

Karina Schlingensiepen-Trint

# Citizenship, democracy and social work

## An exploration toward a direct link

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*In democratic constitutional states there is a gap between social inequalities as a result of capitalist societies and the status of free and equal citizens guaranteed by the constitution. This paper argues that social work, by "mediating" between the individual and society, is not only confronted with this gap. It can be shown that there is a direct link between social work, democracy and citizenship. The following hypotheses are laid out. (1) Social rights are the necessary condition for realizing the status of a free and equal active citizen. Social rights are necessary in order to achieve democratic conditions. (2) Taking into account the fact that rights are meaningless if there are no social conditions available for the individual to realize them, this paper argues that social rights implemented and guaranteed by a welfare state are needed but not sufficient. (3) The author points out that social work is crucial for the individual to really make use of his or her status as an equal free citizen and therefore for realizing democratic conditions. The paper ends with some consequences that arise from this theoretical consideration.*

**Keywords:** social rights, welfare state, citizen, social policy, social conditions.

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### Državljanstvo, demokracija in socialno delo - raziskovanje neposredne povezave

*V demokratičnih ustavnih državah obstaja vrzel med družbenimi neenakostmi, ki so posledica kapitalistične družbe, in statusom svobodnih in enakopravnih državljanov, ki ga zagotavlja ustava. Avtorica trdi, da se socialno delo s tem, ko "posreduje" med posameznikom in družbo, s to vrzeljo ne samo pasivno srečuje. Pokazati je mogoče, da je med socialnim delom, demokracijo in državljanstvom neposredna povezava. Predstavljene so tri hipoteze. (1) Socialne pravice so nujni pogoj za zagotovitev statusa svobodnega in enakopravnega aktivnega državljana. Socialne pravice so nujne, če hočemo zagotoviti demokratične razmere. (2) Ker pravice nimajo smisla, če ni družbenih razmer, v katerih bi jih posameznik lahko uresničeval, avtorica trdi, da so socialne pravice, ki jih uresničuje in jamči država blaginje, sicer potrebne, niso pa dovolj. (3) Avtorica opozori, da je socialno delo ključno, če hoče posameznik zares uveljavljati svoj status enakopravnega svobodnega državljana in če hočemo zagotoviti demokratične razmere. Na koncu članka je opisanih nekaj posledic takšnega teoretskega razmišljanja.*

**Ključne besede:** socialne pravice, država blaginje, državljan, socialna politika, družbene razmere.

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The starting point of this exploration is the question of the theoretical foundations of social work. Current discussions on the search for theoretical paradigms mainly focus on human rights (e.g. Staub-Bernasconi, 1995, 1998a, 1998b, 2007, 2008; Mührel and Röh, 2007, 2008; Ife, 2001; Reichert, 2003) and (social) justice (e.g. Wakefield, 1988; Otto and Ziegler, 2007, 2010; Oelkers, Otto and Ziegler, 2010; Oelkers, Schrödter and Ziegler 2010; Ziegler, 2011a, b) as the basic normative principles to legitimate and provide a justification for social

work. The paper suggests a different approach by focusing on democracy and the status of free and equal citizenship. Citizenship in this context refers to a rights-based notion of citizenship.

## The underlying concept of social work

Before presenting the line of argumentation, this section introduces the assumptions behind the concept of this theoretical perspective.

