Disciplinary Borders and Borrowings: Social Work Knowledge and its Social Reach, a Historical Perspective.

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1 Disciplinary boundaries, identity and social reach

The relevance of outside boundaries and borrowings is one entry point into a discussion on the nature of a discipline and the identity of a field. The activities at the borders of a field are concrete manifestations of movements in knowledge in the academic sense (academic location and mandate), and express ways in which members of the field relate to broader social relations (responsiveness and agency in the societal order of relations.)

Moreover, borders are not simply established in relation to external disciplines to which an inside core of a field adhere with a particular coherence. The boundaries and borrowings from outside disciplines and practices reflect movements from within the field – the constant repositioning of agents and spheres of influence, and of values being pursued –such that there is a parallel between the outside boundaries and the partitions that exist inside the field: borders without and borders within. Both types of borders discriminate between types of knowledge, horizons, disciplinary subcultures, and the accompanying sets of differentiated practices. Separate conferences, networks and journals are so many indicators of partitions within a field. The situation is far from static. It is rather a continuous struggle for position and influence, for shaping the content and the direction of the field, for its legitimacy and its claims (Bourdieu 1994; 2001).

Thus the formation, development, and current standing of a disciplinary field can be traced by observing the activities it entertains at its borders. The shift in boundaries is very informative. It is this aspect that I am focusing on.

This article is a reworking of a presentation given at the German education conference in Osnabrück in March 2012. This paper expands what was then posed as a set of questions, supported by vignettes of a few historical records. It is an opportunity to examine old materials in a new light. By turning to history we can examine our present afresh.

The thesis put forward is that social work has had a phased history of alternating expansion and contraction of its knowledge base. Its disciplinary borders have shifted with time. Shifts occur with changes in knowledge from within the discipline, and very much from broader scholarly influences. But importantly, in an applied discipline, these knowledge changes are very much shaped by economic, social, and political conditions of societies (Lorenz2008; Maurer 2003; Reisch& Andrews2001), and in turn, knowledge constraints and possibilities shape the many responses to these changed conditions.

The questions posed are: How was knowledge circumscribed? What activities of border crossing and borrowings were conducted? In other words, how were social work boundaries

defined, the nature of the academic legacy it took from, the *knowledge* and *social reach* it aimed at? What justifications and claims were made?

To start to address these questions, I have chosen to examine two disciplinary extensions of social work that may seem distant borders and that appear as polar opposites: the relations between social work and (1) political economy; and (2) the arts. Selected initially as two separate problematics, social work is viewed in relation to two entities that seem at first blush to be localized in distant realms from one another. As I came to delve into the material and the logic of the border conversations, I came to see a common thread that will become more evident as the paper develops. The process has been one of surprises accompanied by a number of bafflements.

A caveat is in order: This article is limited to the North-American context, to Canada, the U.S. and to links made with Britain. This is in no way meant to serve as a template for social work or for social pedagogy more generally. The intent is a limited one, to provide a perspective onto a set of local social work histories. This paper is an example of a close examination of local material and circumstances with a view to looking at past practices and past struggles in order to question and illuminate the present. The present does not repeat the past, but there are echoes and resonance and new paths taken. We will revisit this question in the concluding section of the article.

2 Social Work, political economy and the social question

I have looked for empirical beginnings that constitute marker events in a field's formation. Like cornerstones, such acts of institutionalized beginnings are often accompanied by formal statements of intent, of vision, claims to legitimacy and stated knowledge horizon. In order to ground the discussion, I have focused on three sets of institutional practices: university education, research endeavors, and social work publication. They are distinct sets of practices but I also hope to show that they flow from one another.

The University of Toronto established the first department of social work in Canada, as the department of social service, in 1914. The early annual reports submitted to the university administration are informative, as is the organizational structure under which the department was created, and the disciplinary background of its first directors.

