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Globalizing the Local and Localizing the Global in Practice

Introduction

The development of social work is currently being contested as the profession moves from its modernist project under the auspices of the welfare state to responding to identity-based theories, including postmodernism and post-structuralism and the challenges of indigenous perspectives to social development (Grande, 2004). This is especially relevant in the many parts of the West, where neo-liberalism and globalization have weakened the earlier social democratic consensus that it was the duty of government to respond to people’s needs for assistance and security. This has now been replaced by an individualism that has been configured in decontextualized spaces void of their social underpinnings to capture the ideals of personal self-sufficiency and responsibility for welfare provision. The latter is procured primarily through a market that has commodified care while opening up the welfare state for the purposes of capital accumulation by private entrepreneurs and targeting publicly funded resources only on the most needy. Expressions of solidarity rooted in the traditions of working-class activism and social democracy have been undermined.

Insights from the USA, where the welfare mix has involved private providers for a considerable period, can be useful in understanding developments in post-welfare state situations in other countries. However,
from an egalitarian point of view committed to inclusion and the celebration of diversity, the exclusion of many poor people from needed services in education, health and social care in the country that still retains the reputation of being the richest in the world does not suggest a positive outlook for future innovation and development inclusive of all the earth’s people. The social exclusion of poor people from health facilities may continue under Obama’s health reforms because these are still based on the payment of insurance premiums and subject to the market developed by the private providers. And the system continues to require considerable expenditure on bureaucracy to maintain records. Publicly funded universal services available free at the point of need consume far fewer resources in administrative costs than the current American system (Herdman, 1994; Woolhandler et al., 2003), a reality that is unlikely to change in future.

In this chapter, I consider the implications for practice of wider developments in the social, geopolitical and economic spheres at the points where the local and the global intersect. I argue that social work is being globalized so that many local events and interventions have repercussions beyond their national borders. The profession is simultaneously facing pressures to becoming more globally aware while paying more attention to ‘the social’ at the local level. Excluded groups are demanding additional control in what happens in their specific localities, while the notion of local place and space is being extended by global forces and contested by local ones. The contestation of place and space includes those who ‘migrate’ virtually by exploring the internet; those doing so in reality through migration; those who remain to defend their sense of the local – as in the case of indigenous peoples living in colonized territories; those segments of majority populations that feel threatened by newcomers to their lands, as do poor white working-class people in Europe; and those seeking to expel migrant workers in both the Global North and the Global South. The riots and social disorder linked to the ousting of migrant workers from South Africa in 2008 are an indication of this last phenomenon (Munnion, 2008). Hostile reactions to migrants, wherever they may occur, indicate the importance of addressing the issues of scarcity and the equitable distribution of resources within and between countries on a global basis.

Moreover, in this chapter I consider the mobility of social work professionals, within Europe as a result of European enlargement, and in the wider world. Migratory issues linked to labour mobility raise questions about the portability of training from one country to another in a diverse discipline such as social work, the recognition of qualifications across borders, and the thorny issue of who should pay for this training – especially when much of the traffic is often from low-income
industrializing countries to high-income industrialized ones. The lack of reciprocity is also shown by the absence of bilateral agreements for receiving countries to repay the training of the individuals concerned in order to allow the countries of origin to train new personnel (Dominelli 2004b). Thus, an opportunity to express mutuality and interdependence is lost.

An interactive and interdependent local–global nexus

Globalization is a two-edged sword. It has provided amazing opportunities to draw people together in both the virtual and the geographic domains. One possibility is that of raising issues that transcend the economic sphere, especially human rights (Ife, 2001b). Globalization has simultaneously privileged industrialized capitalist growth and initiated a series of crises—environmental, financial, demographic and political—that have had the most damaging effects on the world’s poorest people. These have included the loss in the Global North of highly paid blue-collar work; the spread in the Global South of jobs that offer insufficient income to provide a decent standard of living (Wichterich, 2000); increasing health hazards that spread rapidly from one country to another; rising food and energy prices; extensive environmental degradation and resource depletion; and significant numbers of armed conflicts (HSRP, 2009). These elements combined constitute an interactive and interdependent local–global nexus whereby what happens in one location carries implications for another. Addressing the ensuing issues requires collaborative endeavours that recognize the interdependent nature of people and the environment.

Globalization, a contested term with no single meaning (Hirst et al., 2009), can denote the simple economic integration of countries in one global economic system (Cox, 1981; Wallerstein, 2005) or signify the impact of economic global relations on social relationships, from the meta-level of a complete social system to the interstices of everyday life practices (Dominelli, 2004a). The latter meaning attempts to address the complexity and depth of social relations in the economic, cultural, political and social domains and the connectedness between people in different parts of the world.

Despite the absence of an agreed definition of globalization, there is a degree of unanimity around some key features:

• cultural diffusion and rapprochement contradicted by increasingly nationalist tendencies in a number of countries;
• social relations that shape all aspects of life while simultaneously according priority to market mechanisms and discipline;
migration as a response to environmental degradation, economic hardship and violence;
• a general integration and a widening of economic forces across borders that compete for space alongside economic protectionism and exclusion;
• rapid technological change, which has produced new forms of social exclusion – e.g., the digital divide – and opened up opportunities for exploiting individuals, particularly children, through the use of the internet;
• demographic changes, including increasing population and the rapid ageing of many societies, particularly in the West;
• urban growth and the exacerbation of urban–rural disparities; and
• urbanized centralization, which puts stress on the environment.