- (1) Social work is understood as a “mediating actor” between the individual and society. It is characterized by various fields of action and has different historical lines of development (both nationally and internationally). In order to develop a possible theoretical framework, it is crucial to identify in this multiplicity the aspects they have in common. What makes social work social work? Referring mainly to the theoretical debate within German social work, “mediating” between the individual and society can be identified as the underlying “scientific object” of social work (Hornstein, 1995). Social work is always connected with society, as its origins “coincide with the formation of modern Western nation states” (Shardlow, 1998, p. 29) referring to Lorenz (1994, p. 4) and the contemporary formation of the bourgeois capitalist society that liberated the individual from earlier structures (Sommerfeld, 2013). Caught between alienation and emancipation, the individual was and still is confronted with the challenges of coping with life (Böhnisch, Schröer and Thiersch, 2005, p. 18). Social work is in particular connected with “the social question” – unequal societal conditions that the individual has to cope with (e.g. Pestalozzi, 1932; Natorp, 1894; Bäumer, 1929; Hornstein, 1995; Böhnisch, Schröer and Thiersch, 2005). As a result, the relationship between the individual and society that social work deals with is always marked by contradictions. In its “mediating role”, social work tries to improve social conditions but also to empower the individual to cope with life and to change social conditions himself or herself (Hornstein, 1995, p. 18).
- (2) This paper follows the line of argument that social work is related to social policy, the welfare state and the state in two ways – jobwise and functionally. Analyses show that social workers are not only often paid by the state but that there is also a functional anchorage. Social policy needs social work wherever regulative modi such as financial support and social benefits are no longer sufficient to bring about a change for the individual. Social policy needs social work that is linked to the everyday life and the lifeworld of the individual in order to achieve its regulatory aims (Böhnisch, 1982)<sup>1</sup>.
- (3) In connection with, and in distinction to, this position, this paper argues that social work cannot be reduced to this functional anchorage. Theore-

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<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of the relationship between social work and the welfare state in the UK see e.g. Harris (1999).

tical analyses of the state (Gramsci, 1991; Poulanzas, 1978) show that it is not a "monolithic block" (Poulanzas, 1978, p. 129) but a result of action, an "arena" in which various societal groups and actors fight over the maintenance of, or changes in, societal order and conditions. Social work can therefore also be a political actor in the "arena" and can act independently of the (welfare) state. There is scope for action in its work with individuals and there is also scope to impact a change in societal conditions. Otto and Schaarschuch (1999, p. 143) argue similarly for "re-develop[ing] a political perspective. It's crucial for social work to recognise that it is a political actor in many arenas of state institutions and at different levels of the state."

- (4) From the perspective of a subject-oriented social work, social work is not understood as "care" but as education, more precisely what is called "Bildungsarbeit", where the term "Bildung" refers to a process whereby the individual "acquires" the world by himself or herself. "Bildung" is always an active process accomplished by an individual and means more than knowledge and competences. It includes developing personality, creating one's own lifeworld and apprehending the (social and political) environment (see e.g. Thiersch, 2008; Thole, 2013). Autonomy, competence in reflection and action, the ability to judge and political consciousness are key elements (Sünker, 2006). Consequently, social work works *with* individuals on the one hand and *on* societal structures on the other in order to promote democracy, to overcome social inequalities and to empower the individual (Sünker, 2002, p. 241).
- (5) Summarizing – and with a focus on societal and governmental interconnectedness – social work is, in its historical development (Sommerfeld, 2013), its practice (Wagner, 2013) and concerning its "scientific object" (see above), shaped by the tensions within democratic capitalist societies: the precariat, social marginalization and social inequalities as a result of capitalist conditions stand in opposition to the status of free and equal citizens guaranteed by a constitution and to the (political and social) participation in society guaranteed by political and social rights.

## The direct link between citizenship, democracy and social work

Based on the underlying concept of social work outlined above, the argumentation that follows shows that there is a direct link between social work, democracy and citizenship – more precisely between social work and the fact that it is possible for the individual to make use of his or her status as a free and equal citizen.

The following theoretical considerations on the relationship between democracy and social work stand in a long tradition of social-pedagogical thinking. The (historical) development of social work and its scientific and professional discourse demonstrate a close connection between democracy and social work concerning both its origins (Sommerfeld, 2013) and its scientific (Müller, 2005; Mager and Kronen, 1844) and professional development

and practice (Oehler, 2018). What is new is the concept of citizenship and the rights, based on the status of free and equal citizens, as a third and decisive factor in the analysis of the connection between social work and democracy.<sup>2</sup>

### *The theoretical perspective*

The focus of this theoretical perspective is on the fact that social work is embedded in social and governmental conditions connected with the question of legitimacy. Contingent on this, the following analysis of the relationship between democracy, basic rights and social work is not a description of contemporary social and political conditions. It is, rather, an attempt to combine the factual and the normative layer with the aim of “specifying) conditions under which the state must ensure its own normative basis” (Olsen, 2006, p. 6).