The 1915-1916 annual report, addressed to the university community, presented the aims and horizon of the new department. The document spoke to the symbolic significance of creating the first academic social work program in the *Dominion of Canada* that was to be comparable to similar initiatives in other *modern* nations. References were made to the U.K. and the U.S. The new School of social work at the University of Toronto aimed to foster its own cadre of leaders and develop its expertise, and would no longer need to rely on importing leaders from other countries. One of the defining roles of the School thus lay in the building of the nation. To set this nationalistic aim in context, the Canadian Confederation dates back to 1867. In 1914, Canada was still a young political entity. The School was further established at the time of the international conflagration of World War I.

The student body consisted of two groups that were, initially, of equal numeric strength: paid social workers, and volunteers in philanthropy. The image of these volunteers was a highly valued one, somewhat at odds with the image we may hold today. In this new School, the philanthropic volunteers were thought of as civic leaders who were to actively promote new, progressive legislation. Thus, a second function of the School as a university-based program

was to actively shape the larger societal landscape through its professorial body, and through the establishment of a cadre of social leaders. At the time, the universities catered to a small number of elite students, and became more democratic only in the 1960s. In the early 20th century, the targeted volunteers and paid staff joined, in effect, an elite contingent.

The post-War 1918-1919 report no longer contained a nationalistic statement and instead detailed the curriculum offerings of the department. Its newly appointed Acting director, Robert Morrison MacIver, a sociologist and political scientist, was a senior member of the department of political economy (Burke 1996; Graham 1996). Originally from Scotland, MacIver had been trained at the London School of Economics, itself linked to the Settlement House movement and to Fabian social reform. An influential figure, MacIver was Vice-Chairman of the Canada War-Labour Board in 1917-1918. Taking on this new position, the director instigated a structured social work curriculum. Students were to be instructed in history, political economy (through courses in sociology and economics) and took a course in philosophy, specifically in social ethics. This was the core of the course-based instruction. A number of instructors came from the Settlement House movement. In addition to the core courses, the curriculum was comprised of fieldwork. This dual structure was borrowed explicitly from the professional field of medical training. Moreover, the School established an advanced practice specialization in medical social service. What was considered core learning is quite striking.

In 1922, with MacIver promoted to the directorship of the political economy department, J.A. Dale took over as the head of the School of social work until 1927. Dale pursued the curriculum direction developed by his predecessor. While some of the philosophy courses were expanded, MacIver continued to teach two courses in economics in the department (Burke 1996) throughout that period. To put the academic culture in context, the department of political economy was a central academic unit at the university at the time, in alignment with the British university system (Graham 1996). The disciplines of economics, sociology and social work did not exist on their own but were subdivisions of political economy. The substantive areas of knowledge prioritized by this dominant discipline were unemployment, labour conditions, and housing. Thus, the early School of Social Work at the University of Toronto was a child of political economy.

A comparable examination of the early Schools of social work in the U.S. shows that they were "sites of contention" (Shoemaker 1998). Serious controversies arose and festered about the type of auspices under which the schools were to be created; whether university-based or not; and the extent of theoretical vs. applied aspects of the education (Shoemaker 1998). A case in point, the School for Social Workers in Boston was created ten years earlier, in 1904, through the initiative of the Boston United Charities and under the joint auspices of the Women's College of Simmons and of Harvard University. This is an intriguing case. The School's first director, Jeffrey Brackett, was a graduate of Harvard with long-standing connections to the Charities organizations (Channing 1954). This unexpected academic partnership was a result of his sustained initiative. Brackett held academic positions in the two institutions. At Simmons, he was the "Professor of the Theory and Practice of Philanthropic Work," while Harvard appointed him "Instructor in Charity, Public Aid, and Corrections" (Channing, ibid). The collaboration between the two institutions of higher learning lasted twelve years, but was never very strong. In 1916, Harvard broke away, in large part because of the weaker academic commitment of the School with its greater emphasis in field education. Similar struggles took place in the Schools of social work in New York, Chicago, and Michigan.

