

**Lively Internationality – a quality characteristic of social work**  
**- seen by the example of the Council of International Fellowship (C.I.F.) -**  
**- a report from the C.I.F. programme with New Zealand 2016 -**

International conferences are a classic forum not only in politics and business, but far more in the field of science in order to establish fundamental definitions and agreements. In social work, the conferences of IFSW (International Federation of Social Work) and of IASSW (International Association of Schools of Social Work) have been of interest<sup>1</sup> since the 30s of the last century. For teaching and science in social work, the developments of definitions since the 1980s have resulted to the fact, among other things, not only that the self-confidence of the subject has strengthened and has become a force unto itself, but much more that a global self-perception of science and profession has become apparent. Especially with respect to the struggle for the object area of the subject, the clear offer of definitions was helpful to survive the very frequent colonisation attempts by the so-called reference sciences<sup>2</sup>. In “Forum sozial 2 / 2014” Mrs Gabriele Stark-Angermeier demonstrated clearly that since the IFSW delegates meeting in Salvador 2008 the aspect of “indigenous knowledge” has been added to the struggle for definitions. Thus, the last sentence of the presently valid definition (see: <http://www.dbsh.de/beruf/definition-der-sozialen-arbeit.html>) reads as follows: “Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing.”

In the course of my long service as a lecturer in social work, it happened rarely that a definition caught my attention; after all, what was indicated by the concept of “indigenous knowledge” ? Did this apply for cultures only, in which there were “indigenous people” ? How does this concept get into a globally valid definition for scientific use pending practical application actively ? Which force and movement is concealed behind the concept ?

The note by Mrs Stark-Angermeier, that the influence of the Australian social workers had inspired the inclusion, evoked curiosity.

The youth welfare literature indicates that the family conference approach originating in Australia and New Zealand reached Germany in the 1990s, and was understood and implemented here in particular as a network-oriented diagnostic model.

The New Zealand Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act of 1st November 1989 and the help plans of the FGC were translated by Frank Früchtel and Wolfgang Budde in [http://www.familienrat-fgc.de/ges\\_grund\\_neuseeland.html](http://www.familienrat-fgc.de/ges_grund_neuseeland.html), and presented to a wider professional audience for the first time in Berlin in June 2006 within the framework of the 3rd Specialist-Policy Discourse / Berlin Youth Welfare Service. During the discourse the family conference was mentioned as a network-oriented help plan process. Family groups are motivated and activated to recognise “their competences and resources” and to introduce an own help network. In this way, they turn into real actors in the help plan. They can share their experiences, habits and wishes directly and unfiltered, and can work out solutions themselves. The families are no longer objects of help, but experience that they themselves and their environment have strengths which they can provide to improve the situation. Feelings of powerlessness and helplessness, which frequently are an important part of the problem, can be replaced by a more positive self-awareness in this way. By means of the family

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<sup>1</sup> The global IFSW was newly established in 1959 in Munich as successor organisation of “International Permanent Secretariat of Social Workers”, which was founded in 1932 in the USA (see: Constitution of the international Federation of Social Workers; source: <http://ifsw.org/what-we-do/governance/constitution-and-by-laws/>).

<sup>2</sup> One remark in this respect: Since 2013 the author has been retired from professorship, and thus is rather more an “outside” observer; however, it seems (subjectively) that in revisions of present study concepts the so-called reference sciences have been gaining more influence in the setup of curricula. The acceptance of social work as an academic field of science does appear to be obvious by any means.

conference, clients in help procedures turn into citizens again who take their lives into their own hands again (see above). It is hoped that families' need for help is understood anew in this way.

In essence, a family conference is about giving an active role in special life situations to persons, who are related to another – either as a family, a chosen family or in another form of togetherness. This means for persons and their social network that they have the chance of discovering own resources and to render them available to the community and/or for one another. This new and further view provided the youth welfare service with important stimuli to understand itself network-oriented and sociospatial.

With this understanding of the family conference process, I replied to the call for tender which invited the exchange of expertise with the Council of International Fellowship (CIF) for New Zealand. In the meantime, C.I.F.<sup>3</sup> has become a worldwide association for the exchange of specialists in social fields in the widest sense; in the call for tender I saw the opportunity of getting an insight into processes of social work, teaching and theory development, of talking to New Zealand colleagues about their work, and of getting to know them locally in attendance in parts. In addition, there was also the chance of living together with a local partner in his family for some weeks.

The journey to “down under” from a global point of view world”. After all, there is no is further away from there has been an absolute with young Germans for more or less permanently Germans on the islands who with a “Work and Travel” out and about as so-called organic farms.



CIF group with NZ attendant Sue

was not only very long, but led “to the other end of the other spot in the world that Germany. And, in addition, “hype” about New Zealand many years, and indeed you will meet young travel around for a year visa. Frequently they are “woofers” (working on

Our CIF group consisted of two women from Finland, one from Sweden, one from Estonia, one from Nepal, and me the only male person and from Germany. As a retired professor, I pulled the average age up quite a bit.

The project gave me the opportunity of getting know the study on the Bachelor of Social Work level in Auckland and New Plymouth as well as a wide range of social-work fields of action.