For social workers, an analysis of globalization would be incomplete without an examination of how it has influenced service delivery in the personal social services and labour processes. Globalization has impacted extensively on social workers by affecting relationships between practitioners and their clients, internationalizing social problems and changing the nature of the nation–state (Cox, 1981; Dominelli and Hoogvelt, 1996; Clarke and Newman, 1997). In the UK, globalization has affected the profession in several ways:

• promoting a 'new' managerialism, which has forced business practices and market discipline into arenas formerly excluded from market forces and the profit motive;
• disempowering social workers by restricting access to resources that would enable them to meet the needs of specific individuals;
• increasing the techno-bureaucratic nature of practice through performance indicators and efficiency measures for the purpose of covering the greatest number of people and maximizing limited resources;
• shifting service user–worker relationships away from relational to a more distant and bureaucratic form of social work so that practitioners can focus on the state's role in commissioning services delivered by private and voluntary-sector agencies;
• commodifying the relationship between service users and the state by turning them into consumers in a quasi-market while at the same time offering them greater choice and control over their lives through the personalization agenda and individual budgets;
• reducing reliance on publicly funded, citizenship-based universal services and promoting residual ones that target the neediest of the needy;
• encouraging family-based and individual responsibility among people for meeting their own needs, while the state becomes preoccupied
with competitiveness, opening the welfare market to international corporations keen to profit from providing services;

- the internationalization of social problems such as poverty, the drug trade, trafficking in women and children, the arms trade, the pornography trade and organized crime; and
- increasing the impact of migration through demands made by movements of people on services, but also the movement of social workers who train in one country but go to work in another (Dominelli, 2004b; White, 2007).

The complexities that social workers have to address have been intensified by the financial and environmental crises. These will require practitioners to look for new paradigms for practice and prioritize social and community development within an ecological framework that addresses both environmental and human degradation.

Moreover, contemporary analyses of globalization have to incorporate the significance of the emerging economies, especially China, India, Brazil and Mexico. These are introducing further challenges and will, in time, decentralize the West's role in shaping global economic development. New models of growth are coming to the fore as each country attempts to maximize its position within the global economic system. Additionally, if current levels of population growth are maintained in each of the emerging countries, there will be further demographic challenges that must be addressed by the world as a whole. The UN has raised the issue of the world's population exceeding 9 billion by 2050 and the importance of working out how, in a context of scarce physical resources, the planet can sustain such a level (United Nations, 2005). Furthermore, indigenous and poor people are resisting the homogenization of their cultures and their relegation to the margins of global decision-making (Grande, 2004). Anti-globalization movements and individuals have created new ideas about how to organize paid work and meet human needs in ways that transcend notions at the core of neo-liberal capitalist social relations. Stiglitz et al. (2009) argued that globalization has to focus on the necessity of including indicators of well-being alongside economic indicators. This view is countered by others, such as Samir Amin (2009), who condemns elitist notions of globalization and argues for a bottom-up approach in the search of new models of development—a view that is endorsed by the anti-globalization movement (see Anti-Globalization, 2010). The insights arising from these alternative visions for society can provide new sources of innovation and hope that social workers can tap into.

- The demands of indigenous people have heightened aspirations for new theoretical understandings that take account of their spiritual needs,
the reclaiming of their traditional rights and heritages, and their dreams of developing as whole human beings, not simply as consumers in the marketplace (Bruyere, 2009). Their calls for endogamous forms of social work stand in contrast to the homogenizing tendencies of the McDonaldization or Americanization of societies (Ritzer, 2000) that have undermined local forms of social work practice (Dominelli, 1992, 1996a). For example, in Eastern Europe, the traditional skills that local practitioners had called upon to meet welfare needs during the Soviet era, but which had been discounted by Western academics, are now being revalidated. Westerners’ assumptions that there existed nothing in these countries to build upon led to the imposition of inappropriate models on transitional societies (Stubbs, 2007) and echo practices that indigenous people experienced during the colonization of their lands. Critiques of globalization highlight neo-liberalism as a bankrupt ideology, despite its claim to produce the greatest good for the greatest number – a claim often epitomized in the phrase the ‘trickle down’ effect (Giangreco and Moore, 1999; Anti-Globalization 2010). Those seeking to create new theories and forms of practice have to take account of interdependence and reciprocated forms of solidarity, pursue interdisciplinary approaches to research, and replace ideologies that glorify possessive individualism, with its focus on self and family, with those encompassing all people.

Indigenous practice focuses on the local and engages with the global

Social work practice in Europe was developed within nation-states, with each country focusing on its own concerns. In the days of Empire, locality-specific practices from Europe were transported to other countries to meet the needs of the European settlers rather than those of the local populations (Grande, 2004) and to integrate them into a world economic capitalist system (Wallerstein, 2005). Before the advent of modern communications technology, accessing other people's ideas and models of practice was expensive because it required the physical movement of goods and people across the globe. The creation of IASSW, IFSW and ICSW as early as 1928 gave the profession international remits that focused on conferences and the exchange of materials, staff and students and enabled individuals to cross borders with relative ease. Although these initiatives demanded fund-raising as well as linguistic and communication skills to facilitate participation, those who attended shared the aim of learning from each other. The early egalitarian thrust of these bodies was reflected in the facilitation through solidarity funds of the
involvement of individuals from across the world and enabling them to use their own languages. Although a solidarity fund has been retained in each organization to assist those in the Global South to travel to conferences and meetings, linguistic parity did not last as long. Following the depression and the Second World War, the physical movement of social work educators and practitioners came to draw heavily on American personnel and resources. This meant that the English language took precedence – a matter that continues to arouse concern (Dominelli, 2004c). Symbolically, the strength of America’s role in international organizations was formally recognized through practices such as the incorporation of IASSW in the state of New York in 1971.