Staying within the frame of this one case, a review of the history of the Boston School indicates that it was one among four Schools that received a grant from the Russell Sage Foundation to open a course in *social investigation*. Thus, "all second-year students were required to take 'Methods of Social Inquiry,' a series of lectures which covered the work of LePlay, Charles Booth, and community surveys, while subjects for special study were printed in the catalogue" (Channing 1954: 439). The initial connection with Harvard, and the support from the Russell Sage Foundation (itself established in 1907) point to the possibility of a type of knowledge that closely articulated applied considerations with academic disciplines. We need to further consider the nature and influence of such social research endeavours.

The Russell Sage Foundation was established to foster social science and social reform (O'Connor 2007). Russell Sage, in the context of an American privately funded system of education and research, was a major funder of the first large American survey of an industrial city, the Pittsburgh Survey, which was inspired by Charles Booth's survey of the working class neighbourhoods of London, conducted between 1886 and 1903 (*Life and Labour of the People in London*). The Pittsburgh study combined a house-by-house survey with thematic investigations into Women and the Trades; the Steel Workers; Homestead: The Households of a Mill Town; and Work-Accidents and the Law (Zimbalist 1977:151).

The director of the project, Paul Underwood Kellogg, was a member of the editorial committee of *Charities and Commons*, the major social work publication at the time. The journal was the instigator of the study and served to disseminate its results. When Kellogg was appointed its senior editor in recognition of his immense work, he immediately changed the name of the journal to *The Survey*(Chambers 1981). This symbolic renaming of a social work publication is reflective of the popularity of *the survey movement* (Zimbalist 1977) as a socially progressive approach (Chambers 1981), which had its counterpart in Canada, though with more modest, localized means, and that was further shaped by religious values (Hunt2002). The survey approach was widely adopted by settlement houses and by the umbrella organizations of social services that aimed to document local needs. Just as Booth's survey had had an enormous influence in social policy in Britain, so did The Pittsburgh survey in the U.S. where it was instrumental in bringing about protective legislation of work conditions (Zimbalist 1977).

This state of ideas did not last. An important turn in social work knowledge took place in the U.S. a few years later. This turn was materialized by the sharp contrast in orientation between the first Pittsburgh survey and the subsequent, 1934-1938, Social Study of Pittsburgh, otherwise known as the Second Pittsburgh Survey. The latter was led by Philip Klein, a professor at the New York School of Social Work (Zimbalist 1977). Linked to the growing professionalization of social work, and coming out of the Depression, this second study no longer focused on the social question, i.e., the needs and living conditions of the community population, but concentrated instead on the needs and resources of a growing array of social service agencies. This was a move away from a broader exploration of social issues for social change to assessing the coherence, relevance, and effectiveness of the social service sector. The social needs of the period were treated in a cursory manner and became contextual information in the study's final report. This shift in professional academic culture reflected political changes at large, and by 1950, an intensive casework orientation further channelled the impetus of social work away from political economy. This major shift in the nature of knowledge and the social reach of the discipline in that period can be found, similarly, in the changing fortune and direction of the first academic journal of social work published in Chicago, the *Social Service Review* (Shoemaker 1998).

There have been other periods in the history of social work during which the broader political economic questions became central in the discipline in North America (Reisch& Andrews 2001). This is a far from linear development. However, thinking of the present time by contrast to this earlier period, we are today witnessing a split in the training of direct line staff from the training of policy makers, or planners. This split was prevalent for many years within a number of schools, which held in their midst two distinct groups of scholars operating in a parallel fashion, if not as polarized groups, who drew upon distinct sources of knowledge. In Canada, the internal disciplinary splits tended to seek outside legitimation respectively from the U.S. in clinical work, and from the U.K. in the policy arena. Such branching offs are indicative of profound cultural differences. In a number of cases, currently, the internal partitions have turned into external boundaries. New policy institutes exist today, which draw policy-oriented scholars away from social work. The London School of Economics has continued to champion social policy research, which was the core of its early program, but it has shut down its social work department. In the U.K., more generally, a number of formerly joint social work and social policy departments have been severed into separate academic units.

We now move on to other practices of knowledge taken up in early social work: the visual representation of knowledge, documentary photography, and the arts.