Consequently, attention centers on the normative basis of present-day European states: the democratic constitutional state and its implications for the individual.<sup>3</sup>

Here, the paper refers to Habermas's theoretical framework, especially as laid out in *Between facts and norms: contributions to a discourse theory of law and democracy* (1994a)<sup>4</sup>. This makes sense in three ways. (1) Habermas investigates the internal relationship between democracy, the constitutional state and basic rights, (2) developing this relationship his starting point (as we will see below in detail) is the relation between the individuals and not the relation between the individuals and the state and (3) he furthermore also combines the factual and the normative layers.

This paper focuses on citizenship rights and the social conditions necessary to make use of these rights and it therefore constructs citizenship as a matter of rights and status. However, this is not a contradiction to citizenship as a participatory practice (Lister, 1998, p. 5 f.). In fact, following Lister, it is argued here that a synthesis of these two aspects is needed (cf. Lister 1998, p. 6). Citizenship is therefore constructed as a matter of rights and status that includes and requires specific social conditions to become (participatory) practice.

It is crucial to construct citizenship in this broader way because a status as well as a right is meaningless if there are no conditions under which use can be made of it. But whereas a right can serve as a normative basis, as a justification, a practice cannot. A synthesis of both is needed. Here again the factual and the normative layers are combined.

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<sup>2</sup> In the theoretical debate within German social work Schaarschuch (1996a, 1998) refers to the concept of citizenship when dealing with the question of socialising modi and the role of social work in this process. Focusing on the conditions of political acting, Wagner (2009, 2013) identifies citizenship as an analytic category to reflect the practice of social work critically.

<sup>3</sup> But this focus does not imply that the functional analysis of social work and social policy (as referred to in point (2) of 1. *The underlying concept of social work*) is negotiated.

<sup>4</sup> Complemented by: Habermas, 1985a, 1994b, 1997, 1998, 2001.

### *Democracy, citizenship and social rights*

Referring to Habermas's theoretical framework concerning the internal relationship of democracy, the constitutional state and basic rights (1994a)<sup>5</sup>, it can be shown that social rights are the necessary condition for the ability to exercise civil and political rights. In the logical genesis of rights, social rights can be justified only in relative terms as they result from the status of free and equal active citizens, which *implies* civil and political rights. However, this relative justification does not mean they are of minor relevance. On the contrary, without social rights, civil and political rights cannot be achieved. Social rights are the necessary condition for realizing the status of a free and equal active citizen and for an individual's private and political autonomy. Social rights are necessary in order to achieve democratic conditions.

In evolving "the system of rights" (Habermas, 1994a, p. 109 ff.) Habermas's starting point is the aim of "reconstructing the conditions of social integration" (Habermas, 1994a, p. 37). Together with "the concept of the lifeworld" and "institutions", the "category of law" is the third category of social integration. Habermas's "logical genesis of rights" (Habermas, 1994a, p. 154/155 ff.) is his answer to the question which "rights citizens must accord one another if they want to legitimately regulate their common life by means of positive law" (Habermas, 1994a, p. 109)<sup>6</sup>. This is the decisive factor in Habermas's line of argumentation. Law as the third category of social integration is reconstructed interpersonal and not as a relation between the state and the individual. In developing his line of argumentation, Habermas refers to, but does not follow, Thomas H. Marshall's conclusions in *Citizenship and social class* (Marshall and Bottomore, 1992). Marshall reconstructs the history of citizenship and "assign(s) the formative periods of the three elements of citizenship each to a separate century – civil rights to the eighteenth century, political to the nineteenth and social to the twentieth" (Marshall and Bottomore, 1992, p. 13). According to Marshall, civil, political and social rights, constituting the status of a citizen, historically developed as a linear process. Citizenship is regarded as mediating between real social inequality and formal equality (Marshall and Bottomore, 1992, p. 67) but not as overcoming inequality. Marshall comes to the conclusion "that citizenship has itself become, in certain respects, the architect of legitimate social inequality" (Marshall and Bottomore, 1992, p. 7). In this point Thomas H. Marshall follows Alfred Marshall's "sociological hypothesis" that "the inequality of the social class system may be acceptable provided the equality of citizenship is recognized" (Marshall and Bottomore, 1992, p. 6).