Partly in response to the dominance of Anglo-American theories and models of practice, local scholars in other countries took explicit action to develop their own materials. Although there had always been resistance to the imposition of external models on local initiatives, the ‘indigenization’ movement became much stronger during the 1970s and 1980s. As a result, indigenous forms of social work practice have built on genuine interests in collaboration. In chapter 5, we saw the impact of Maori models, particularly the Family Group Conferences, and the contributions made by First Nations peoples in Canada in bringing spiritual views of the world back into mainstream practice. In addition, Australian aboriginal teachings draw upon reconciliation processes aimed at healing the damage caused by racism and the ‘stolen generations’ (Read, 1981). Different models are being developed in Asian countries, where such values as harmony and family relationships hold sway (Yip, 2005).

I want to caution against the view that indigenous cultures are the same, even within a country. And I want to warn against considering the West as a homogeneous entity or that its welfare regimes are all the same, as suggested by Yip (2005) and Webb (2003). In their concern to focus on the local within the context of the global, these authors ignore the enormous variety and heterogeneity that exists at both levels, regardless of the social grouping being considered. The West has significant disparities in wealth among its constituent groups, and this cannot be ignored without excluding the narratives of important segments of the population. These disparities are the result of structural inequalities. The disadvantages of those who do not live in the West are also spread unevenly, and inequalities in wealth and power are evident in most countries (UNDP, 2009). Those who migrate from the Global South to the Global North may find that internal disparities in power and resources exacerbate external structural inequalities. For example, gender, ethnic and age discrimination within families intersects and interacts with various forms of discrimination, intolerance and misunderstandings
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present in the wider society. Responding to crimes involving these inter-
actions can be mishandled by law-enforcement agencies and social
workers, as is illustrated in box 7.1, an instance of so-called honour

Box 7.1 Case study: ‘Honour killing’ is a misnomer

Tulay Goren was a teenager killed by her father, Mehmet Goren, on 7
January 1999. She had come to the UK from a small village in southern
Turkey to join her parents a couple of years earlier. The trouble started when
she got a part-time job in a factory and met her boyfriend, Halil Unal, who
was twice her age and a Sunni Muslim, whereas Tulay was an Alevi Muslim.
This relationship challenged her family’s cultural traditions and so created
tension. Her father sought to discipline her and secure her compliance, but
she ran away on more than one occasion and went to the police for help. But
the police contacted her parents and she was returned home, where she was
subjected to further physical and psychological abuse from her father. At one
point, Tulay had asked to be taken into care by social services. But she was
sent home instead (Bingham, 2009).

Tulay’s father held a tight rein over the entire family, keeping them all,
including her mother, in check. His failure to get Tulay to obey proved too
much, and he killed her to ‘cleanse the shame that she had brought into his
family’. The father declared that he had to defend the family’s honour, or
namus, as Turkish Kurds call it (Sapsted, 2009). Dr Aisha Gill, senior lecturer
in criminology at Roehampton University and expert witness at the trial, said,
‘Honour killings are anything but honourable. They are brutal, premeditated
acts of violence perpetrated by the very people supposed to protect the victim
from harm’ (Gill, 2009).

Mehmet Goren evaded capture for nearly a decade, until his wife Hanim
gave evidence against him. He was sentenced to twenty-two years in prison.
Hanim hoped that her story would encourage other women to refuse to live
in violent situations and seek support from the authorities (Bingham, 2009).

There is considerable opposition to this form of violence against women
within Muslim communities. Among many others, the Kurdish Women’s
Rights Organization in the UK, Queen Rania of Jordan, and Musawah
(‘Equality’), an organization to bring equality and justice into Muslim family
law in thirty countries (www.musawah.org), are all working to end such
practices.

The police initially involved in Tulay Goren’s case did not feel pre-
pared to deal with the complex family dynamics and cross-cultural tradi-
tions involved and went to Turkey to find out about namus. As a result,
they have now learnt how to intervene more effectively (Bingham, 2009).
This suggests the need for greater training, so that those responsible for upholding the law do not fail in their duty to protect vulnerable young people whose lives are in danger, regardless of cultural traditions. They also need to be able to address issues of racism in ways that encourage them to interrogate the norms of a different culture with sensitivity. It is important that 'culture' is not considered as a unitary entity, so that practitioners can explore cultural differences within and between groups and countries.

Additionally, 'honour killings' may be better described as instances of men's violence against women as they seek to defend patriarchal authority over family members who wish to assert personal autonomy, regardless of age. Violence against women occurs in all societies, and as such is resisted by those who support women's struggles for autonomy. Sometimes these endeavours are high profile, at other times they are not. Moreover, such attacks are opposed by members of the same communities as well as those outside them (CBC News, 2008b). Such resistance demonstrates that it is possible to develop alliances that cross social divides if those involved support action that is initiated and controlled by those seeking change.

International action in the welfare arena integrates the local and the global

International action to address issues of poverty, migratory movements, communicable diseases, and the mobilization of local resources to address local problems has involved social workers, their organizations collaborating with other civil society organizations and governments to change policies and development practices to reflect more closely the views of people on the ground in a wide range of issues. Much of this action was linked to participating in various UN summits, organizing seminars, presenting papers and promoting policy changes. Two important highlights were the Copenhagen Social Development Summit of 1995 and the Beijing Action Platform for Women in the same year.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) formed another UN policy initiative that required intensive involvement by social workers and community workers. The MDGs were formulated in 2000 to carve out a more prosperous future for the most disadvantaged people on the planet and targeted poverty, education and health (www.un.org/millenniumgoals/). Eight goals targeted specific actions and specific groups of people with the aim of setting achievable outcomes. Sadly, this looks unlikely (Correll, 2008). In some respects, the challenges of environmental degradation question the relevance of the MDG targets. The financial
crisis that precipitated the virtual collapse of the global banking system has highlighted the weaknesses of international institutions when it comes to handling global problems.