3 Visualizing the social question, from graphics to documentary photography

The social work journal *The Survey* was intended as a tool for shaping an active social citizenship. In its heydays it had a regular circulation of 25,000 readers (Chambers 1981). The publication was aimed at a dual audience. Professional social workers were the core of the readership, and beyond them, an informed wide audience. In this perspective, social workers were not thought of as a separate, or distant entity. Instead, they were thought of as active members and leaders of the broader society who were to be informed, and to take a prominent part in the deliberations on the directions that their society was to take. This is also the period when the leading figures in the discipline held senior public positions and played significant roles in shaping public policy. The format and aim of *The Survey* thus emphasized knowledge for public engagement and mobilization.

The *Survey Graphic*, initially a monthly supplement to the *Survey,* was started by the editor, Paul Kellogg, in 1921 to make room for visual representations of complex social information. The *Survey Graphic* made that knowledge accessible, attractive, and easily understandable. The format was very successful and the *Survey Graphic* became a stand-alone publication in 1933, and it ran until 1952.I draw upon the separate inaugural issue of 1933 for this analysis. The year is not an insignificant marker: it is at mid-point in the Depression years, with the rise of fascism and Nazism, and the growing polarization that was to lead to the Cold War.

The January 1933 volume opened with the report of the U.S. Presidential Task Force on Social Trends and provided a sweeping look unto the social changes that have taken place between 1900 and the 1930s, clustered around the following headlines: "Who We Are," "What We Do," "What We Have," and "What We Think." The articles included numerous graphs, charts, and maps of nation-wide demographic, economic and social trends over that period, providing data on age, ethnicity, birth and mortality rates; also, agricultural production, manufacturing, and labour statistics; secular and religious orientations. It was the kind of information that professionals and a general public could relate to.

I was intrigued by the sustained presence of graphs. Otto Neurath, Austrian philosopher of science, sociologist, and political economist, was one of the influential minds behind graphic representation of data. A strong believer in visual education, he held the view that by using simplified symbols (pictograms or icons), viewers could, at a glance, understand complex information regardless of their education. Before he fled Austria in 1934, Neurath was the founding director of the city's Social and Economic Museum (The *Gesellschafts-und Wirtschaftsmuseum*), a public educational institution, financed by the social democratic municipality of Vienna, and created to render social and economic information accessible to city residents. The display of information relied heavily on visual means. Pictorial charts could be produced in multiple copies and served both permanent and travelling exhibitions. The museum innovated with interactive models and experimented with animated films. In brief, this was a social citizenship building institution.

These principles were adopted in the *Survey Graphic,* and several of Neurath's ideas illustrated with numerous examples appeared in the pages of the journal, and in the September 1933 issue. What is striking for a reader today is the combination of sweeping overviews of major social questions, combined with the playfulness and accessibility of the charts, pies, maps and tables. The idea of visually representing mathematical data was later developed by Edward Tufte (1983). In the earlier instance of the *Survey Graphic*, the communicability of economic, social and political information was meant to foster action, linking expert knowledge to a broad public and to policy making. The approach to establish links between expert and lay constituencies continues to be greatly relevant today.

4 Documentary photography and social work

In addition to the graphic representation of social data, the *Survey Graphic* included quality photographs taken by professional photographers, many of whom were highly established. This was no lay venture. The inclusion of professional photographs was influenced by the wide appeal of photojournalism found in popular magazines (such as *Life*)that were multiplying at the time. The photographs present in the *Survey Graphic* were meant to document social realities. According to Peter Szto (2008), social workers held a deep commitment to documenting conditions of poverty during the Progressive Era (1880-1920), thus the fields of social photography and social work became close allies (Finnegan 2003). As part of a broader movement, social workers, psychiatrists, and the police were equally invested in this new technology, based on their common belief in the *truth-value* of the photograph (Tagg 1988). A photographic image held the promise to provide a faithful witnessing of social life. Visual imagery was a persuasive yet realistic means to convey the physical, emotional, and symbolic dimensions of the everyday. Such documentary images helped lay down the groundwork for social reform.

