entrepreneurship – as one of the ways to overcome the crisis of the welfare state by empowering active citizens in the context of a functioning market – with a growing importance of community work in social work practice – as a way of empowering com-



munities to self-organisation – suggests that these two concepts can be applied together and one can find support for achieving its goals in the other. (comparison shown in Table 1).

**Table 1. Comparison of indicators of the social dimension of social entrepreneurship and principles of community work**

	<b>Social entrepreneurship</b>	<b>Community work</b>
<b>target group</b>	Socially excluded groups/communities/localities, or threatened by social exclusion	Particularly socially excluded/disadvantaged communities/localities
<b>condition</b>	Initiative started by a group/community	Community motivated for change
<b>space</b>	Local/regional level	Local community
<b>decision-making process</b>	Participatory management	Involvement of the community in the whole process, incl. management and decision-making
<b>objective</b>	Benefit for the community	Empowering the community for change

Source: Borzaga, Defourny (2004); Schuringa (2007); Henderson, Thomas (2007), modified by the author.

If we want to identify the relationship of social entrepreneurship and social work in general, in specialised literature we can observe a multitude of perceptions of the relationship of social entrepreneurship and social work, or social services, dependent on the discourse in which the individual authors operate:

**1. Social entrepreneurship with social work:**

- social entrepreneurship as a tool for financing social work services and thus a tool for its sustainability – the field of social work is equated with the field of social services (Dohnalová 2009; Krajčík, Janák 2012; Šebestová 2012);
- social entrepreneurship as a “trendy” business model<sup>2</sup> (i.e. corporate social responsibility, philanthropy etc.) (Kuldová 2010, Dizdarevič in Skovajsa 2010).

**2. Social entrepreneurship in social work:**

- social entrepreneurship as a means for achieving the integration objectives of social work (Campfens, 2006);

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<sup>2</sup> It is not always necessarily about entrepreneurship with social work, but if we start from an objective declared by such business – achieving social change, then we can include this concept of social entrepreneurship here.

- social entrepreneurship as a reaction of social work to the crisis of the welfare state and the diminishing resources of state financial support to social work services (Rodger 2000; Elsen 2007);
- social entrepreneurship as specialised social work for the development of local communities (Elsen 2007; Henderson, Thomas 2007; Schuringa 2007).

The connection of social work and social entrepreneurship should consist of the implementation of activities aimed at the integration of society, or the integration of socially disadvantaged people, or people threatened with being socially disadvantaged into society<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> A theoretical discussion of the integration concept suggests that it is advisable to view this relationship from Lockwood's (alternatively Luhman's) (in: Zollschan, Hirsch 1964) perspective of social integration (inclusion) and system integration (integration).

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### Summary

In the first part of this text we will try to discuss what in this area seems to be important for social work as an agent of social change. Of main importance is the second part which suggests the possible inter-disciplinary collaboration of social work and social entrepreneurship, which could support the potential of civil society. All this aims at answering the question of whether social work could use ideas of social entrepreneurship, resting exactly on this potential, to achieve its goals. And if so, what form its intervention might take.

**Key words:** civil society, social inclusion, social work