That the heaviest price is exacted from poor people has become abundantly obvious. Public expenditure cuts are taking place in personal social services and welfare provision aimed at providing poor people with education, health and income support in order to bail out the financial sector and bankers. This occurred via the structural adjustment programmes of the 1980s and 1990s in the Global South and the financial crisis of 2007–9 in the Global North. ICSW has engaged in monitoring the developments and is pessimistic about the realisation of the MDGs. Despite the weaknesses in the global economic system, and critiques of their implementation to date (Correll, 2008), the latest UN report predicts that the MDGs could be reached by 2015 if governments put enough resources behind their realization (UNDP, 2009). Monitoring their progress and impact on the ground is something in which social workers can be fully involved.

The internationalization of social problems

The formation of the MDGs could be considered a response to the internationalization of social problems. The ‘internationalization of social problems’ (Khan and Dominelli, 2000) is a by-product of globalization processes that encourage people to migrate in response to social problems such as poverty, armed conflict, drought and natural disasters. It is also the result of the growing interdependencies between countries. In other words, the internationalization of social problems provides pivotal points at which the global impacts on the local and the local impacts upon the global. However, social work is usually enacted at the local level because that is where people lead their lives.

Sometimes, what constitutes the local is contested and problems become even more difficult to resolve. This can occur, for example, in cases of child abduction, when a parent takes a child to another country — generally that of the parent’s origin. The processes that can be followed to recover the child depend on whether or not the country in question is party to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction (Hague Convention) of 1980. The UK is a signatory. The return of a child can become very complicated if the country in question has not signed the Hague Convention or is an Islamic country in which sharia law prioritizes the father’s rights over those of the mother.

Nations that are party to the convention are called ‘contracting states’. A parent who removes a child from another parent living in a ‘contract-
ing state’ without due process of the law is required to return that child immediately. Regardless of a country’s status regarding the Hague Convention, fighting to get a child back can be a costly and painful process for all those concerned. During 2008 in the UK, 336 cases of child abduction involving 470 children were reported to the authorities. This figure may under estimate the numbers involved, as not all instances are reported and most do not make newspaper headlines. In the 336 reported cases, 134 children were taken to countries that had not signed the Hague Convention. Among the children removed from the UK in 2008, thirty were taken to Pakistan, twenty-three to the USA, twenty-two to Ireland and twenty-one to Spain.

In the UK, the Foreign Office deals with cases involving countries that have not signed the Hague Convention. Signatory countries are dealt with by the Ministry of Justice in England and Wales and the Scottish and Northern Irish court services in Scotland and Northern Ireland respectively. The charitable organization International Social Services also assists parents seeking the return of their children, as does Reunite, an agency specializing in international child abduction. Both organizations have reported substantial growth in such actions, with Reunite claiming that international child abduction cases have risen by 93 per cent since 1995. Their spokespersons link the growth in this phenomenon to increasing migration and relationships being formed between those of different cultures (Pidd, 2009).

What may happen in disputed situations is evident in the case study in box 7.2, where a child born in Britain was taken to Libya, a non-signatory to the Hague Convention. Had the convention applied in both countries, the UK would have been treated as the locality with which the child was associated, especially as the mother already had custody. Sharia law is likely to recognize the father’s country of origin as the relevant locality. However, this did not occur in this particular situation.

**Box 7.2 Case study: Father abducts Nadia Fawzi**

Nadia Fawzi was a four-year-old British child abducted to Libya, where her father’s family lived. Following her parents’ divorce, she was taken from her home in Wigan by her father, Fawzi Abu Arghub, on the pretext of going to a party. Instead, she was taken to Manchester airport and then on a flight to Libya. Her mother, Sarah Taylor, a white British national, has spent the last two years fighting to get Nadia back. The British courts had already awarded her custody of the child when the marriage broke down. After a year of making no progress, Sarah gave up her job, sold her house and went to Libya to fight her case through the sharia courts. After a lengthy legal struggle in
that country, she successfully secured full custody of her daughter in 2008. Unfortunately, her ex-husband refused to comply with the court order and, as his and Nadia’s precise whereabouts were not known, the child remained with him in Libya for three years.

Meanwhile, Sarah Taylor’s MP, Andy Burnham, had gone to Tripoli to plead on her behalf and to insist that the court’s ruling was enforced. In 2009, Gordon Brown asked Colonel Gaddafi to assist in the mother’s reunification with her daughter when the two leaders met at an economic summit in Italy. Finally, with the help of Gaddafi and his son Saif, among others, Sarah and Nadia were reunited in December 2009 and the two returned to the UK in February 2010. There are now issues of Nadia’s readjustment to being back in the UK and the thorny question of retaining links with her father and his extended family to be addressed. The ‘best interests of the child’ remain paramount in child abduction cases. However, Nadia’s predicament indicates that the matters raised in the interstices between the local and the global cause much pain and are not easy to resolve.

Social workers can support mothers (or fathers) and children through a trying legal process and help with family reunification and/or reconciliation initiatives. They should also be aware that social problems such as these that intersect the local with the global acquire political significance and ramifications as well as causing personal pain and suffering.

Such cases of abduction are fraught regardless of the situation, and often involve children in complex dilemmas not of their making, especially if the parents part on acrimonious terms. It can lead to confused emotions, mixed loyalties, feeling responsible for what has happened and a deep sense of grief and loss (Freeman, 1998). Sometimes the children are denied contact with the absent parent for years – a likely outcome if parents are playing power politics with their children’s lives, or if one party moves away, making it difficult to maintain contact (Jenkins, 2006). Social workers may have considerable difficulties in establishing the ‘facts’ of a situation, even if they achieve contact with both parents, and they may have to ascertain what happened without face-to-face meetings. Additionally, with the internet, new dilemmas may present themselves. For example, an African American woman put her children up for adoption on the internet and sold them to both an American couple, for £4,000, and to a British one, for £9,000 (BBC, 2001). The children ended up in Britain and were taken into care when the American couple complained that they were the first and only legitimate parents. Social services in both England and America had to step in to resolve the matter and consider the relevant local, national and international
regulations and legislation. In the end, the children were taken back to America and given to foster parents. The birth mother sought to have them returned to her, but it was not until she had remarried and changed her lifestyle that she was given access to visit their foster home (Langton, 2005). Ironically, the British couple had resorted to the web because they had been unsuccessful in being accepted as adoptive parents. Buying or selling children is illegal in the UK, but the internet allows people to bypass the necessary safeguards for children.