Lewis Hine, the most prolific photographer of the period, was on the payroll of the *Survey Graphic*. Throughout the 1920s and into the 1930s, he produced photographic portraits of men, women and children at work that were powerful expressions of everyday life, as contemporary curator, Julia Dolan, argued in "Lewis Hine, the Machine Age, and the Aesthetics of Labor/The Survey Graphic Work Portraits" (Dolan 2008):

Many artists working in the United States who were influenced by modern form displayed so prominently at Stieglitz's gallery, the Armory Show of 1913, or in the developing European movements that focused on industry, produced machine-centered or -inspired imagery. […] Hine was the first, however, to systematically depict workers as integral, thinking elements of their industrial environments. […] On June 20, 1921, Hine wrote to Kellogg about his

developing industrial vision: "I have just finished a series of photographs showing the Human Side of The System, (Pennsylvania),- the very best thing I have ever done.

According to Dolan, although Hine was inspired from European artists such as Fernand Léger who depicted modernity, the machine, and industrial work, whereas Léger kept an abstract quality to the figures in his compositions, the photos by Hine bring back the individual look and posture at work that maintains the link between people and things. Hine was given a lot of leeway with his photographs in *The Survey Graphic*. His images and choice of captions were displayed without commentary. They 'spoke for themselves'. The double-page composition entitled *Through the Threads* in the April issue of volume 22 (1933) depicted women, men and children working in the textile factory. Each image preserved the personality and the dignity of the workers though they were shown as part of a larger work arrangement. Hine's photographs were respectful and moving pictures. These were not demonstrations of despair, or typical representations of 'the fallen,' or the marginalized, unlike many images shown in charity work (Rose 2008). Instead, these portraits showed people whose postures demonstrated the part they took in society. There was both a human stance and a social stance in the images.

Hine's work was, in his own words, *interpretive photography* (Dolan 2008) in which the border between social documentary as fact and photography as art was bridged through the composition and delicate lighting of the images. Hine's photos were not solely based on the demonstration of an idea. Hine was simultaneously a social documentarist and an artist whose evocative and beautiful work was far from instrumental. Yet, or because of this combination, his work roused social groups to change working conditions and institute new protective legislation.

At about the same time in Toronto, its first city photographer, Arthur Goss was commissioned to document the engineering achievements for the City Planning department, to create a photographic record of the slum conditions, and the sports and recreational parks for the Department of Health, and to document the work of public health nurses and the activities that children, youth and parents were engaged in at the Settlement Houses. Goss's practice, not unlike that of Hine, extended well beyond technical versatility. Goss was a member of the Toronto photography club, and worked with light, structure, and mood. A number of his documentary pictures are arresting because of the sensitive play of lines, textures and contrasts(Rodgers 2004). Some of his photographs of children in the city conveyed multiple meanings of uncertainty, joy, poverty, and gracefulness. They were deeply respectful. This photographic work was much more open-ended as to its intent. A beginning analysis into the multiple connotations of some Goss's images is in process (Winckler, Chambon &Lightman, in preparation).

Today, in light of contemporary theories into cultural images and the visual turn, we no longer think of documentary photography as simply the precise rendering of an accurate truth, but consider such images as the result of a inflected production and anticipated reception, as a form of interaction between the creator of the image and its audience, further shaped by the institutional context of its making. The perspective of the photographer and that of the viewer are also perceived as codes, which take on new meanings as the pictures circulate and take on different values in given contexts (Edwards 2009; Schwarts 2000).

5 Social work and the arts

The *Survey Graphic* also included representations of major art works, sculpture, painting, drawings, and lithographs that were featured in The Metropolitan Museum, the Whitney Museum of Modern Art, and in smaller art galleries. The name of the artist was indicated in each caption, as was the museum where the work was displayed. These works, like those of the graphic representation of statistical data, or the documentary photographs, referred to modernity, to industry, and also to humankind. In the 1933 volume alone, we find two reproductions of paintings by Edward Hopper from the Metropolitan Museum (August issue, pp. 410-411); two large Murals by Diego Rivera, the "Panorama of Industry" in the March issue was taken from the Detroit Institute of Arts(pp. 159-160), the other in October(p. 490) was part of a panel in progress "The Contest between Government and Individual Rights" that Rivera was in the process of painting for the New Workers' School in New York at the time of the publication. Accompanying an article by Karl A. Meninger M.D., on "The Origins and Masques of Fear" in the April issue, was a reproduction of a somber sculpture made by Auguste Rodin. These works do not merely have an illustrative value, in a tautological repetition of the written message. Instead they operate as a discourse in its own terms. This is what makes their appearance formidable. The serious consideration of art works in this social work journal was intended as a source of inspiration, an instrument of the larger aims of social work knowledge, in other words, as an expression of social ethics.