In contrast to that view, this paper argues that social inequality and social classes in a constitutional democratic state cannot be legitimated with recourse to the formal equality of citizenship. On the contrary, the state is under an obligation to create social conditions to make the constitutionally guaranteed citizenship status realizable for every citizen, and in order to do that, it must overcome social inequality to ensure its own normative basis.

<sup>5</sup> Complemented by see footnote 4.

<sup>6</sup> Unless specified otherwise, the quotations from Habermas (1996) are from the translation by William Rehg.

This can be explained theoretically with recourse to Habermas's genesis of rights, which shows the relevance of social rights.

Habermas criticizes Marshall's "picture of a linear process" in the development of citizenship because "it is blind to the large differences in the actual use made of a citizenship that allows individuals to play a role in democratically changing their own status" (Habermas 1994a, p. 104).<sup>7</sup> To avoid this, Habermas "reconstruct(s) the normative content of citizenship" (Habermas, 1994a, p. 106).<sup>8</sup> In doing so, Habermas's argumentation can be used to (1) get closer to the aim of identifying social conditions the state is obliged to provide due to its own normative basis and at the same time (2) to construct a point of reference that can be used to criticize and change actual social conditions.

Following Habermas, it can be shown, as argued above, that the normative basis of a constitutional democratic state includes all of the three basic rights – civil, political and social rights. The implication of social rights in the status of free and equal citizenship demonstrates their high level of relevance in the genesis of rights. The social-integrative power of "the category of law" only evolves completely due to the third category of basic rights, the social rights.

Legal regulations are legitimate only if they treat equals equally and unequals unequally and thus effectively secure equal freedom. Legitimate regulations can be expected only if citizens make use of their communicative freedoms together in such a way that all voices have equal opportunities to be heard. Thus, the effective utilization of private and public autonomy (as reciprocally presupposing each other) is at the same time both the condition for the interpretation and protection of civil rights in changing contexts, and the condition for the further development of the rights. Because the reproduction of law, normatively speaking, always implies the realization of an association of free and equal citizens (...). (Habermas, 1997, pp. 385)<sup>9</sup>

### *Democracy, citizenship and the welfare state*

But what can social rights include and how could they be implemented? Taking into account the fact that rights are meaningless if there are no social conditions available for the individual to realize them<sup>10</sup>, social rights implemented and guaranteed by a welfare state – including financial support, social benefits and social services – is the first crucial step toward realizing free and equal status as citizens and thus for achieving democratic conditions. With reference to a huge philosophical (Habermas, 1985a, 1994a, b, 1997, 1998, 2001; Brunkhorst, 1994, 2001; Steinvorth, 1999; Olsen, 2006), sociological (Möhle, 2001; Hartwich,

<sup>7</sup> For a further critique of Marshall's conception of this process as a linear evolving process in sequential steps, see Schaarschuch (1998, p. 209).

<sup>8</sup> Olsen (2006, p. 106) argues similarly, pointing out, that Habermas "fills some of the normative lacunae in T. H. Marshall's conception of citizenship."

<sup>9</sup> For the translation see Rosenfeld and Arato (1998), pp. 441/442.

<sup>10</sup> "Rights can only be 'appreciated' as long as they are exercised", Habermas (1997, p. 71, author's translation) argues similarly and against Rawls's position that rights can be distributed like goods.