Another problem with international adoption is exemplified by the recent scandal of an American mother sending back a young boy she had adopted from Russia on a flight by himself. She sent a letter with him saying that he had too many problems for her to deal with and that she wanted the adoption annulled. The Russian authorities were incensed because their social workers had approved the adoption, as did those in the USA. The American social workers who undertook follow-up procedures did not detect any problems in the relationship between the mother and child. Consequently, the Russians have called a halt to any further adoptions by Americans for the time being (Stewart, 2010).

The spread of diseases across borders is another instance of an internationalized social problem. Panics have already occurred around this issue in relation to SARS and HIV/AIDS. A more recent example is 'swine flu', or the H1N1 virus, which officially reached pandemic proportions (WHO, 2010). Internationalization is evident not only in the journey that a disease takes in moving from one country to another — a likelihood that occurs more quickly in an era of cheap, rapid airplane travel than at other periods. But speed is also evident in scientific cooperation to trace the movements of the disease, looking for strategies of curtailment and seeking cures. Despite its global dimensions, treatment is administered locally, and the costs of such treatment — whether preventative or curative — are borne locally. This localization makes it difficult for low-income countries or individuals to sustain the costs of treating viruses that can quickly get out of hand, create chaos in everyday routines and cause enormous loss of life. As a result, concerned individuals, including social workers, have:

- highlighted such issues as poor people's lack of access to medicines;
- lobbied large pharmaceutical companies to lower their charges for medicines;
- mounted campaigns both to bring about change in policies and the distribution of medical supplies and equipment, particularly anti-viral drugs, to avoid unnecessary loss of life and to encourage the use of local indigenous medical knowledge when this is more effective; and
offered advice and counselling to people in need, including in rural areas, often using imaginative means of communications such as radio to do so.

The campaign to bring anti-viral drugs to tackle HIV/AIDS in countries in sub-Saharan Africa is indicative of such endeavours.

**Neo-liberal globalization impacts on social work**

Neo-liberalism and globalization have impacted on professional social work by making it more complex, increasing connections across borders and introducing problems that have international implications, e.g., international adoptions. Such developments are fuelled by people seeking opportunities to make money, often illegally, and those migrating from one country to another to achieve better standards of living, to escape persecution, and/or to flee armed conflict. Migration and the internationalization of social problems, including human trafficking and the drug trade, complicate local scenarios, as discovered by the social workers who were unable to protect Toni-Ann Byfield.

Toni-Ann was abducted as an infant in Jamaica by her father Bertram Byfield (aka Anthony Pinnock) and brought to England. She was shot at the age of six by Joel Smith in a London bedsit on 14 September 2003 because she saw him murder Byfield, whom she was visiting. Smith, a member of a London street gang, like Byfield, was involved in an international drug ring. Toni-Ann, whose immigration status was in doubt, was under the care of Birmingham City Council's Social Care and Health Directorate and in temporary foster care when she joined her father in London. Her mother, 'Roslyn' Richards, was in Jamaica, but came to England after her daughter's death when questions about the identity of the child's birth father surfaced.

The complex relationships and trends evident in this case simultaneously constitute, expose and magnify the interdependent nature of people's lives as they cross borders. They reveal the impact of global factors on local practice and how local events have a global impact. Social workers also have to respond to the reconfiguration of national boundaries as problems originating elsewhere are brought their way in the interstices of micro-practice – as occurred in Toni-Ann's short life. Other examples can emanate from working with people of diverse ethnic origins, those caught up in wars and intensified armed conflicts, asylum seekers and refugees, and undocumented workers, as well as from diseases that cross borders (e.g., HIV/AIDS, SARS and swine flu), the exploitation of children and women in the drug and sex trade, and transnational adoptions, as is indicated in box 7.3.
Box 7.3 Case study: International trafficking endangers children

Vladimir had been smuggled into England with the promise of a new life. But unknown to him or his family at the time, he had been trapped by a paedophile crime ring that subjected him to sexual violence and exploited him to make money. He was deprived of his passport and contact with his family, who were in any case being threatened with his death if they did not pay for his passage overseas, and was being coerced into performing for his captors by being told that, if he refused to obey, members of his extended family would be harmed or even murdered. This meant that Vladimir lived in a constant state of fear. The risks would be too great if he were to challenge his situation. However, after several years he developed a relationship with an older man who bought him out of his bondage and with whom he went to live. After what seemed an interminable period, Vladimir had the chance to escape, but he had no money and no friends to turn to. So he walked into a hostel for homeless men to seek help.

The case study in box 7.3 exposes the complexities involved in the ways in which the global and the local interact to reshape each domain. Dealing with children and young people in Vladimir's situation is highly skilled, sensitive work and not to be undertaken by those who are newly qualified. There are a number of resources upon which practitioners can draw to help them in the complicated interventions needed to respond to a child's needs. These include psychological support to deal with the emotional trauma and damage caused by being exploited, providing the financial and physical resources required to begin rebuilding their lives, family reunification if appropriate and possible (given the intersection between their existence and that of criminal gangs) and, dependent on age, engaging them in educational programmes and peer interactions. Multi-agency working will be essential in developing the appropriate plan for safeguarding a child such as Vladimir and creating a safe environment in which he can grow. This will involve not only the usual agencies such as psychological services, the NHS, education departments, the criminal justice system and the courts, but also immigration services. Helpful resources to be drawn upon include Breaking the Wall of Silence (Pearce et al., 2009), London Safeguarding Trafficked Children Toolkit (LSB, 2009) and Safeguarding Children Who May Have Been Trafficked (DCSF, 2007).