This form of knowledge production and circulation was not unique but was part of a more general trend. The co-founder of Hull House, Ellen Gates Starr, whose activity focused largely on industrial working conditions, wrote on the commitment to art for working people that prevailed at Hull House in the *Hull House Maps and Papers*, originally published in 1895. Her words suggested an edificatory (moral as well as educational) function of art. To back her argument, she cited the writings of Horsfall in the U.K., such as „Art in Large Towns" and "The Work of the Manchester Art Museum." As discussed by cultural historian, Seth Koven (1994),the Whitechapel Fine Art Loan Exhibition, which opened in 1881, showed the works of contemporary artists in London's East End without a fee, and with the gallery open on Sundays, to make it more accessible.

Museums generally were thought of as practices of citizenship (Duncan1991).The presence of art works was intended as a bridge across the social divides by the supporters of the Settlement Houses in Britain. "The Barnetts [who established Toybee Hall] believed that great art transcended social divisions and created a pool of shared emotions, thoughts, and sensations that would tie all men and women together" (Koven, 1994:27). Attendance reached 10,000 in 1881 and above 70,000 in 1892 and the temporary gallery became a permanent institution. Further extending the scope of the exhibits: "The leaders of the gallery made loans of high-quality reproductions […] available to poor people, and exhibitions of work by local artists and children from the local Board (publicly funded) schools. In this way, East Enders were recognized as producers of art, not just consumers" (Koven1994:43).

Similarly in Toronto, some of the photographs of the Toronto Settlement Houses taken by Arthur Goss showed young people engaged in art activities, from playing musical instruments to learning to draw (City of Toronto Archives, digital exhibit, Fall 2011). St. Christopher House, one of the leading Settlement Houses in Toronto, founded in 1912, had a music room with professional instruments and a number of the children trained there became professional musicians. That music room exists to this day.

Linking past and present, the maquette of a group of sculptures, *Helping Hands*, created by contemporary artist, Louise Bourgeois, to commemorate Jane Addams, was unveiled in September 2012as the centre piece in one of the rooms at the Hull House Museum. Besides the installation, the room contained the recreated soundscape of the neighbourhood of Hull House from the 1930s. Past and present cohabit comfortably in that space: the children's voices and the sculpture of hands that symbolized the work at Hull House and the spirit of the project.

In contemporary social work, a lot of activity is taking place at the moment at the border of social work and the arts. Such practices are thought as totally innovative, and are presented as a new development in the field. Yes and no. A number of social work practitioners are turning to the arts. Participatory research and community based knowledge formation have made space for the arts from the elicitation of knowledge to the stage of knowledge translation (e.g. Chambon 2009 for a review; more recently Crath 2012 and Huss 2012). And a small number of scholars have turned to the works made by artists to problematize social questions, interrogate the viewer, and open up windows of sensitive knowledge (e.g. Chambon 2008; Chambon & Irving 2005; Philipps 2007; Philipps&Bellinger2011.)

6   Conclusion

This exploration has hopefully shown that social work, as a new discipline, positioned itself in relation to other academic fields of influence. In Toronto, as in Britain, the academic discipline of influence was political economy, which served as an umbrella for social reform, and for the social reach that social work sought. Social work and sociology were closely aligned in the U.S. as Ian Shaw has shown in discussing the close relation that existed between the Chicago School of sociology and academic social work (Shaw 2012; also Shoemaker 1998).