1978) and constitutional (Abendroth, 1972; Böckenförde, 1972, 1973, 1991; Heinig, 2008; Preuß, 1990, 1994a, b) debate, it can be shown that a constitutional, democratic state is obliged to guarantee social rights implemented by a welfare state. The key argument is not an economic one but a political one. Democracy needs citizens (citizen in the meaning of *citoyen* not *bourgeois*) who are able to participate in a democratic, political process. The potential for political autonomy of the individual is the decisive factor. This argument rests on the distinction between private and political autonomy, based on the distinction between *citoyen* and *bourgeois* (Habermas, 1971, 1985b; following Hegel, 1955). Private and political autonomy are reciprocally correlated.

The internal relationship between the constitutional state and democracy is that on the one hand citizens can only make use of their political autonomy appropriately if their private autonomy is equally ensured and they are therefore sufficiently independent, and on the other hand they can also only appreciate their private autonomy if they make appropriate use of their political autonomy. (Habermas, 1998, p. 391, author's translation, see also Habermas, 1994a, p. 91)

The normative basis of a democracy requires that every citizen has to have the opportunity and be able to make use of his or her free and equal citizenship status. What is fundamental in this line of argumentation is that the state's intervention in the private autonomy of the individuals within and through a welfare state can only be justified with regard to the political autonomy and not with regard to the private autonomy of the individual.

Olsen (2006, p. 15) argues similarly, pointing out that “[p]articipatory equality is the normative basis of this conception of the welfare state.” He continues: “[e]qual participation cannot be a purely formal concern” rather “[t]he state must ensure its own basis of legitimacy by safeguarding the material conditions of political participation” (Olsen, 2006, p. 16), this also implies material conditions of democratic decision making. Therefore, a welfare state that provides financial and social benefits and social services is needed. Material equalization is justified with recourse to democratic decision making.

Preuß (1990) calls it a “citizenship-qualification-policy” (Preuß, 1990, p. 126, author's translation). The democratic principle postulates the participation in legislation of each individual who is subject to the law and is therefore the “realization of the universal right of participation” (Brunkhorst, 1994, p. 76, author's translation). The conditions for participation must be created, and to do this material and immaterial social goods and services must be made available to the citizen. Immaterial goods are, as well as the right to vote, education via a public open access educational system and information via an uncensored public sphere (Preuß, 1990, pp. 127/128).

A possible configuration of a welfare state legitimated and justified through this democratic approach does not correspond to the present configurations of European welfare states (for an analysis of the German welfare state see e.g. Lessenich, 2013). But it can be used as a critical point of reference for criticizing and changing the conditions in the way the (welfare) state ensures its own normative basis.

### *Democracy, citizenship and social work*

However, and here the paper goes beyond the argument pursued by Habermas (and others), a welfare state (and its institutions) is not sufficient to achieve real democratic conditions, more precisely to achieve those conditions that are needed for a possible realization of free and equal citizenship status for everyone. A “citizenship-qualification-policy” of a welfare state is only the first step. By connecting the points made above with the notion of social work as “Bildungsarbeit”<sup>11</sup>, it can be shown that, in its distinctive capacities, social work is crucial for the individual to really make use of his or her status as an equal free citizen and therefore for achieving democratic conditions.

As pointed out above, in democratic capitalist societies there is a gap between social inequalities and free and equal citizenship status, between capitalism and democracy, which has to be looked again in detail. As Bowles and Gintis (1987, p. 3) have demonstrated:

Capitalism and democracy are not complementary systems. Rather they are sharply contrasting rules regulating both the process of human development and the historical evolution of whole societies: the one is characterized by the preeminence of economic privilege based on property rights, the other insists on the priority of liberty and democratic accountability based on the exercise of personal rights.

Democracy based on social inequality is a contradiction in terms of concept.<sup>12</sup> The democratic constitutional state and capitalist society are therefore on a collision course. This collision course is even more obvious from the individual's point of view. Being part of capitalist society, the individual is exposed to social inequalities that (1) oppose his or her normative status as a free and equal citizen and (2) furthermore make it impossible for him or her to really exercise this status. Factually, the individual is limited in his or her private autonomy as well as in his or her political autonomy. The principle of free and equal active citizenship is blocked. Democracy, based on this same principle, is also not realizable. This dilemma between the normative legitimated layer (democratic constitutional state) and the factual layer (capitalist society) needs a “mediating actor” that makes possible a realization of the free and equal citizenship status in societal contexts of social inequalities, and this mediating actor is social work.