Regional developments, which are blurring the borders that have been used to articulate the confines of the nation–states, form an important element in models of practice that cross national borders, or even
when skilled practitioners do. The European Union, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the North American Free Trade Agreement and the Latin American Integration Association provide examples of organizations that have been established to transcend national frontiers. Many of the agencies that enable goods, services and personnel to move across territories are predicated on ideas that valorize market imperatives over people’s needs, but the EU, for one, allows its nationals to access welfare rights in other member countries.

The thrust towards market-based developments has been exacerbated by international regulations and multilateral agreements, including those associated with the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), which threatens to undermine the empowering effects of social work education and practice and to promote private or commercial provision in personal social services and social work education in all countries. These establish trends that challenge the idea that social work is a parochial profession dealing only with local issues. Such developments are in addition to the profession’s attempts to raise its voice internationally, as described in chapter 1.

Social workers as worker-practitioners are not immune from global processes either. Many may find that, having qualified in one country, they will practise in another (White, 2007). This raises questions about the recognition of qualifications acquired in a country other than the one in which a social worker practises, and what is common in social work training and what is locality specific and different. It also highlights the importance of practitioners learning about local cultures, practice traditions, legislation and policy, and how they are assisted to adjust to the demands of their new positions. Neo-liberal globalization has also brought market discipline into social work at the local level. As a result, it has supported demands for increased professional accountability, client choice (at least in theory), the bureaucratization of ‘risk assessments’ and managerial control of the labour process.

Migratory labour forces

Globalization has shrunk the world and made migration an even more widespread phenomenon. The reasons for migration are varied and pose different responsibilities for the nation–states involved. The migration of skilled, professional workers is deemed less problematic than that of unskilled labourers. For example, business people who create jobs are welcomed with open arms in the West (Lester, 2010). Asylum seekers, like unskilled workers, are often defined as economic migrants rather than as fearing for their lives. Thus, they undergo punitive procedures
and are often confined in detention centres (Cohen et al., 2004; Briskman, 2007). Migratory movements are also linked to ‘terrorism’, as individuals move about the world to be ‘trained’. Social workers are implicated when called to engage with harsh immigration processes and legislation that excludes a range of migrants from claiming welfare assistance. Racial profiling as a part of border control exacerbates the situation by drawing innocent people into a net intended to capture criminals. The ‘Christmas bomber’ who attempted to blow up a plane headed for Detroit in December 2009 provides an example of the kind of journeys ‘terrorists’ take to disguise their objectives and avoid capture. After such people are arrested and have completed their sentences, the question arises of what needs to be done to rehabilitate them and reintegrate them into society. This is an issue in which probation officers can be involved. There are only a few such programmes and what little research there is suggests that these are of limited use (Neumann, 2009; Champion, 2010).

At the same time, the instruments for controlling those who cross borders have become more sophisticated and surveillance-oriented, particularly through the new information technologies. While in the early nineteenth century it was not even necessary to have a passport to travel from one country to another, today’s travellers are required to prove that they are entitled to enter a country either by virtue of citizenship or by holding a valid visa. Moreover, machine-readable passports containing detailed personal and biometric information are rapidly becoming the norm. Such instruments of control and surveillance are also ‘fixing’ identities in a world that would promise personal choice and multiple, fluid identities. As such, the use of these technologies serves to normalize particular attributes associated with specific territories and peoples, making difference less acceptable where migration status and claims to place and space interact. Such trends are particularly evident in discourses around the need for ‘homeland security’ initiated by the so-called war on terror and the racialized profiling aimed at identifying ‘terrorists’.

Moreover, the concern to protect borders and deny access to welfare benefits to those defined as non-citizens or ‘other’ has resulted in immigration control filtering down to professional practice. Social workers are being asked to check people’s passports for their immigration status before giving them help. Immigration control has therefore shifted from being a practice that is enacted by immigration officers at the point of entry to one that can now take place at an ‘internal’ border that is policed by caring professionals. Moreover, it can be set up at any point where public agencies seek to respond to individual requests for assistance. This creates a fusion of the public and the private that leaves many social
workers feeling distinctly uncomfortable, not only because they become involved in a form of surveillance that goes against their professional remit to care but also because they are unable to meet visible need, and they feel constrained by rules and regulations that do not make sense to them as helping practitioners. They feel compromised by having to ration resources in ways that pit the needs of long-standing residents against those of more recent arrivals (Dominelli, 2004a).

Cultural and educational exchanges and the use of the internet and distance learning materials have meant that internationalizing practices are becoming more common and involve a broader range of institutions. Private corporations, such as McDonald’s, have established their own ‘universities’ to ensure that the local people they employ are trained to create their standardized products. Local traditions and expectations about either education or service delivery are rarely accepted, further intensifying the cultural homogeneity that accompanies globalization.

The education of social workers in developing countries retains an element of idealism and the potential for introducing change through social and community development that will enhance the well-being of local people. In industrialized countries, people are more likely to become jaded and simply consider the job as a way of earning money. As a result, migrant workers from the Global South may find their experiences as social workers in industrialized countries are more narrowly focused, and they may become less inclined to think innovatively (Sithole, 2008). The move away from innovating to improve the quality of life for poor and marginalized people in the West suggests that the dynamism reflected in the enormous community work efforts in postwar Europe, the Community Development Projects in the UK and the ‘War on Poverty’ in the USA (Dominelli, 1997) has been lost, and that social work practice in the Global North has become more bureaucratic and less concerned with social development and change than that in the Global South. Contemporary challenges to the existing configuration of social relations are likely more muted in the Global North. Yet the need for emancipatory changes and action aimed at eradicating structural inequalities and social exclusion may be just as great in both hemispheres.