The examination of research and publications showed the centrality of the survey movement, which in itself is not a new finding. However, the survey movement was found to be a more complex enterprise than is given credit for nowadays, when we tend to equate scientific modernism with a neutrally positioned expression of the rational scientific mind (Webb 2007). In Foucauldian terms, a means to survey (to surveil or oversee) the population can also be put to use in alternate ways. In reading these early materials, we were struck by the enthusiastic nature of the survey enterprise as a grounded way to find out about people's daily lives (door to door canvassing), at a time of frustration with the social gap, and with little knowledge of its daily manifestations. This is why Settlement Houses adopted the survey movement easily, as an activity about neighbours. For it was about taking the social question and turning it firstly into the problem experienced by real people living in real neighbourhoods. Secondly, it was about translating this knowledge into measures for legislating change. This was an ambitious project where knowledge was linked to authority positions and also to influence. Today, the evidence-based policy perspective on housing has picked up this trend. Most of the literature on evidence-based inquiry is about the measurement of practice. This split is reminiscent of the one we noted in the switch from the first to the second Pittsburgh Survey. What is worth underlining in the historical review is that the social, political reach of social work as a discipline was one of a formidable actor in society.

The visual dimension of knowledge, which we tend to think as something recent, a product of the internet and the abundance of visual media, can be traced to earlier manifestations, linked in part to the democratisation of knowledge in a social reform perspective, and to the

enthusiastic adoption of new technology, which also then greatly shaped public media. We showed a continuum between the graphic representation of data, the inclusion of documentary photographs and their artistic dimension, and the activities linked to art works, to artists, and to community art practices. These visual practices all converged into a social ethics.

Conceptually, the two apparently antinomial disciplinary borders that social work crossed at the time with political economy on one hand, and with the arts on the other, can be thought in a new light as a single cluster. Though there were different individuals who typically crossed the border into political economy or into the arts, a number of initiatives combined both arenas. The two apparently disparate border activities of early social work were shown to have converged. Though the disciplinary entities are quite distant from one another, it is the movement of knowledge, the kind of intent and shaping that linked them to social reform, in a particular configuration of society, that made social work a powerful agent in societal terms. The discipline was positioned, and actively positioned itself, by attempting to create disciplinary alliances with strong disciplines established academically, and with fields of knowledge at the vanguard of social questioning. Such boundary activity enhanced the social reach of social work.

It is interesting to note that some of the earlier activities have parallels in contemporary times, while other aspects have dwindled, and segments (within-border distinctions) have diluted the social power of the early social work establishment. In the past, we should not forget that there were other trends and conflicts within the field, which this paper has not covered, but some of these (the tension between the field and academia; or the gendered dimension) are more often discussed. These tensions can be explored further, though even there, we would expect to find more differentiated manifestations of such splits. This is an invitation for future work.

To conclude, this exploration into the borders and boundary activity of the early discipline of social work has provided us with some insight, I would hope, into the continuous alignments and realignments of the discipline, the changing landscape of a field, and its struggles for academic and for societal positions. The movements I have discussed cut across a range of activities, from education, research and foundation choices (public and private) to publications, and from university to community activity. This trend further took place across national borders. This was a social movement using social work as disciplinary domain of influence. Political economy and the arts did not dilute the specificity of social work. They were used instead as catalysts. The boundary activity of the early discipline served its interests and promoted social work to a central knowledge position, and its leaders as significant social agents.

As to the social reach of social work, we might want to reflect on such movement today, which we could articulate with what political scientist Chantal Mouffe (2005) has advocated: taking an active role in the pluralistic agonistic dimension of democracy within the necessary conflicts of interests that shape the broader society. Today, when a number of social work scholars engage in interpretive policy studies, or in critical social work knowledge, when social work journals start including visuals and reproductions of art works in their pages, when artistic expressions are very much elicited in community-based research, such contemporary movements do not replicate earlier forms of knowledge but they harken back to some of the earlier controversies, to the public visibility of social work leaders, to the energy and to the social impact that social work unleashed in its early days. These border strategies

can be reconsidered as so many mechanisms for augmenting the social reach of our discipline as it is evolving.

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