The material and immaterial social goods described above are important but not sufficient. Public education is one basic immaterial social good of a welfare state required in a democracy (see the reference to Preuß above), and as Amy Gutmann (1988, p. 112) has pointed out:

The democratic truth of equalization is that all children should learn enough to be able just to live a minimally decent life, but also to participate effectively in the democratic processes that socially structure individual choices among good lives.

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<sup>11</sup> As referred to in point (4) of 1. *The underlying concept of social work*.

<sup>12</sup> For a detailed analysis of the relationship between democracy and capitalism see Wood (2016).

She goes on to argue that

(...) democratic states cannot rely upon schools alone to help children reach the threshold of learning. States must provide access to a wide range of other goods and services, decent housing, job training and employment for parents, family counseling, day-care and after-school programs for children (...). (Gutmann, 1988, p. 119)

In other words, and going beyond Gutmann, the article argues, democratic states must provide social work. Social work is able to mediate in the conflict of equal rights and unequal social conditions because of two decisive factors: (1) the specific range and capacities of social work and (2) its specific pedagogical interest connected to its systematic point of reference.

(1) Linked to everyday life and the lifeworld of the individual social work goes far beyond social policies. Whereas social policies distribute (financial) benefits and services, addressing the individual as a passive recipient, social work practice focusses in its "mediating role" on the individual in his or her own lifeworld. Social work has the distinctive capacities to connect to the individual's horizons of meaning and sense-making and to reach, and to relate to, the individual's patterns of action. Therefore, social work has the capacity to empower the individual to realize his or her constitutionally guaranteed free and equal citizenship status. Political and private autonomy cannot be realized and strengthened only through distributed material and immaterial goods by a welfare state. Moreover, a practice is needed that is connected to the individual's horizons of meaning and sense-making and thereby apprehends and addresses the individual not as a passive recipient but as an active, acquiring subject, as an actor. Something that is fundamental, to make democratic decision making possible for every individual. Returning to the question of the social conditions needed to realize the constitutionally guaranteed rights for every individual, one can now argue that social work is needed.

(2) The second decisive factor is social work's specific pedagogical interest connected to its distinctive systematic point of reference. Being related to the constitution of the social (Natorp, 1894) and taking into account the reciprocal relationship of the individual and society (Hornstein, 1995) at the same time social work has a specific pedagogical interest in the "development and enhancement of the individual's opportunities for action and living" (Hornstein, 1995, p. 24, author's translation) and a distinctive "systematic point of reference", namely "the autonomy of life praxis" (Schaarschuch, 1996a, p. 863; Sünker, 1995, pp. 199 f., 1998, pp. 137 f.).

The concept of the autonomy of life praxis (diametrically opposed to colonization and social control) is bound to the hope for potential reason contained in this conception and this for the communicative rationality of the life world as well as the educability and capacity for reason of all, also realizable with the help of professional action. (Sünker, 1998, p. 137)

Professional action is thus based on the concept of maieutic, which means *enabling* in the sense of making actual the potential, that lies in the individual

himself or herself. The process of education, precisely the "Bildungsprozess", is the result of consciousness and consciousness raising and finally constitutes subjectivity. "Bildung" is an active process accomplished by the individual, that cannot "be given" by someone else. Essential therefore is the dialogical structure of the maieutic process (Sünker, 1989).

Following this, social work in principle has the capacity to enable the individual to achieve his or her free and equal citizenship status despite his or her socio-economic status and in a next step to achieve more democratic conditions. Conceived as "Bildungsarbeit", social work works with the individual and has the potential to empower him or her, with respect to both private and political autonomy, to create his or her own lifeworld as well as to participate in the political process. And therefore it has, furthermore, the potential to empower the individual to change societal and political conditions and to make the constitutionally guaranteed democratic conditions a reality.