_Social workers as a mobile, migratory, professional workforce_

Professional workers are increasingly likely to acquire qualifications in one country but to work in another, possibly at several different points in their careers (White, 2007; Sithole, 2008). Such movements mean practitioners are part of a transnational phenomenon of people holding allegiance to several locations simultaneously. Moreover, transnational
arrangements are likely to augment the potential of social workers both to learn from different cultures and to contribute their own insights and understandings to other practitioners. Such transfers of knowledge should not be assumed to be equal or to indicate parity of exchanges between those involved. Equality has to be worked for and action taken to ensure that it becomes embedded in these relationships rather than being presumed *a priori*.

An interesting feature is that the current trend is primarily one of professional social workers from low-income countries being employed in the West. These workers are highly educated, and in many instances are already familiar with the relevant social work models, language and culture. This is a result of the longstanding tradition of social work being conducted overseas by former colonial powers and the role of the media and globalizing institutions in promoting Western models of professionalism throughout the world. At the same time, the failure of industrialized nations to produce enough qualified social workers to meet their own demands, or to engage in serious workforce planning, challenges employers, educators, practitioners and policy-makers to develop more appropriate approaches to this thorny issue, including compensating sending countries for the loss of their trained personnel. Western governments often utilize agencies for recruitment purposes, ostensibly to reduce employment costs for the state. These agencies can be poorly prepared for the tasks involved and may undermine the well-being of those they encourage to migrate (Devo, 2006).

Specific campaigns aimed at attracting qualified social workers, often at Masters' level, have been mounted by both the state and private recruiting agencies in Canada, India, South Africa and Zimbabwe, among others. These have been crucial in enabling some local authorities to meet their statutory responsibilities towards children and older people. For example, Essex County Council recruited scores of social workers from Canada in the 1990s, and Birmingham City Council brought seventy-two social workers from Zimbabwe. At one point, about 50 per cent of Zimbabwean trained social workers were working outside their own country (Devo, 2006). Some of these workers stayed for several years; others settled permanently in the UK and developed careers in the profession (Sithole, 2008). Several individuals have also applied for posts independently of external recruitment drives (personal communications).

The preparation for these recruits – planned induction programmes and subsequent training – was not always fully thought out. Consequently, many migrants found that they had to rely upon each other, and particularly their fellow nationals already in the country, for assistance. For example, Zimbabweans in Birmingham formed the Zimbabwean Social Workers' Network to help them gain the confidence
and support that they needed to make the best use of their skills in an unfamiliar country (Sithole, 2008). The concerns expressed by many in the profession about the failure of the authorities to address these issues at the outset ultimately became incorporated in the government's Social Care Code of Practice for International Recruitment. However, this response is inadequate. Although it addresses some of the concerns about the processes used in recruiting overseas workers, it fails to deal with those linked to career progression and the implications of taking large numbers of trained personnel from countries that are themselves desperately short of skilled professionals. It also begs the question of the chronic under-training of social workers in the UK, which has been evident for decades, but which successive governments have failed to address. Social work is not the only profession that is experiencing these dilemmas. The health professions, particularly nursing and medicine, have a longer history of recruiting overseas professionals without putting in place the necessary infrastructure and mechanisms of support (Buchan and Seccombe, 2006).

Lack of preparation and training for these newly recruited overseas workers to join those already in the imperial heartlands of the West included not welcoming them into their new posts, not finding appropriate housing before their arrival, not holding induction and training classes in agency procedures and cultures, and not ensuring the bases for career progression afterwards. Their absence may be seen as encouraging predatory practices that appropriate the skills and knowledge held by individual professionals who are detached from their social contexts. Each social worker becomes a free-floating agent able to make their own decisions about where they might find employment without the necessary safeguards being in place to facilitate their migratory journey, to handle the transitions involved in becoming settlers, and to promote their development as employees. Sending countries with little control over the export of labour find that they lose considerable numbers of their skilled personnel, as was the case with Zimbabwe, when half of its skilled social workers relocated to one English city (Devo, 2006).

India, South Africa, the Caribbean and Pakistan have similar experiences, with their most skilled workers in a range of professions moving to the West. Silicon Valley in California has benefited enormously from the influx of migrant labour, from India in particular, and companies have been able to augment their own pool of knowledge and skills and maintain a competitive edge in the information technology industry. Remittances sent to countries of origin can be substantial. For example, Sri Lankans overseas contributed £2.9 billion in 2008 and £3.3 billion in 2009 (www.disasporajourney.com). Polish workers in the UK, Sweden and Ireland sent back a total of €6.4 billion, or 2.5 per cent of GDP, in
2004. Most of this money went into consumer spending linked to extended family needs, and led to an 11.9 per cent rise in retail sales (www.workpermit.com), rather than contributing to the wider development of the country's economy (Small, 2007). While this pattern does help lift people out of poverty, it does not compensate for the resulting skewed development or to fill the ensuing gaps in the workforce of the sending country.

A substantial number of continental Europeans have been attracted to work and study in Britain. Since 2004, 380,000 Eastern Europeans have registered for National Insurance numbers (McSmith, 2007). Many of these workers have entered the social care sector. However, the financial recession in the UK and the growth of the Eastern European economies has led to a decline in this source of labour, which threatens the potential of care homes to operate effectively (Kelly, 2008). Eastern European migrants are particularly numerous in residential homes for older people. Addressing the serious shortage of trained staff in the statutory sector has also been helped by Britain's imperial links (Sithole, 2008). It is hard to obtain precise numbers, but estimates suggest that one in ten social workers in the UK is from overseas. This figure may be misleading because it includes people who are British citizens born abroad. Interestingly, the migration of professionals to work in different parts of the world is seldom remarked upon by public commentators.