The studies of social work, sometimes also referred to as “social practice”, take place on a university level as well as on a non-university level in so-called Unitec institutes which call themselves Polytechnics.

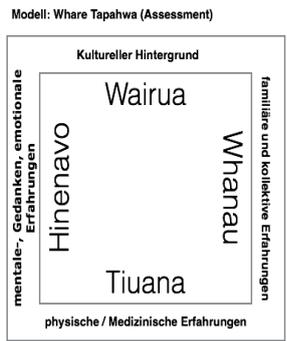
They are comparable with German technical colleges, but not identical. I was able visit the Unitec University in Auckland and New Plymouth, and the Social Work Department in Dunedan City. The biggest difference to our known education, also in contrast to the US versions, is the massive emphasis of the indigenous approach.

<sup>3</sup> From German-language „Wikipedia“: The origin goes back to 1954 when the US Secretary of State Henry B. Ollendorf was sent to Germany within the framework of the re-education programme in order to run course for youth leaders and social workers. The Youth Ministry in Bonn supported him. In 1956, the said together with the Fullbright Commission gave the travelling scholarship to the German participants for study contract in the USA. At a later point into time the programme was extended to other countries. The Cleveland International Program (as from 1965 Council of International Programs for Youth and Social Workers Federation with its headquarters in Cleveland (Ohio) was born. In 1958, the German federal government invited for the first time American social workers to Germany. In 1960, the Cleveland International Fellowship (CIF) was founded in Hamburg, which at a later point in time was changed to the Council of International Fellowship. The association was registered at the District Court of Bonn.

In this respect, the orientation is of special importance during assessment. The coverage of the living conditions is oriented very much to a background of the Maori culture, even when there are only a few links to the Maori culture. This is explained on the grounds that the consideration is based on the special living environments of the islands. Moreover, under the perspective of a life together, a kind of “dominant Maori culture” is accepted. Thus, “being Maori” depends less on the real ethnic inheritance, but rather on the individual and collective consciousness of being Maori. On account of the very different immigrations, the culture and lifestyle in New Zealand in total is a culture of immigration, whereby the Maoris are granted the privilege of the “first group”<sup>4</sup>. In the historic understanding of the relationship between the different ethnic groups, the historic Treaty of Waitangi (1840) plays a central role, in which the rights and obligations of the groups amongst each other were regulated.<sup>5</sup>



The assessment process is explained by two female Maori welfare workers.



The acceptance of Maori tradition as a basis for the methodical orientation in social work has effect right into the special forms of youth welfare, such as in “outward-bound education”, in which deviant young people experience in

camps (marae) the attachment to family in a specific landscape. The experience of imparted landscape (pitiga) gained by generations shall not be passed on in an individual sense of security but in the roots of the group and tribe. The family tradition is integrated and obligated in the help process.

These principals are transmitted to community work as well. The intensive community development embeds in the immigration culture in the communal development process; the socio-political anchoring is considered as common task. The service range of the so-called independent institutions is compared by means of an EDP-assisted process and is put up for discussion during the community meetings (marae). In the process competition should be avoided and cooperation shall be encouraged.

The four-week CIF programme gave us the opportunity of living with colleagues and their families for twelve days each in two locations. The open friendly naturalness with which we were welcomed and hosted did not only make us very thankful and touched but also permitted us to experience at the other end of the world that social work is considered a very significant social investment. The social development in a so-called post-modern world is definitely very similar to ours, however the relaxed manner and the emphasis that social work is what supports and shapes the social consensus, astonishes frequently.



You can do this way as well

In Europe, New Zealand is known to us often enough only from “Lord of the Rings” where the

<sup>4</sup> The settlement history of New Zealand is straight forward. It has been defined that the first boats (Maori: waka) from the Polynesian sea area arrived in the 13th century. The European immigrations took place as from the 17th century (Abel Tasman is considered the discoverer in 1642, who however has never put foot on the islands James Cook made the first topographical and nautical maps of the islands and with him the colonisation started by the British Empire. Thus, New Zealand has no “aboriginal people” (as opposed to Australia), i.e. they are all immigrants.

<sup>5</sup> The Treaty of Waitangi (1840) is an agreement between the British Crown and Maori chieftains. The document introduced the British law in New Zealand, and at the same time gave the Maori the authority and determination over their land and their culture. Up to this day, this Treaty is accepted the constituent document of New Zealand, and is considered as historic example of a mediative process, in which the interests of the individual groups and tribes are described and legally drawn up. The Treaty has been written and valid in English and Maori language. There are still interpretation problems due to different interpretations of legal concepts. As not all Maori tribes have agreed to the Treaty, political arguments about the justice of the Treaty occur again and again.

strange “Hobbit” permits a quaint naturalness to appear. The breath-taking nature and the friendly calm of the “Kiwi” have made the “excursion” to the social work of “Down Under” enchanted and precious.

For this reason, a very cordial “Thank you” at this point, and respect that even during the severe earthquake at the beginning of November we were told with a smile: “It’s the usual shakin’ “.