#### *Additional remarks to the underlying concept of citizenship*

In the previous line of argumentation that laid out the direct link between social work, democracy and citizenship, citizenship was constructed as a matter of rights and status that includes and requires specific social conditions to become (participatory) practice. The paper closes the theoretical thoughts with some additional remarks to illustrate this underlying concept of citizenship in more detail.

Concerning Habermas's concept of citizenship the decisive factor is that his *system of rights* contains such rights individuals grant one another and not rights the state grants the individuals. The constitutional state is not the starting point but a necessary consequence, namely the institution to guarantee sovereignty of citizens (Habermas, 1994a, p. 58).<sup>13</sup> Habermas's concept of citizenship as a status therefore is not a conception of a privileged status as a "birthright".<sup>14</sup> Grounded in his discourse theory of communication (evolved in *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns*, 1987) Habermas's discourse theory of law is a reconstruction of interindividual democratic practice, political participation in the center. Key element is a procedural concept of democracy and law. "Procedurally regulated public discourse is Habermas's criterion of legitimacy" (Olsen, 2006, p. 105). Consequently, Habermas constructs citizenship as "a status that people grant one another to enable their mutual participation in a politically organized society" (Olsen, 2006, 102).

Focusing on communicative action and equal participation Habermas's conception of citizenship is compatible with contemporary positions of bro-

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<sup>13</sup> To guarantee rights and status a constitutional state is needed. Without a constitution and without an institution that safeguards the law, individuals can't exercise their rights and status. A problem arises if existing states define individuals as non-citizens and they therefore are excluded (from rights and status). Rygiel (2010, p. 6) points out that the temporary nation-states in doing so, use citizenship as "a way of governing individuals and populations", regulating with border controls and detention practices.

<sup>12</sup> For a critique see Rygiel, Ataç, Köster-Eiserfunke and Schwierz (2015, p.7 ff).

ader conceptions of citizenship who gain to “break down citizen/non-citizen binaries” (Rygiel, Ataç, Köster-Eiserfunke and Schwierz, 2015, p. 5) and to emphasize that citizenship needs to be a dialogical and political “relationship of inclusion and exclusion” (*ibid.*, p. 11). Developing Habermas’s position further by emphasizing practices of social cooperation and reciprocal forms of recognition, Olsen (2006) argues for a reflexive concept of democracy and citizenship. As a reflexive status “it allows citizens to redefine and reformulate their own status as citizens” (Olsen, 2006, p. 135) as well as the content of citizenship (*ibid.*, p. 140).

This fits to the thoughts of Richter (2008, p. 238) who argues for a “democratic ideal of egalitarian understanding of partners of interaction that reciprocally recognize each other” and connects this to the discussion of multiculturalism (Richter, 2008, p. 268 ff.). He turns out that citizenship isn’t bound to cultural identity (*ibid.*, p. 284), rather it is all about a deep opening for a discourse. “It is a matter of a generally empowerment to articulate on the side of the interacting collectives” (Richter, 2008, p. 288, author’s translation). For this empowerment, as argued above, a welfare state is the first step, the second decisive one is social work.

## **Consequences, challenges and open questions**

This paper ends with some conclusions concerning the consequences, challenges and open questions that arise from these theoretical considerations.

Following the position taken here, it can be shown that from a theoretical perspective social work cannot be reduced to the administrative, functional extension of a state’s social policy. What is needed instead is “a new political agenda for social work” (Gray and Webb, 2013, p. 11). In taking these theoretical considerations seriously, social work must be aware that it is a political actor with a genuine societal mandate and responsibility.

As a consequence, social work has to monitor first of all its own professional practice: it needs to be organized democratically. A brief look at the existing everyday practice of social work shows that it is often undemocratic or even “pre-democratic” (Schaarschuch, 1996b, p. 20), in many cases only implementing the agenda of social policies (Blandow, Gintzel and Hansbauer, 1999; Dahme and Wohlfahrt, 2002; Böhnisch and Schröer 2008; Dahme, Trube and Wohlfahrt, 2008) and being involved in processes of social exclusion and even de-citoyenfication (“Ent-bürgerlichung”) (Wagner, 2013).