Ruth White (2007) describes her own personal journey as a transnational social work migrant who has practised in the UK, Canada and the USA. Alongside the issues of meeting immigration requirements – the tediousness and expense of progressing through the formal processes – she highlights the importance of possessing friends with local knowledge and support networks, knowing people who are willing to offer practical help at short notice, and having the ability to work effectively and professionally even while enduring extremely stressful conditions. In some ways, her experience reveals the fragmented nature of the transnational journey for individual migrant workers.

Migratory movements also expose the need for social workers to practise some of their skills on themselves. This could take the form of an international network of social work support for migrant practitioners and academics that could be brought together under the auspices of both IASSW and IFSW. The two organizations could develop high-quality, well-informed services for which individuals might be willing to pay and thus generate income that could be ploughed into further assistance for migrant workers. Such a network could provide help to ensure their well-being by requiring employers to have the appropriate facilities and resources in place when the newcomers arrive; aiding them to settle into local communities by linking them up with social workers already
embedded in the community; and supporting them in their career progression. There are instances of local self-help initiatives being taken, such as the Zimbabwean Social Workers’ Network in the UK (Devo, 2006), but these local initiatives cater only for the needs of a specific and localized group and do not link up to international organizations to build a wider cache of knowledge. Another difficulty is that local organizations formed spontaneously by migrant workers, such as the network referred to above, are under funded and may not have the capacity to sustain their growth and development over the long term (Sithole, 2008).

The European Union perhaps displays the most organized trends concerning the migration of professionals. As a result of the development of the single market in goods and services, the EU has issued a number of directives based on various agreements and treaties that carry direct implications for professional education and training, including that of social work. Crucial to the EU’s deliberations have been the Bologna Process and the Lisbon and Maastricht treaties to bring harmonization in professional qualifications, the recognition of qualifications obtained in one country in another, and the potential for students to begin their studies in one location and complete them elsewhere. What is advocated is a Bachelor’s degree of at least three years’ duration at undergraduate level, a two-year Master’s award at post-graduate level and a three-year PhD at doctoral level. Most EU countries are seeking compliance with these requirements, although there have been criticisms. For example, the Nordic countries, which had four-year undergraduate degrees, have complained that standards will be reduced (Juliusdottir and Petersson, 2003). Portuguese social work educators have made similar claims (personal communications).

Additionally, the Bologna Process has promoted the use of the European Credit Transfer Scheme (ECTS), which has sought to standardize teaching systems. The take-up of ECTS and the use of the Diploma Supplement providing a description of a student’s studies has been patchy (Dominelli, 2007b). However, an important aim of these endeavours was to make it easier to have ‘portable’ qualifications that would be readily accepted in any European country, and in turn to facilitate labour mobility.

The EU has put funding into its drive to harmonize education and ensure that European models acquired currency both within and beyond its borders. For example, the Erasmus programme aims to facilitate staff and student exchanges, while Tempus projects seek to make Western European knowledge readily available to Eastern Europeans, a move that was particularly important for those countries seeking a smooth transition between communist and market-based societies. The EU has cooperation programmes promoting staff and student exchanges in Canada.
(TEP), the United States (Atlantis), South Korea, Japan, Aotearoa/New Zealand and Australia (ICI) and funds research involving Asia, Latin America and Africa as well as North America.

All these programmes promote a variety of projects and exchanges. It is usually left to the individual applicant to apply their ingenuity in meeting the relevant funding criteria. Important questions to consider are the following:

- What projects?
- How many projects (per funder and per institution)?
- How many individuals and institutions are to undertake the exchanges?
  - With whom?
  - For how long?
  - Under what conditions?
- Can equality in the relationships between individuals and institutions be maintained?
- What funding is available under what conditions and for whom?
- How can these projects be sustained in the longer term?
- What formal exchange agreements, visa requirements and other preparations are needed?
- How can students be supported when they are overseas so as not to disable them vis-à-vis students who remain at home?

Interestingly, many of these exchanges are being conducted in English, and so the dominance of the language is not being challenged. The EU does fund translation services for some activities, but these are expensive and so often limited in scope, applicability and duration (Dominelli, 2004c).

While these initiatives transcend the borders of the nation-state, they also reinforce national boundaries, as agreements are made between specific institutions and a minimum number of countries have to be included for a project to meet funding requirements. There are also geographical and other anomalies that arise. Countries bordering the Mediterranean have traditionally been less involved in these activities than those in Northern Europe. Additionally, the limited amount of funding provided means that older students with family and caring responsibilities are less likely to participate (Dominelli and Thomas Bernard, 2003). And, because demands for funding outstrip supply, calls for projects have become increasingly competitive, and many good projects, particularly those that are more adventurous, are not funded. There are more projects from the physical and computing sciences that have obtained funding than those in the arts and humanities, for example.
Conclusions

Globalization has subjected the local to forces that have prised its boundaries open and brought external influences to bear upon it. At the same time, the local has impacted upon the global to alter perceptions of both. The many connections that exist between the two have impacted on social work practice as well as on all other aspects of social, economic, cultural and political life. The profession has become a global one, with tensions between an imperializing mission and that of working with others in egalitarian relationships. The indigenization movement serves as a constant reminder that those from the West have to maintain vigilance over their actions and those of their governments and institutions if they are to become allies in the struggle to maintain locality-specific forms of practice and ways of knowing and doing in the world.

Globalization has opened up opportunities for social workers to train in one country and work in another. While there are issues to be addressed concerning the recognition of qualifications across borders, the preparation that receiving countries need to have in place for overseas recruits, the training and support migrants need to progress in their careers, and reparations to be made to sending countries for the personnel that they have trained, labour mobility among professional groups can enrich the profession.