Thus, one challenge is to change its own practice and underlying asymmetric power relations. One perspective here is Beresford and Croft’s (1993) concept of “citizen involvement”, which emphasizes the importance of having a say instead of having a voice. Their “democratic approach”

is more than having a voice in services, however important that is. It’s also concerned with how we are treated and regarded more generally and with having greater say and control over the whole of our lives [...]. It is concerned with people having a chance to speak directly for themselves. (Beresford and Croft, 1993, p. 9).

Having a say is a fundamental aspect of recognizing and realizing the self-determination of the users of social services.

Furthermore, democratically organized social work is important for the layer of professional action. One suggestion is Dewe's and Otto's (1996, 1998) concept of "democratic professionalism". A crucial element here is a "democratic rationality" that includes a democratic organization of the professional action and decision making as well as requiring the autonomy of the users (Marquard, 2000, pp. 374/375 with reference to Dewe and Otto, 1996). Democratic rationality

requires [...] a comprehensive democratic rationalization of the public discussion of achievements in social fields themselves, for which the preconditions lie more in an on-going de-commercialization of the social service sector and the reinforcement and structural support of possibilities for political participation, than in a further unreflective escalation of maxims of actions directed at the economy and the market. (Dewe and Otto, 1998, p. 275)

Democratic professionalism is therefore characterized by the constant inclusion of the societal structure of social services on the one hand and the rights and interests of the users on the other hand. Taking the user as an expert in his/her own life praxis seriously, it is furthermore crucial to mediate between the different kinds of knowledge of the professionals and the users. Democratic professionalism needs a "democratic-participatory mediation" between scientifically based professional knowledge and the users' knowledge of his/her everyday life and lifeworld. (Dewe and Otto 1998, p. 276).

Secondly, reflexive professionalism includes to be aware of the functional anchorage of social work in social policy<sup>15</sup> and ongoing processes of governing and exclusion initiated by the state (in the state and between states)<sup>16</sup>. Taking the procedural, reflexive democratic approach seriously, social work, as a political actor, has to criticize the societal conditions and even more, namely to change them. Fabricant and Burghardt (Fabricant, Burghardt and Epstein, 1992, p. 247) have pointed out:

Generative social service has the potential to make citizens and workers stakeholders in a change process. This kind of investment is critically associated with opportunities to honestly name problems and struggle to effect change. The potential of this process also rests with the opportunity for service workers and citizens seeking services to take greater control of their lives by initiating and not simply reacting to change.

As Balibar (2012, p. 20, author's translation) analyzed citizenship includes "the dialectic of rebellion and constitution" which rises and falls "with the functioning of the educational systems (Bildungssysteme)" (Balibar, 2012, p. 29, author's translation). Because of the fact that "Bildung" leads to emancipation of the individual as well as it curtains the power of the hegemonic class (Balibar, 2012, pp. 29/30), it is even more crucial for social work not to rely on

<sup>15</sup> As referred to in point (2) of 1. *The underlying concept of social work*.

<sup>16</sup> See footnote 13.

schools/the public educational system (that is an instrument of hegemony and social control) but to take its own educational mandate (*Bildungsmandat*)<sup>17</sup> seriously and to empower the individuals to create their own lifeworlds as well as to participate in the political process and to change societal conditions.

In monitoring its own practice and criticizing or even changing societal conditions, social work could use the theoretical ideas in this paper as critical points of reference.

Nevertheless, it is still an open question in this theoretical concept just how the arguments concerning the direct link between social work, democracy and citizenship can be transferred to the level of the relationship between client/user and social worker. The next step that must be taken is a corresponding theoretical explication of this interaction.

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<sup>17</sup> For a detailed historical analysis of the development of social work as an independent educational actor ("Bildungsakteur") see Thiersch (2008).

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